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Professor Mary O'Kane
and the Australian Universities Accord Panel
via the Department of Education

Re: Melbourne School of Government Submission to Australian Universities Accord Panel Discussion Paper Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Universities Accord Panel Discussion Paper Consultation. This submission is made by academic staff in the Melbourne School of Government, the University of Melbourne, Professor John Howe and Dr Sophie Lamond.

Melbourne School of Government

Melbourne School of Government is an interdisciplinary school within the Melbourne Law School at the University of Melbourne conducting innovative education, research and engagement activities addressing key contemporary policy and governance challenges. Our research examines the implications of economic, legal, social, political, and cultural trends for the content and conduct of public policy.

Over the past several years we have conducted research into higher education institutions, which includes reflexive research on the policies, practices and operations of our own institution. One of the themes central to this research is the role and potential of universities as anchor institutions. This complements our research program in social procurement which examines how governments as well as public and private organisations can align their operations with socially oriented policy goals and progress towards broader social and environmental outcomes.

Submission Summary

The panel has requested bold recommendations for the future of all aspects of the Australian higher education system in order that it may meet Australia's current and future priorities and needs. In response to this call our submission outlines our recommendation that the AUA seriously engage with strategic policy and material support to enable anchor institution models and projects to thrive in Australian higher education settings. Our submission includes:

1. A brief overview of the anchor institution concept and benefits seen in existing applications of these models globally.
2. Specific examples of anchor institution policies and projects developed by universities in the UK and the USA
3. Links between our proposal and other stakeholders' submissions to the *AUA Consultation on the Accord Terms of Reference*

4. Recommendations for the development of the Australian Universities Accord

The potential for the higher education sector's engagement with anchor institution models, policies and projects addresses several key areas outlined in the *AUA Review Terms of Reference*, with specific alignment to the key areas and sub-points included below:

Key Area 1. Meeting Australia's knowledge and skills needs, now and in the future
▸ Enhance the delivery of quality education that meets the needs of students across all stages of lifelong learning and develops the skills needed now, and in the future.

Key Area 2. Access and opportunity
▸ Improve access to higher education, across teaching, learning and research.

Key Area 3. Investment and affordability

▸ Explore funding and contribution arrangements that deliver equity, access, quality and longer-term investments to meet priorities in teaching, research, workforce and infrastructure.

Key Area 4. Governance, accountability, and community

▸ Explore the contribution that higher education makes to the Australian community.

Key Area 7. Delivering new knowledge, innovation, and capability

▸ Support a system of university research that delivers for Australia, securing the future of the Australian research pipeline, from basic and translational research to commercialisation. In doing so, the Accord will explore relevant initiatives and other opportunities and to further boost collaboration.

Anchor Institutions and Their Benefits

Anchor institutions use their place-based power as well as their scale and economic output to support novel modes of community economic development. The term refers to organisations which are unlikely to relocate, and which have an important presence in their particular place by being largescale employers; large, or the largest purchasers of goods and services in a locality; and controlling large areas of land and/or having relatively fixed assets.

They are tied to the place in which they operate by their mission, histories, physical assets, and local relationships. Examples of organisations that might be anchor institutions include local government operations, universities, hospitals, large local businesses as well as large, locally oriented charitable institutions.

Anchor missions are deliberate decisions by institutions to use their power to benefit their local communities, especially historically disadvantaged groups.

Anchor institution models have emerged as a response to local, often post-industrial, economies which have impacted by broader trends which have displaced local manufacturing and locally owned and run businesses and services.

In practice anchor institutions and their policies and programs take many forms, on top of the strategies above in higher education these approaches might also include:

- ▹ Service-learning and community-based teaching and learning initiatives
- ▹ University-community partnerships
- ▹ Place-based community engagement programs
- ▹ Providing community access to shared infrastructure and services
- ▹ Using the university's convening power to bring community members together and facilitate skill sharing and capacity building

Anchor university models are similar to Civic University models, and at times these terms are used interchangeably. Both describe universities using intentional place-based strategies for community engagement and community development. Two other key concepts are helpful in understanding anchor-based strategies:

Civic Agreements or Community Benefit Agreements - strategies rooted in robust and shared analysis of local needs and opportunities, co-created with local partners

Community Wealth Building – orienting economic activity so wealth is held and recirculated within the local community and used for local and regional development. This intends to reorient economic activity towards the public sector, social sectors and local business and enterprise.

