

## The proposed 'merger' of UCL and Imperial College



*"The Stanford/UCSF merger experience, which ended in ignominious failure and an enormous debt, stands as a stark warning of blithely merging two distinct academic cultures, particularly when they are not geographically co-localized."* Phyllis Gardner MD, Stanford (signatory)

This document is an attempt to state the case for and against merger in plain English, and to aid the process of gathering the views of those most affected by the proposals to merge with IC. This proposal originated in talks between Derek Roberts (DR) and Richard Sykes (RS), and started only a few weeks ago. UCL's provost, within months of taking office for this, the last year of his association with the college, appears to have agreed with RS's initiative that, if passed by Council, would end UCL's existence ("After half an hour he [RS] said, "Why don't we cut through all this and explore a merger to create a world-leader? "My [DR] instant reply was positive"). A press announcement was made on October 14th, before Council had met. At a meeting of academic board (AB) on Thursday 18th October, the Academic Board was notified of what DR and RS wished to do, there was little opportunity for consultation

The search for a new provost was immediately suspended. DR states "Assuming a favourable decision by the Councils in December, the aim would be to have a unified management structure, under Sir Richard, in place by October 2003". If this were to happen, UCL would have lost any say in the choice of its head.

The college has offered the option to staff of e-mailing comments to the steering group for the merger ("If you have any comments or questions about the proposals please email [proposedmerger@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:proposedmerger@ucl.ac.uk)") and, although we welcome this, we feel that such a move does not satisfy the need for open discussion. As a result this web site has been started to provide a forum for the consideration of these issues in a way that has so far been notably absent from either UCL or IC.

Opinions expressed in UCL over the past two weeks have tended to fall into one of two camps. Some people concentrate on the pros and cons for their current research. Others tend to argue on the basis of what universities should be like in the next 100 years. Many people have described these events as a take-over bid, rather than a merger (see para 9); but whatever they are called they will, if successful, represent a turning point in the history of the college.

### Summary

- Merger would mean that the UK would lose a University that has all departments on one site
- Choice and diversity would be reduced: two different institutions would be replaced by one.
- Separation of departments would harm multi-disciplinary research

- Some of the most creative people may not be attracted to work in an enormous corporate university on two widely separated sites.
- The best US universities are not of the enormous size that would result from merger
- The loss of alumni loyalty (and bequests) could take a generation to repair.

### Arguments for a merger

The idea of mergers cannot be dismissed out of hand. Sometimes mergers make sense and, thanks to the efforts of Derek Roberts and of many others, we have had a lot of them. Further obvious possibilities exist in the Bloomsbury area. Mergers make sense if one partner is smaller and/or less successful, *and* if it wishes to merge, *and* if it is geographically close. In this case none of these apply. Both UCL and IC are large, both are successful, neither has shown any wish to merge before this sudden explosion of activity, and they are far apart (an inconvenient 2-tube line journey).

The only arguments for merger that have been presented so far are the ‘briefing document’ (appended below), DR’s speech to the Academic Board, and on the College web site (most of it not public). Their merits are best left for the reader to judge.

The gist of the argument appears to be that UCL would be in some sense ‘left behind’ if it does not merge. However, it is not clear what form this threat would take. Presumably the same people would carry on with much the same work whether merged or not, and would continue to get grants as before. Is there any implicit threat that our funds will be reduced if we do *not* merge? At present there seems to be no reason to believe that there is. Funds come through the HEFCE funding council and it is hardly possible to imagine that their decisions are being formed by UCL’s continued existence as an independent organisation.

If there is indeed a real threat to UCL from not merging then it is certainly the duty of the proponents of merger to spell it out clearly. This has not been done.

The briefing document refers to the “increasing globalisation of education and research”. The term *globalisation* has been used a lot by both the proponents of merger but the meaning of this word has not been explained in plain English. It presumably does *not* mean we will have a branch in every high street like McDonalds, and research has been global (international) for decades now.

There are, no doubt, for certain departments or individuals, advantages to be gained from a close association with IC (and, indeed, many of us already have made such arrangements and plan to continue to do so). However our view is that it is very ***short-sighted to consider the pros and cons of any merger solely in terms of the immediate advantage for an academic’s (or a department’s) own research. We are discussing a much bigger question; the future of UCL, and in some sense the future of British universities in general***

### Arguments against a merger

#### ***(1) Loss of an all-subject university***

UCL was established as a complete university (with the exception of theology), with all departments on one site. This undoubtedly one reason why we, like other complete universities, appeal to many staff and to many students. The College provides a breadth of educational opportunity that cannot be rivalled in any more specialist institution. If any consequence of merger is completely certain, it is that all departments would not be represented on both sites. Part of IC might indeed come to Bloomsbury, but when large sections of UCL go to South Kensington a successful complete university would be severely damaged, if not destroyed. The geographical argument is important here. It is a matter of simple observation that neither staff nor

students now move much between the two campuses for lectures or seminars; and that will certainly continue to be the case in a merged institution, whatever pressures are brought to bear.

### **(2) Loss of diversity and choice**

UCL and IC have very different origins and different ethos. Words like ethos are not fashionable in some circles today, but they are in part what makes many of us work for low pay in central London, and they are also what make some people want to give money to places such as our own. Although the terms were dismissed as irrelevant at the Academic Board meeting, others see their value. On this topic, a recent *Nature* editorial states

*UCL and Imperial College each have distinct identities that inspire strong loyalty among students, staff and alumni. . . . —these identities are of value, and should not be discarded lightly.*  
(*Nature* 419, 763. 2002)

Regardless of such abstract ideas, the effect of a merger would be to replace two rather different institutions with one. The result would be a *reduction of choice* for both students and staff. So much for diversity. Too often, the real world of industry pays lip service to competition but expends much effort to produce monopolies which, most people agree, are unhealthy. Universities should not make that mistake. Unless it is proposed to run *more* courses than the sum of those now offered in both places already, choice of courses will be reduced too.

### **(3) Effects on interdisciplinary research**

Some argue that merger would increase opportunities for interdisciplinary research, but because neither site would be a complete university, it is inevitable that many departments that are at present close to each other will be separated. Thus at least as many opportunities for interdisciplinary research would be lost as would be gained.

It remains to be seen what division of subjects between sites will be proposed, but one possibility that has been discussed is that arts and biomedicine will concentrate at UCL and physical sciences, engineering and maths at Imperial. That will, at the very least, damage two highly inter-disciplinary programmes at UCL, the bioengineering department, and the CoMPLEX group that promotes collaboration between mathematicians, physical scientists and biologists (something that attracts grants). Under the new arrangement the relevant departments would be so far apart that casual contact would vanish. One response to this criticism is that many sorts of collaborations can easily be carried out by email now. That is often true but to the extent to which it is true, it makes mergers quite irrelevant to interdisciplinary collaboration. It also neglects the fact that many such collaborations arise in the first place from casual contacts that would vanish with the proposed separation of departments.

