

Imperial College Union

CHOOSING THE RECTOR'S SUCCESSOR

A note by John Collins, IC Union President

Background

Sir Richard Sykes's term of office as Rector of Imperial College is scheduled to come to an end in early 2008. The Chairman of the Imperial College Council, Lord Kerr of Kinlochard, recently announced that he would like the College Council to appoint the next Rector of Imperial College by July 2007. On November 24th 2006 the College Council formally established a "Search Committee" and tasked it to find the next Rector of Imperial College.

At the last College Council meeting, Lord Kerr acknowledged and praised Sir Richard's record as Rector of Imperial. However, he also stated that it may not be appropriate to appoint a successor with a similar background or perspective to Sir Richard if the needs and challenges of the College are judged to be different to what they were when he first arrived in 2001.

The Chairman made it clear that he and other members of the Search Committee are entirely open-minded about what type of person should become the next Rector and no individual has been openly endorsed by any member of the Committee so far. This is, therefore, a timely opportunity for students to have their say on this matter and influence leading figures within the Search Committee.

The student perspective

Lord Kerr has already stated that he would welcome student input on this issue. To this end he has asked the ICU President to seek guidance from the student body on what students believe the future challenges of the College are, what background students think the next Rector should have, and what qualities and skills students feel the next Rector should possess.

The ICU President will meet with Lord Kerr and two other members of the Search Committee over the next two months to discuss this matter. As the appointment of a Rector is an inherently delicate matter, it is suggested that it would be more appropriate if this matter were discussed outside public meetings, although the ICU Council may take a different view.

Recommendation

That the ICU Council should establish a Presidential advisory committee to consider this matter and report its findings to the College Search Committee through the ICU President. Councillors interested in sitting on this committee should inform the ICU President as soon as possible.

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