### **(4) Effects on student numbers**

UCL's best-kept secret is its difficulty in attracting students for many subjects - including those taught by academically highly distinguished departments. We have fewer applicants per place than universities such as Nottingham or Bristol. School-children in general know or care very little about university research; and for UCL they are put off by the expense and difficulty of attending a large and intimidating organisation in central London. It is hard to see that doubling its size and spreading it over several square miles is going to do anything to improve this. The prospect of enormous classes (over 700 medical students?), the possibility of long-distance commuting between lectures, the loss of all-faculty status, and the divorce of teaching and research implicit in corporate organisation will all make a mega-university less attractive.

Many people are very sceptical about the claim that the merger would produce, in student terms, an institution that was greater than the sum of its parts. Mergers are always advertised as  $2 + 2 = 5$ , but usually end up as  $2 + 2 = 3$ . In all probability the total number of students (and staff) would turn out to be smaller in total, whatever is said in the enthusiasm for merger. It is surely one of the best-known things about take-overs that the advertised economies rarely materialise (unless a lot of people are fired). This would not be consistent with government's aim to increase student numbers.

#### **(5) Attractiveness for staff**

It is asserted in the briefing document that the merged mega-university would be more attractive to staff. That statement is not self evident and no facts are produced to back it up. If (and only if) the promised facilities and equipment were delivered, the new university might well be attractive, especially to people in 'big science' that requires very expensive equipment. On the other hand many of the most creative people will not want to work in an enormous institution run on corporate lines, with its concomitant tendency to top-down setting of strategy and lack of local accountability and management. We know from our colleagues at IC that such changes are already under way there and this rush to merger with little consultation of those most involved suggests that the new institution would be no different.

#### **(6) Size and quality**

The advocates of the merger repeatedly say that the 'super university' will "break the hegemony of Oxford and Cambridge" or that it will "rival Harvard". Both UCL and IC are already big and to suggest that making them bigger will have any such effects is –at best –no more than an assertion. The fact that the budget is, on paper, larger than that of Oxford is unlikely, of itself, to impress anybody.

Comparisons with Harvard have been invoked frequently by proponents of merger. The medical intake at Harvard is about 165, half that of UCL *alone* at present, and a far more attractive proposition for undergraduates than over 700. Harvard has 6650 undergraduates, 3358 graduate students and 9351 in graduate entry subjects (law, medicine, business etc). Clearly it is not size that makes Harvard good (well, perhaps its relatively *small* size helps).

An editorial in *Nature* points out that

*"However, the elite US research universities — Harvard, Yale, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton, Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley, would rank on most people's lists — are not in fact the largest in terms of their annual research spending. In fact, few members of this group currently spend much more than either UCL or Imperial."*

(Looking after number one: A merger of University College London and Imperial College, the top two research universities in Britain's capital city, may not in itself create a combined institution that is more internationally competitive. *Nature* **419**, 763. 2002)

#### **(7) The medical school and the NHS**

The medical schools are a big part of both UCL and IC and it is hard to see how they could possibly fuse without huge expense. Both are dependent on research income from the Department of Health and on support from the Department of Health for medical teaching. It is quite possible that the Department of Health could take the view that this enormous concentration of academic medicine in a small part of London could not justify the increased funding that would be necessary. *A clear view from the Department of Health should be sought before merger talks go too far, otherwise it will be indulging in a major gamble.*

#### **(8) Alumni and donations**

We have already heard of several alumni who propose to rescind bequests to UCL (in some cases quite large) if UCL no longer exists. It would take a generation for a merged institution to establish and identity and produce alumni of its own who might feel sufficiently loyal to it to leave money

### ***(9) A brief history of two business mergers***

These proposals originate from the heads of our institutions, DR and RS, both of whom have been much involved in mergers in their previous lives in the world of business. The fate of the much-merged GEC, Derek Roberts' previous employers, is well known: it has in effect collapsed. The state of Glaxo-SmithKline (GSK), Richard Sykes' organisation is also less than healthy.

#### ***Derek Roberts***

In his email of 29-Aug-02, shortly after his return to UCL, DR said

*“HOWEVER, I do not plan any short-term changes”*

*“If, over the next few months I conclude that formal changes are needed, I will discuss those with all directly involved at that time”*

The present proposals do not seem to be consistent with these statements.

On UCL's new official web site DR says *“In 1998, Sir Richard Sykes was UCL's first choice to succeed me as Provost”*. In fact RS withdrew before the final shortlist was drawn up, and was not interviewed formally by the full selection committee.

At Academic Board DR assured us that the changes that RS had brought about by his merger to form GSK had been a great success –that is dubious (see next paragraph).

#### ***Richard Sykes***

The enthusiasm of RS for take-over bids is also well known. The most recent, between Glaxo-Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham, is worth a closer look [bold type ours]

*“At the time, Sir Richard reassured employees that the deal was "about vision - not a cost-cutting exercise". In a precursor to his remarks about Imperial, he spoke of creating a research and development "powerhouse".*

***But little more than two years on, the unions beg to differ. Glaxo SmithKline has shed more than 15,000 jobs. Instead of creating a "powerhouse", research has been split into smaller, autonomous units - following an admission that size could inhibit scientific creativity.***

*Ian Gibson, chairman of the House of Commons science and technology select committee, recently threatened to launch an inquiry into the deal, accusing Sir Richard and his colleagues of misleading MPs about their motives for the tie-up. He maintained it was little more than a cost-cutting drive.*

*Neither has the company lived up to its expectations for investors - a series of drugs have fallen through including Lotronex, a pioneering treatment for irritable bowel disease. The firm faces increasing criticism for its handling of the antidepressant Paxil and since the merger was completed, the shares have fallen by 25%.*

*” (From Andrew Clark, <http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,9830,816263,00.html>)*

The opinion of the *Financial Times* is interesting too.

*“GlaxoSmithKline lost another senior scientist yesterday when James Palmer, the pharmaceuticals group’s head of development, announced he was leaving . . . Mr Palmer is the fourth senior executive from GSK’s research and development division to leave since the 2000 merger between GlaxoWellcome and SmithKline Beecham. . . . His departure will renew concerns about the implementation of GSK’s radical new research department . . . The new structure was a response to a series of failures in research at the two merger partners. . . . The experiment is being closely watched in an industry looking for solutions to a sharp fall in research productivity ”* From headline in *Financial Times* (22-Oct-02), by Geoff Dyer.

***Sagging morale, departing scientists, a dwindling pipeline: when will GSK’s research overhaul produce results?*** Headline of full page article in *Comment and Analysis* section, *Financial Times* 24-Oct-02.

And along the same lines, from the *Sunday Times* –Business (27-Oct-02)

*“It is all a far cry from the promises at the time of the merger. “The past in drug discovery was about serendipity; the future is about predictability,” said Sir Richard Sykes. . . .*

### ***Dysfunctional deals***

*THE merger mania of the late 1990s gripped few industries as strongly as pharmaceuticals but the results have been almost universally poor - at least for shareholders. Most of the deals were presented as companies positioning themselves for the dawn of the new scientific era of genomics. They have turned out to be little more than old-fashioned cost-cutting deals. . . . As the true rationale has unravelled, so have the share prices. Glaxo Smith Kline is down 40% from its peak”*

It was, of course, Richard Sykes who set the research policy of the merged giant.

**We feel that much more discussion, and many more hard facts are needed before the academic staff of UCL, who make it what it is, can judge the merits of the proposed merger. Not least we need hard costings of the enormous expenses that would be involved. This web-page is a first step in that direction.**

### ***Feedback***

Send your feedback to [cucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cucl@ucl.ac.uk). We will use your comments (unless you indicate otherwise) to keep this forum alive with regular updates of the web-page. To avoid repetition (and to minimise the chances of libel) we will act as moderators to the page rather than simply allowing unlimited access

To indicate support you can just send mail with YES in subject line to [cucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cucl@ucl.ac.uk) (please give your name, department, and job).

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### **Signatories**

**On 18 November 2002, there were 21 distinguished signatories**

(Please send all correspondence to [cucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cucl@ucl.ac.uk).)

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**Geoffrey Bindman (Senior Partner, Bindman and Partners Solicitors, and visiting professor in Law Department, UCL)**

**Sir James Black FRS, OM (James Black Foundation, KCL, ex HoD UCL, Nobel prize 1988)**

**Professor Ken Binmore CBE FBA (Lately Professor of Economics, UCL)**

**Professor David C. Clary FRS (Head of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of Oxford; Professor of Chemistry at UCL 1996-2002)**

**Dr Michael Cross (Chairman, Polymer Awarding Body Ltd since 2000; Member, Advisory Board, Bloomsbury Bioseed Fund Ltd, since 1999; Director of Group of Companies specialising in contract packing, since 1987. Fellow of UCL)**

**Jonathan Dimpleby (Broadcaster, Journalist, President of the Soil Association, Fellow of UCL)**

**Phyllis Gardner (MD, Harvard) (Professor at Stanford Medical School, and former Senior Associate Dean, lately Vice President for Research and Head of ALZA Technology Institute (ATI). On the Board of Directors of Aerogen, Inc., BioMarin Pharmaceutical, Inc., Health Hero Network, Inc., iMEDD, and CambriaTech. Co-founder and Director of Xeragen, Inc., and of Genomics Collaborative, Inc., Postdoc at UCL)**

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*and the following senior staff of UCL (119 signatories on 18 November 2002)*

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### **Supporters. (362 signatories on 18 November 2002)**

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Simon Charles, student. Electronic Engineering  
Rishi Choolun Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
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Thomas Clark Pharmacology  
Dr Georgia Clarke Courtauld Institute of Art  
John Clarke ICH  
Elizabeth Clear Library  
Dr Walter Cockle Greek and Latin  
Mark Collard Anthropology  
Dr Stephen Conaty Primary Care and Population Science  
Dr Robert Coombes Chemistry  
Clare Coope ex Art, History and Italian  
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Dr Gregory Dart English Literature  
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Dr Claudius Griesinger Physiology  
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Dr Nicholas Maxwell Science and Technology  
Anna McGuire

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Dr Veronique Mundoz-Darde Philosophy  
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Padmasayee Papineni Clinical Sciences  
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Jalpa Patel Chemistry  
Shernayne Patel Geological Sciences  
Dr Anna Patrikidou Biology  
Jon Pendleton Mathematics  
Julian Perfect Chemical Engineering  
Tamsin Piper Pharmacology  
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Emma Potts Examinations Section, Registry  
Robert Purdy Human Sciences  
Stephan Price, MSc student, Geography  
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Ede Rancz Physiology  
Dr Sara Randall Anthropology  
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Dr. Patricia Rothman Mathematics  
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Trea Saint Physics and Astronomy  
Kevin Saint, Geomatic Engineering  
Trea Saint, Physics and Astronomy  
Muhammad Saleem Civil and Environmental Engineering  
Adam Salisbury, UCL Language Centre  
Dr Jane Samuel Medicine

Dr Glenis Scadding Immunology RFC  
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Dr John Scholes Anatomy & Developmental Biology  
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Dr Andrea Sella Inorganic Chemistry  
Ian Senior (Economics 1974, and lately chair of UCL Alumni Association London Group)  
Dr Shahida Shafi Medicine  
Evgeniy Shapiro Mathematics  
Dr Barrie Sharpe Anthropology  
Hannah Shotton Anatomy and Developmental Biology  
Dr Ruth Siddall Earth Sciences  
Dr Talvinder Sihra Pharmacology  
Dr Bill Sillar Archaeology  
Paul Simons  
Dr Lucia Sivilotti, Pharmacology  
Jan Smith Electronic and Electrical Engineering  
Dr Christian Specht Pharmacology  
Dr. Clare Stanford Pharmacology  
Dr Martin Stocker Pharmacology  
Dr Fiona Strawbridge Information Systems  
Dr Alastair Sutcliffe RF Medical School  
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Dr Jeremy Tanner Institute of Archaeology  
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Dr Richard Taylor Geography  
Dr Chris Taylorson Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
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Dr Juergen Thurow Earth Sciences  
Dr Pamela Thurschwell English  
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Dr. D.A. Tocher Chemistry  
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Dr Christopher Tomlinson Economics  
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Dr John Twigg, Earth Sciences  
Oliver Usher Science and Technology Studies  
Dr Martin Utley Mathematics  
Ioana Vais Pharmacology  
Dr. Hans Van de Koot Phonetics and Linguistics  
Dr. Tanja van Mourik, Chemistry Department  
Dr Ann Varley Geography  
Dr Ludunka Voadlo Earth Sciences  
Graham Wagner Engineering  
Dr Paul Walker  
Sean Wallis Survey of English Usage  
Dr. Nicolas Wanaverbecq IoN  
Dr John Ward Biotechnology and Molecular Biology  
Jeremy Warner ex History  
Dr Claire Warwick SLAIS  
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Dr Marie Wells Scandinavian Studies  
Dr David West Visual Science  
Adam White History  
Emily White SLAIS  
Hugh White Biochemistry and Molecular Biology



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Tom Willis Anatomy  
Valerie Wilson Dept. of Surgery, RFC  
Dr. Jonathan Wolfe Biology  
Charlie Wood, Student, Geology, Earth Sciences,  
Dr Ian Wood Department of Earth Sciences  
Luke Wooller Geological Sciences  
Jack Wratten Pharmacology  
Dr D. Wujastyk Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine  
Sha-En Yeo Psychology  
Dr Alan Young Bartlett School of Graduate Studies

*old list*

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Dr Tim Arnett Anatomy and Dev. Biology  
Professor Emeritus Barbara Banks Physiological Chemistry  
Tina Bashford Pharmacology  
Liz Beech Neurochemistry Dept  
Dr. Simon Beggs ICH  
Dr. David Benton Pharmacology  
Dr Lynn Bindman Department of Physiology  
Dr Kasia Boddy English  
Dr John Brodholt Earth Sciences  
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Emeritus Professor D H Jenkinson, Pharmacology  
Dr Peter Jones Geography  
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Dr Jann Matlock Department of French, UCL  
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Gayle Passmore Pharmacology  
Julian Perfect Chemical Engineering  
Tamsin Piper Pharmacology  
Dr Sara Randall Anthropology  
Dr Mark Roberts Mathematics, Departmental tutor  
Dr. Patricia Rothman Mathematics  
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Dr. Stephanie Schorge Pharmacology  
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Dr. Jonathan Wolfe Biology  
Dr Ian Wood Department of Earth Sciences  
Jack Wratten Pharmacology  
Dr Alan Young Bartlett School of Graduate Studies

## **Background Briefing**

- (1) In taking this step toward a full merger, the two Institutions are totally motivated by their commitment to the pursuit of academic excellence – in teaching, scholarship and research – across the full range of arts; humanities; social sciences; physical sciences; engineering and bio-medical sciences.
- (2) Their vision is to achieve quality driven pre-eminence on the international scene – not just in the UK – recognising the increasing globalisation of education and research.
- (3) Size for its own sake is **not** a driver. **However**, scale built on excellence does bring many potential advantages, including:
  - ◆ (3a) Coherent estates and SRIF II strategy.
  - ◆ (3b) Funding organic growth based on excellence in arts and humanities
  - ◆ (3c) Optimal use of expensive and scarce research resources - already recognised in joint commitment to London Nanotechnology Centre, for example
  - ◆ (3d) Capability to respond to research funding strategy based on regional centres of excellence.
  - ◆ (3e) Possessing the interdisciplinary strengths essential to participation in important new research areas.
  - ◆ (3f) Unrivalled clinical links with major general and specialist hospitals, thus encouraging translational research in biomedicine.
  - ◆ (3g) Further improvements in quality, diversity of choice and innovation in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
  - ◆ (3h) Greater opportunities for international partnerships in both teaching and research.
  - ◆ (3i) Opportunities to improve student facilities.
  - ◆ (3j) A major attraction to the best students and staff – particularly important in any new undergraduate funding regime.
  - ◆ (3k) Strengthened IPR portfolio across all disciplines for commercialisation.

*Briefing document from the Provost*

- ◆ (3l) Greater (non-competitive) appeal to potential benefactors.
  - ◆ (3m) Opportunities to build on shared experience in developing access/reachout.
  - ◆ (3n) Similar opportunities to share expertise across range of administration and support services.
- The opportunity to capitalise on a set of internationally famous specialist hospitals and their associated postgraduate institutes to promote clinical scientific research of the very highest calibre for the benefit of the NHS in general through facilitated collaborations and interactions.

**Note on Research Scale:**

The combined activities will have:

About 3,000 research-active permanent academic staff;

About 3,600 research staff;

About 4,000 research students.

Supported by a total research income of £400 M. P.A.

## **The Comment Page**

[A teacher's experience](#) | [Denis Noble, CBE, FRS](#) | [Denise Lievesley, UNESCO](#) | [Dan Jacobson](#)

[Phyllis Gardner MD \(Stanford\)](#) | [Robert S Eisenberg, \(Chicago\)](#) | [Comments by Provost](#)

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[More on reductions in staff and student numbers](#)

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### **Paul Davis (Lecturer, Department of English) writes as follows.**

I am spending this term visiting non-fee-paying schools as part of the English department's response to the three-year government funding for 'Widening Participation' initiatives. Judging by what I'm hearing in classrooms in a number of the strongest state schools in the London area, plenty of teachers are already advising their students against applying to UCL in the present circumstances. They see the writing on the wall, and argue - reasonably enough - that it would be unfair of them to expect their students to take the risk of having their undergraduate studies disrupted if/ when the merger goes through.

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### **From Denise Lievesley (Professor, Director of Statistics at UNESCO, Past president, Royal Statistical Society, Fellow of UCL)**

May I mention some aspects which have particularly concerned me.

First the fact that UCL has only an interim Provost puts it at a disadvantage in the negotiations. It is in my view exactly the wrong time for UCL to enter into the discussions.

The second is that the Research Councils and other bodies tend to spread their funding round and ensure no one University gets too much - the merger of UCL and IC could result in less research money not more.

UCL and IC are different - they appeal to different sorts of staff and students. That is good. We need to have a diverse educational system. I have the greatest respect for both institutions and don't want to see the dilution of aims and purposes which would in my view result from the merging of identities.

**From Denis Noble CBE, FRS, Hon FRCP (Burdon-Sanderson Professor of Physiology, University of Oxford, Fellow of UCL)**

This is a personal view, but it is based on talking with a number of academics and other colleagues in a variety of universities and other institutions here in the UK and abroad.

First, no-one seems to think that this proposal would even be on the table if the funding problems of UK universities were not so acute. Could anyone imagine Harvard and MIT making such a proposal? Not a bad comparison (one strong across all the faculties including humanities, the other strong in science and technology). Or Rockefeller and any other New York City university? Let's be clear. This is a finance-driven proposal. It has little to commend it academically.

Second, one of the reasons that it has little to commend itself academically is that it will reduce the total number of premier universities in the UK. We are going to lose UCL and ICL (two acknowledged prestigious brand names in the UK) for the sake of a hoped-for new "University of London" (for whatever joint name is chosen that is what the new institution will be seen as abroad). The history of both institutions, and their own troubled attempts to break free of the old University of London straightjacket, has been in exactly the opposite direction to the proposal. The name, incidentally, seems to me to be a major problem. The most natural one (i.e. London University) is presumably not available. It will take ages to establish the brand identity using any other name.

Third, it will destabilise the UK university system, primarily by creating great uncertainty within UCL in particular. UCL has most to give up because it is the more genuinely 'collegiate' institution with its magnificent range of faculties. My prediction is that the rest of the University sector in the UK will be looking to pick up the spoils.

Finally, it doesn't make sense unless there are hoped-for and very substantial cut-backs and efficiency gains at both ICL and UCL. Whatever the proposers may say now, that must be the underlying rationale. I also suspect that is why there is such a rush to push the proposal through. The more people explore the consequences the more uneasy they will be. I also imagine that very few currently employed at UCL and ICL will be brave enough to speak their real minds. That is why those strongly attached to UCL but not dependent on it for employment should speak out.

I have been proud to be a Fellow of UCL since 1986. I also regard it as my academic source, with which I have remained in good contact for all the years I have been at Oxford since graduating at UCL. I will find it very difficult indeed to express such loyalty to a merged institution. Imagine Oxford and Cambridge destroying their brand names and loyalty credit in this way.

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**From Dan Jacobson (Author and critic, Professor of English UCL, 1986-1994)**

One would find it hard to say which is the more unattractive aspect of the proposed merger: its philistinism towards UCL's distinctive history or the spirit of corporate elephantiasis it displays.

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**From Phyllis Gardner MD (Stanford University and Director of Biotech companies)**

I am happy to be a signatory. The Stanford/UCSF merger experience, which ended in ignominious failure and an enormous debt, stands as a stark warning of blithely merging two distinct academic cultures, particularly when they are not geographically co-localized. It sounds like folly to me!.

[see also [Stanford comment](#), and

["MEDICINE: Financial difficulties cause Stanford to back out of medical merger with UCSF"](#), and

["UCSF/Stanford: Marriage was rough; divorce is expensive"](#), *San Francisco Business Times*

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**From Professor Robert S Eisenberg, (Ph.D. in Biophysics, UCL, 1962-1965)**

The forced merger of academic institutions is, in my experience, and that of my country (USA) is nearly always motivated by attempts to save money and these attempts usually fail.

If the merger comes from bottom up, it is unforced and usually works. I have experienced both.

First success: in an exceedingly tricky political environment, involving multiple levels of government, government dishonesty more common (by far) in the USA than in the UK, and explicit ethnic rivalries (again more common by far in the USA than in the UK), the *de facto* merger of the University of Illinois Medical School (budget approximately \$200 million per year), Rush Medical Center (budget approximately \$1.2 billion per year), and Cook County Hospital (budget approximately \$1 billion per year) has worked very well, precisely because there has been NO ATTEMPT at overall institutional merger. Individual departments have found a way to work together and merge resources and create efficiencies.

Such results are not pleasing to administrators because the efficiencies are hard to demonstrate: after all they were designed to work, not to draw opposition, and were not designed to be visible!

Second, failure. In every case I know top down mergers have failed to create efficiency for a simple reason: they neglect economic and behavioral realities.



Economically, efficiencies occur when overlap is removed. If overlap is not present, efficiencies cannot be produced; costs can be cut, but only by decreasing function. In many cases, costs are determined "by the means of production". If the inputs and outputs do not change, the means of production is not changed, and costs do not change.

Behaviorally, forced mergers fail because they neglect friction. When humans are asked to change institutional arrangements, uproar occurs which is itself often much more costly than possible efficiencies. I had always hoped that the UK was more mature than the USA and less subject to fads and fancies, particularly those motivated by administrators who wish to "look good". I urge rejection of the forced merger.

"Do good" is the goal, not "look good."

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### **A reply from Sir Derek Roberts**

These comments followed a meeting between DR and representatives of CUCL on 5th November (see [Minutes](#)). The numbering of these comment corresponds to the paragraphs in the [Arguments against a merger](#) section.

1) This is misleading, assuming worst-case disposition of activities in order to rubbish it.

2) Before judging, wait and see what emerges on "core values"/ethos.

3) Quite wrong. Deliberately sets up false proposition just to knock it down. Again, wait and see proposals for the process to explore academic linkages and any consequential re-siting.

4) Imperial does better in engineering and science where we overlap. The "700 medical student intake " is another scare tactic. The Bio-Medical Group are viewing the increased scale as a great opportunity to offer diversity in medical education.

5) Some will be attracted; some won't. Phrases like "run on corporation lines" are totally meaningless - more scare tactics.

6) What makes Harvard good is its wealth. That is what we have to compete with.

7) DoH/NHS are being consulted. Why not wait to hear their views? Far from obvious why "increased funding would be necessary".

8) There are arguments for and against. I presented both in my original SWOT analysis.

9) Their comments are beneath contempt. If the writer knows as little about the pharmaceutical industry as he does about the electrical industry he would

do better to concentrate on challenging the original background briefing, of which he was so dismissive, to say nothing of the subsequent papers about which he says 'he is unaware'.

Derek Roberts  
Provost

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## **More on reductions in staff and student numbers**

*It is obvious that merger would reduce the number and diversity of universities. Although we regard as paramount the long term issues of reduction in diversity and choice, and the desirability of complete multi-faculty education, it is certainly true that many questions have been asked about possible reductions in numbers of students and staff. It is unfortunate, therefore, that these issues are not mentioned on the list of 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs) either on the official [Imperial College](#) site or on the official [UCL](#) site. It is unfortunate too, that rather different accounts of what will happen have been emerging from UCL and IC.*

**The email that describes a senate meeting at Imperial College (see the [SAVEUCL](#) site) states that, according to Richard Sykes.** There will be job losses and there will be fewer students overall taught - although interestingly "not from Imperial"

**On 13th November, the heads of departments in UCL's Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, and Faculty of Engineering, met Derek Roberts and Richard Sykes.**

Reports from this meeting include the following comment.

"At this meeting Sykes confirmed that the merger would result in "fewer staff and fewer students" . This really does invalidate Derek Roberts original claim that the merger would not result in "Downsizing". If UCL staff have been misled over this, what other mis-information is on the official website."

"he [Sykes]he) not saying there will be no redundancies". Indeed, when pushed he spoke about 30% reductions in student numbers and 30% reduction in staff numbers"

## **Reports of Advisory teams**

***The reports of advisory teams are now coming in. These reports provide the information, on the basis of which Council must reach its momentous decision. As in any form of scholarship, there is a great deal to be said for looking at original sources. These reports, the raw data for decision making, are not appearing on the official UCL web site. We shall, therefore publish them here, complete and unfiltered by higher levels of committees, as soon as they become available.***

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### **Advisory Team for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)**

"39. The Team have considerable misgivings over the future of AHSS within a combined IC/UCL, these are: Relations with the University of London and with other colleges 'Brand' and image of AHSS Departments; A sense of being submerged in a science led institution; how the merger appears to the students and alumni and potential sponsors; The sense that we have been caught at a vulnerable moment, (finance and issues around the post of Provost); there may be other possibilities; The sense that merger may be inspired by the wrong reasons.; 40. In any negotiations we must be clear who we are (a great international research-led University) and be clear what we want. The team concluded that there was a case for a vote of confidence in the future of UCL."

[Click here for the full AHSS report](#)

### **Advisory and Negotiation Committees for Biomedicine**

" (e) Merger is not seen as a prerequisite for achieving these desirable changes and a consequential improved financial position. UCL Biomedicine would expect to see such changes implemented from within UCL under the direction of the present Provost and a successor equally committed to the future development of the College. Co-operation in many areas with IC should be encouraged."

[Click here for the full Biomedicine report](#)

### **Issues on merger for Library Services**

[Read extract](#)

### **Advisory Team for Teaching and Learning**

[Read conclusion](#)

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## **Imperial College - University College London Merger Proposal**

### **Meeting of the Advisory Team for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) 6 November 2002**

#### **Minutes**

#### **Present**

Professor Michael Bridge (Dean, Laws), Chair  
Dr Michael Otsuka (Philosophy)  
Professor Henry Woudhuysen (English)  
Professor Theo Hermans (Dutch)  
Dr Paul Ayris (Library)  
Professor Ian Dennis (Laws)  
Professor Julian Hoppit (History)  
Dr Ada Rapoport-Albert (Hebrew and Jewish Studies)  
Professor Michael Rowlands (Anthropology)  
Dr Robin Aizlewood (SSEES)  
Professor Susan Hockey (SLAIS)  
Professor Richard Munton (Geography)  
Dr Brian Balmer (STS)  
Dr Christine Hoffman (Language Centre)  
Professor Tim Mathews (French)  
Professor David Forgacs (Italian)  
Professor Stephen Machin (Economics)  
Professor Bob Sharples (Classics)  
Dr Helen Margetts (SPP)  
Professor Peter Ucko (Archaeology)  
Alan Smith (SSEES)  
Professor Mary Fulbrook (German)  
In attendance Mrs Julia Abbott (Vice-Provost's Office)

#### **Apologies**

Professor Helen Weston (History of Art)  
Dr David Henn (Spanish and Latin American Studies)  
Professor Hugh Clout (Dean, SHS)  
Professor Gerard O'Daly (Dean, Arts)  
Professor John Aiken (Slade)  
Professor Wendy Davies (History)

**The Minutes of the Meeting 24 October were agreed as a correct record.**

#### **Role of the Advisory Group, Terms of Reference, reporting mechanism**

The Chair thanked members for submitting 'vision statements' and those who had responded to the 'key questions' paper from the Humanities and Social Sciences Sub-Group.

The Chair outlined the role of the AHSS Advisory Group as designated to give advice to the Sub-Group for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Co-chaired by Professors Worton and Birley). To carry out this role the Team should:

Concentrate on the key issue; the advantages/disadvantages of merger  
Consider the Sub-Group's 'key questions', but not regard these as exhaustive  
Be a forum for free and frank discussion where Departments could articulate their thoughts.

### **3.1 The Team agreed to shape their discussions around the following key emerging issues for AHSS:**

The practical advantages of merger

The practical disadvantages of merger

Relationship with the University of London (including the UoL Library and SAS) and other Colleges.

Agreed that issues of the structure, particularly the Faculty structure, of a united institution

were for later consideration.

### **3.2 The Chair reminded the team of the general short Terms of Reference for each Merger Sub-Group and Advisory Team.**

The Advisory Team agreed that the Dean of Laws should present their views to the Arts and Humanities Sub-Group.

The next meeting scheduled for 19 November is after the deadline for the Sub-Board's Reports; it was agreed that this would be a useful forum to take forward any further issues.

### **Benefits/advantages of Merger**

6. The Chair invited members to give their view on the benefits/advantages of merger with IC.

The following points were made:

7. The benefits of merger are difficult for those Departments to assess which are not directly affected, (i.e. have no IC counterpart). The Vision Statements are a wish list. There is little real sense of the opportunities or practical benefits and some Vision Statements could be written outside the framework of the proposed merger.

8. The Team agreed that there was an information vacuum on such things as benefits in funding and space allocation, which made it difficult to see the role of AHSS in the new institution.

9. AHSS should be conscious of their potential as an important pillar of the new community and that in this context all subject groups could expand and be strengthened.

10. The possibility of partnership with other institutions should also be considered: why IC? The identity of AHSS Departments could disappear in a

strongly science led institution. As only 8% of a new University it would be difficult to sustain an identity; the AHSS area would need to be significantly larger, 15% or more.

11. The Team raised the fear of possible sale of property on the Gower Street Campus (increasing in value post the Kings Cross rail link), as a source of revenue.

12. The assumption that AHSS Departments could expand if they wished should not go unquestioned; the issue of adequate resources for expansion has not been fully explored and some clear evidence on issues such as space and staffing would aid discussion. At the moment the benefits to AHSS are being presented in too generalised terms; once a merger goes through Departments may be back in competition for resources and the AHSS may not be beneficiaries.

13. The Team agreed that it would be useful to see a business plan for the merger and to have information on the extensive 'due diligence' process being undertaken.

14. Library: the UCL Library needs more space and there is no more room on the Gower Street site. The Library has to find 1.5 miles of shelving per year and is also down the list of UK HEI Library spend. Colleagues at IC have indicated there is very little room in South Ken, so it is difficult to see how more Library space could be realised.

15. Agreed that Sir Richard Sykes be invited to come and speak with the Advisory Team and that members should send their questions in preparation to Professor Bridge. It would be helpful to record the discussion.

16. Language Departments are struggling to maintain numbers against a drop in language teaching in schools; there are fears that the merger would result in 'service language teaching' and that UCL staff would be redeployed. This would be a grotesque use of language teachers and is a genuine and widespread concern.

17. For the Department of Economics the merger presents potential opportunities, but these are difficult to evaluate in the absence of a business plan.

To not go ahead might place UCL in a poor competitive position  
The merger presents an opportunity for change and for some areas of programme development to move ahead  
There is some synergy with IC environmental sciences  
'Do nothing' could mean that opportunities are missed.

18. Laws would also resist any move towards 'service teaching', and would consider the Faculty in a strong enough position to say 'no'. There are also potential development opportunities for Laws.

19. The Team noted that there was no clear indication that the merger would solve the current financial crisis. The Provost has indicated that the UCL current deficit may now be only £4M, but there is as yet no accurate costing of the merger although £100-£200M has been mentioned. The Team expressed concern that there would be a drain on revenue short term post merger.

20. Downsizing: the Team considered that the possible reduction in staff, both academic and administrative was not being addressed openly. The statement that there would be no forced redundancies was beginning to lack credibility.

21. The Departments of Anthropology and Geography are concerned that their specialist areas could be broken up. Geography can see the possibilities in strategic alliance for environmental work, but Environmental Science is perceived as a weak IC Dept and in RAE terms not desirable as a merger partner.

22. Tuition Fees: the Chair advised the team that the issue of tuition fees was really outside the merger and that the delayed Government White Paper would indicate national policy. The CSR had indicated that there would be an increased spend on sciences in 2004/5 and thus a substantial benefit to the new University.

23. Some Departments, (Laws, Economics, French, Institute of Archaeology) would welcome the opportunity for expansion of staff and PG students, but this was not anchored in merger.

24. Most departments would strongly favour co-location.

25. The Team noted that AHSS was not a potential high revenue earner, but that these areas could benefit from re allocation of resource. Should the new engineering building not be required for the engineers, there would be an area for the possible development of the Library.

26. An opportunity to totally overhaul the Finance System was a benefit, but the move to a Recourse Allocation Model is already being undertaken and is not driven by merger.

### **Disadvantages/risks of merger**

27. Brand and image: the Team considered the merger to be a threat to the 'brand' and reputation of very distinguished AHSS departments, and that potential staff and students would perceive the new University as a science institution. Departments would lose public profile.

28. Uncertainty about relationships with the Federal University of London. The following serious concerns were raised:

IALS is used extensively by Laws, and any loss of access would be very serious

The SAS is very important to Departments in AHSS area

History shares resources with other London Colleges and these would need

to be maintained by re negotiation

Classics has extensive inter collegiate work and this would also be threatened  
Philosophy is an intercollegiate programme, some discussions on the implications of merger have taken place, but the level of reassurance it has received on continued co-operation post merger does not convince the Department. Secession from the University of London would be very problematic

. The interdepartmental MA in Film Studies, which is supported by four other colleges would have no advantage in a link with IC.

29. Risks: the team noted that a level of risk was already being experienced as Laws had lost a potential Masters development. Also small Departments need to be sustained by partnerships and these were being put at risk.

30. The future relationship with University of London Library is particularly important; the collection is necessary to UCL which has 6300 registered members. UCL pays the major subscription and this investment could be lost. There is a case for the new institution to run the Library. The merger presents both a significant opportunity and potential for disaster.

31. The Team agreed that an alternative model to merger should be considered:

One that was not 'competitive'; merger might make some AHSS departments appear too small to attract students

A collaborative model of subject areas across the University of London would not be the status quo and would provide support for growth 'inter college'. AHSS could provide a powerful group within the University of London.

32. Agreed that secession from the University of London was on the whole undesirable for AHSS.

### **'Show Stoppers'**

33. Merger would change the political landscape; e.g. would the re grouping lead to the LSE and Kings merging? This could be a significant threat. The team considered that there was a case for allying with SOAS to bring up the proportion of AHSS in the new institution, though the complexities of the combined unit would be considerable.

34. Certain AHSS areas should be 'ring fenced' against re distribution in any merger, it should not be an opportunity for internal dismembering but for constructive collaboration.

35. There is a real threat of loss of distinctiveness. Merger would result in 'MIT' image, not 'Harvard'.

36. In the view of the Team the mood of the College had changed; merger was no longer a bright vision and there must be other ways forward, the community was not being offered a 'plan B'. The merger discussions may well have damaged the prospect of recruiting a new Provost.



37. The Team expressed doubts as to the choice of IC as a partner, and felt this had originated with Sir Richard Sykes.

38. A 'show stopper' might well be the loss of staff morale, only staff good will could make the merger work, and also that students and alumni were against the merger.

### **Summary**

39. The Team have considerable misgivings over the future of AHSS within a combined IC/UCL, these are:

Relations with the University of London and with other colleges

'Brand' and image of AHSS Departments

A sense of being submerged in a science led institution

how the merger appears to the students and alumni and potential sponsors

The sense that we have been caught at a vulnerable moment, (finance and issues around the post of Provost); there may be other possibilities

The sense that merger may be inspired by the wrong reasons.

40. In any negotiations we must be clear who we are (a great international research-led University) and be clear what we want. The team concluded that there was a case for a vote of confidence in the future of UCL.

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### ***Consensus View of the Advisory and Negotiation Committees for Biomedicine on the Proposed UCL-IC Merger***

(interim: to be updated after meetings with the IC Negotiation Committee and Richard Sykes)

At the meeting of the Merger Advisory Committee Biomedicine Sub-Board on November 12th, 2002, the potential advantages and disadvantages for Biomedicine of the proposed UCL-IC merger were considered. Following our initial interest, and with a very real wish for broad discussion concerning the implications of merger, we have now come to a point where we are unconvinced that the advantages of merger are outweighed by the disadvantages. Where potential advantages were identified, it was examined whether a merger, rather than cooperation without merger, was actually needed to obtain the advantage. A consensus view was reached on how the merger would affect research, teaching, administrative structures and financial income, as detailed below. In addition a consensus view on how the biomedicine community at UCL views the potential merger was agreed, and a potential way forward for the future was developed.

### **Research**

***Faculty of Life Sciences*** Research activity at UCL mainly complements that at IC although there is overlap in some areas. A few small groups of researchers at IC might benefit from moving to UCL and vice versa. Although some opportunities exist for synergy in applying for funding for large scale

facilities in (e.g.) proteomics, bioinformatics, functional imaging etc., the consensus view was that this synergy could be achieved just as effectively by cooperation rather than merger.

**Faculty of Clinical Sciences** UCL and IC have clinical researchers working in related areas, but there is little opportunity for relocation of teams to obtain a critical mass of activity because of the need to maintain location-based clinical provision. Access to large groups of patients for trials or epidemiology could be arranged through collaboration without merger. No advantage to merger was seen.

**Post Graduate Institutes** Research in the principal UCL PGIs depends on their close integration with their associated NHS Trusts. Although benefits could result from increased collaboration with IC, this is not contingent on merger. Any disruption of the relationship between PGIs and their Trusts, or diminution of the multi-disciplinary research breadth, would threaten the continuing success of PGI translational research.

**Bids for funding of large projects** The argument that competition between UCL and IC for funding of large projects reduces the total sum of money received by the two institutions, was rejected. The total amount of funding flowing to UCL plus IC was thought likely to be larger if the institutions do not merge, since funding bodies will often fund two large projects at different institutions in London, but would only award one such project to a merged institution.

It is pertinent that from the list of benefits/downsides provided by the Merger Biomedicine Sub-Board (second meeting, 30 October) nearly all of these can be considered to have both positive and negative aspects to merger and thus should not be simply summed and then concluded that 'benefits outweigh downsides'. Generally, there is little or no evidence to suggest that the proposed merger is necessary to bring the benefits suggested over and above that which could be accomplished by measured and close collaboration.

## **Teaching**

**Medical course teaching** A combined entry of 700 students will be extremely hard to accommodate on one site. Maintaining teaching on two sites would hinder any economies of scale. Such a large entry is likely to deter students from applying, and is a major disadvantage of merger. Merging would help IC by improving the teaching of science to their medical students, but offers no advantage to UCL.

**Non-medical course teaching** This is mainly complementary at UCL and IC, so that there is little opportunity for a merger to generate economies of scale. Exceptions are the Biology and Biochemistry programmes, but joint UCL + IC programmes could not be delivered on one site without substantial investment in teaching infrastructure (especially at UCL; see below) and would be unlikely to generate the same number of students entering merged courses as currently enter UCL and IC separately. Consequently merger is not advantageous.

**Quality of student experience at UCL and IC** Student opinion holds that the students have a better experience at UCL, with more contact with staff, more feeling of belonging to an academic institution, better pastoral care, and many more course options than at IC. Merger might reduce these advantages and make the combined institution less attractive to students, leading to fewer applications and reduced fee income (see below).

**Delivering teaching more efficiently** To achieve any economies of scale in teaching would require enormous investment to relocate lecturers and build new teaching facilities - otherwise travel of lecturers and/or students between sites would be massively inefficient. It is unlikely that sufficient funding for this would be available (and might be dependent on a diversion of SRIF that would consequently not be available for other purposes). The effects of a rapid imposed convergence of course content in a merged institution would be extremely disruptive, and would decrease applications, with significant financial consequences. These negative consequences of merger greatly outweigh any minor advantages for the delivery of teaching. The consensus view was that UCL could and should improve the efficiency of its teaching (see below), but that this should be done over a period of several years and without merger.

### **Administrative structures**

Some advantages to the administrative and financial structures at IC were perceived, but at the cost of more top-down control being imposed. The consensus view was that such advantages could be obtained by alterations to UCL's own administrative structures without necessity for merger.

### **Financial implications for biomedicine**

Would a merger produce a significant increase in income? The following consensus viewpoints were established. (a) The effects of anticipated changes in the funding environment for UK Universities, including possibly radical changes in arrangements for meeting the costs of tuition, are currently uncertain.

(b) Merger might result in an overall reduction in student numbers. This would be particularly serious in the case of Medicine. There is a possibility that applications for a merged medical course with an entry of 700+ will fall.

(c) Selling off buildings and consolidating research and (a smaller amount of) teaching in fewer buildings, possibly on the IC site, might generate capital for investment but was not seen as a desirable strategy because it would make future expansion more difficult.

(d) Staff reductions might be possible if courses were merged and teaching was streamlined, but this was not seen as a good strategy because: (i) it would decrease the quality of the students' experience (see above) which will lead to a fall in demand (and hence fee income); (ii) the staff likely to be lost are the ones currently doing a disproportionate amount of teaching - this is undesirable because it will mean that research active staff will have to be diverted to doing teaching, decreasing their research output.

(e) Merger would not increase, and would probably decrease, in the short term the total amount of donations from alumni because of a loss of identity of the two institutions.

The conclusion was reached that the financial advantages of merger are uncertain.

### **View of the biomedicine community at UCL**

For the merger to work, the biomedical community has to see advantages and be committed to it. The general view, backed up by departmental surveys, was that 80-90% of the community are against the merger, for the following reasons. (i) The advantages of merger as so far stated have not been convincing.

(ii) Merger will bring a period of great disruption to research and teaching, for uncertain and possibly little gain.

(iii) No clear vision has been portrayed of the future structure of the merged university, nor of where people will be located, nor of how the merger will improve the financial position. Staff do not accept that these are details which can be worked out later.

(iv) There is a clear difference of ethos between the academic communities and administrative structures at UCL and IC, with the UCL ethos being seen as more democratic, supportive of individual researchers and student-friendly.

(v) The two institutions are not seen to be merging as equal partners (because the UCL Provost will leave when the institutions join, and the IC Rector will take over).

(vi) There are fears that compulsory redundancies will rapidly follow merger.

(vii) Most staff do not think it prudent to commit to merger on the basis of the limited information currently available and uncertainty over the impact on finances and student recruitment.

### **Current view of the joint Advisory/Negotiating Groups**

(a) Advantage of a merger is not seen to outweigh the risks at present.

(b) Views remain fluid and may change after the meeting with Sir Richard Sykes.

(c) Merger discussions have strongly sharpened the awareness of weaknesses in UCL's management, administrative and financial organisation and of the need for change.

(d) Changes inter alia in financial and general management (especially budgetary control), in the efficiency and cost effectiveness of undergraduate teaching (with a long term reduction in staff numbers through natural turnover), in how we represent ourselves to prospective overseas students and how we organise for research and infrastructure provision are seen to be necessary.

(e) Merger is not seen as a prerequisite for achieving these desirable changes and a consequential improved financial position. UCL Biomedicine would expect to see such changes implemented from within UCL under the direction of the present Provost and a successor equally committed to the future development of the College. Co-operation in many areas with IC should be encouraged.

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### **Issues on merger for Library Services**

(<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/development/merger/mbsg/Download/library18oct.pdf>)

**"Opportunities** : Move to a campus-based approach for the location of stock and services. Science and Technology can be run from Kensington. Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences can be run from Gower Street. (But this may not be as straightforward as this if the location of academic activity is not this neatly rationalised). Medicine is problematic and will be dispersed . . . "

***This appears to be saying that, unless all science is absent from Gower Street, some scientists will have their library miles away in South Kensington. No comment is needed on an idea quite as barmy as this one***

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***Meeting of the Advisory Team for Teaching and Learning, Graduate School, (8 November 2002)***

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/development/merger/mbsg/Download/teach-minutes8nov.pdf>

The final paragraph states:

"The Group identified a considerable range and scale of difficulties, but very few real benefits; those that have been identified are strongly conditional on other circumstances."

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## The Press Page

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### The student website [SaveUCL.net](http://SaveUCL.net)

Well worth a visit, especially the 'Ask Jeremy Bentham' page. Much funnier than this site.

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### Some press coverage

A *Nature* editorial [Looking after number one](#) (*Nature* 419, 763. 2002). *Nature* has provided free access to the pdf file.

"Both Sykes and Roberts have experiences that suggest that big is not always beautiful"

"UCL and Imperial College have distinct identities that inspire strong loyalty among students, staff and alumni"

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### Simon Jenkins in the Evening Standard: *Spare London's Colleges* [Evening Standard \(31-Oct-02\)](#)

*Some quotations.*

"Imperial College is planning to swallow UCL and create a 'super-versity'. This is a businessman's ambition run mad"

" The strategy is that Imperial cuts out UCL's dead wood and pockets its research grants. For Sir Richard a university is a drugs company. He could call his new empire Glob-U or Unron. The rationale is set out in his message to Imperial's staff, written entirely in consultancy Birtspak.

It is stuffed with globalisation, critical masses, broad profiles and worldwide solutions. Apart from an explicit desire to cut out competition common to all monopolists, the only apparent reason for the merger is the beauty of sheer bigness. The new "super-versity" would have a research budget of £406 million, which is bigger than that of Oxford and Cambridge combined.

To which I say, so what? On the Sykes thesis, London is riddled with intolerable diversity. It must be absurd to have a National Gallery and a Tate, a Royal Opera and a Coliseum, a Selfridges and a Harrods, a Camden and a Westminster, a Times and an Independent. Merge them."

**"London Universities are like German palatinates.. Thousands of serfs can change owners at the whim of a prince or the turn of a hand of cards"**

### Derek Roberts' reply (4-Nov-02)

"Simon Jenkins is entitled to his opinions about the merits of merger between UCL and IC, but Londoners are entitled to the facts. Rather than a takeover, discussions between UCL and Imperial are on the basis of a merger between equals"

*Few hard facts that have been given to UCL staff (never mind Londoners in general). And the experience some of those who are doing the actual negotiations does not bear out the contention of equality.*

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**Alan Ryan (Warden of New College Oxford). *Why the University merger won't work* ([Independent 31-Oct-02](#))**

"The conventional wisdom in business schools is that mergers are bad for shareholders and employees."

"So why do they happen? Received wisdom is that they gratify the egos of the chief executive officers."

"The notion that doubling their deficits and tripling their managerial problems will make them superior to Oxbridge is implausible."

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**Jeremy Warner (*Independent 9-Nov-02*) [The Independent UCL/IC](#)**

*Some quotations.*

"Few big corporate mergers are an unambiguous success. The great bulk of them destroy more value than they create and some end up completely demolishing what had previously been two perfectly healthy, competing companies. The only obvious beneficiaries are the investment bankers who concoct these things. By the time the balloon goes up, they've long since pocketed the fee and moved on to other things. If they play their cards right, they'll earn the fee all over again untangling the mess they helped to create.

That mergers continue to get done at all is a triumph of hope over experience. But then deal making is a lot more fun than just running the business, and there is never any shortage of corporate egos only too eager and willing to give it a whirl."

"Jeremy Bentham, the 19th century utilitarian and the spiritual father of UCL, was a great iconoclast but he would have hated the destructiveness of most modern mergers. Experience of them is overwhelmingly that they don't work. Why should we believe this one will?"

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**Steve Jones (*Daily Telegraph 14-Nov-02*) *View from the lab: dinosaurs, academics and the case against ginger biscuits* [Daily Telegraph](#)**

*A quotation.*

"New Gargantua will need to rebrand (although we who speak from the pants of the beast still rather like the label used against our founder, Jeremy Bentham; "That Godless Institution in Gower Street"). A title that accepts both UCL's tea-bibbing history and IC's new-found megalomania might be the "Grand, Imperial and Nebulous Giant Establishment, the Roberts-Bentham Institute of South Kensington, United in Torment" - or ginger biscuit for short (the substitution of C for K comes from Latin, the language of academic discourse).

The new identity provides both a coat of arms (gold, two scaly lezards combatant vert) and a motto, Iunctus in Tormentum. Others may prefer Consignia College, or Enron University. Most of us, though, just wish we could get back to diplodocus's day, in the Jurassic, 70 million years before Tyrannosaurus rex appeared on Earth."

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