Exemplar Anchor Institution Initiatives

Emory University and the Working Farms Fund

The Working Farms Fund is a collaboration between Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Conservation Fund.[1] The university is tackling the loss of viable farmland in city-regions and land access through a novel sustainable finance model by which the institution is acquiring productive farming land. The land is then leased back to farmers from groups historically marginalized from land ownership with a five to ten-year pathway to ownership. To further support the viability of the farm-based businesses Emory has committed to using its own procurement power to purchase produce for its food and dining operations. Additionally, Emory researchers and students work with the farmers to conduct critical research.

Case Western Reserve University and the Greater University Circle Initiative

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[1] 'From Georgia Farms to Emory Tables', *Emory News,* 13/11/2019, https://news.emory.edu/features/2019/11/farms-to-tables/index.html

The Greater University Circle Economic Inclusion (GUCI) Initiative[2] in Cleveland Ohio brings together <u>Case Western Reserve University</u>, University Hospitals the Cleveland Clinic to use their collective economic power to meet strategic policy aims. Collectively these institutions spend $3.6 billion on goods and services per year. Through their commitments to anchor institution Strategies 38% of that budget is now spent on goods and services procured from the city and regional community. They have supported this strategy with targeted employment and training programs; social and health equity programs as well as support for The Evergreen Cooperatives which provide the institutions with goods and services while increasing financial security and job security for local residents.

University of Pennsylvania Netter Center for Community Partnerships and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

The <u>University of Pennsylvania</u> Netter Center for Community Partnerships[3] is the University's primary vehicle for advancing civic and community engagement. It brings together the resources and assets of both the University and the wider community to help solve universal problems such as poverty, health inequities, environmental sustainability, and inadequate, unequal education as they are manifested in the University's local geographic area of West Philadelphia and Philadelphia at large. The Netter Center develops and helps implement democratic, mutually transformative, place-based partnerships between Penn and West Philadelphia that advance research, teaching, learning, practice, and service and improve the quality of life on campus and in the community.

The Netter Center supports the Healthier Together Initiative by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to tackle social determinants of health as a path to improving the health of children. Through the collaboration resources are provided through after-school programs to children experiencing grief and training provided to adults to provide trauma-informed emotional support

Anchor institutions and community engagement as priorities for Australian universities

The *Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper* put forward the following two questions:

▸ How should the contribution of higher education providers to community engagement be encouraged and promoted?

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[2] Eckardt, RE, 'Cleveland's Greater University Circle Initiative: An Anchor-Based Strategy for Change', *Expert Insights*, 27/10/2016, https://buildhealthyplaces.org/sharing-knowledge/blogs/expert-insights/clevelands-greater-university-circle-initiative-anchor-based-strategy-change/
[3] University-Community Partnerships, Democracy, Inclusion, & Social Change Here and Across the Globe, *Netter Center*, ND. http://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/

> ‣ Where providers make a distinctive contribution to national objectives through community, location-based or specialised economic development, how should this contribution be identified and invested in?

We suggest that Australia engage with international practice on anchor institution strategies and recognition of anchor institution status as one way to identify, encourage and promote community engagement.

Universities' critical role in their communities was a frequent theme across submissions to the *AUA Review Terms of Reference*. We note that submissions from Engagement Australia, Southern Cross University, The University of Wollongong, James Cook University and RMIT specifically mentioned anchor institutions and anchor strategies, and several others included reference to the importance of civic responsibility, community engagement, and community service. From these submissions we note that higher education providers see their missions as extending far beyond teaching and research, with many of their ideas aligning with anchor institutions tenets. From across the submissions, we noted the following critical ideas:

Universities are critical to local and regional economies

- ‣ Universities play and important role in their local and regional economies, including as key contributors to innovation districts and other novel place-based programs
- ‣ Universities are major employers in local and regional economies
- ‣ Universities are core drivers of research and innovation and are central to directing this knowledge capital towards local/place-based industries
- ‣ Universities support enterprise and business development, both through teaching and research and through the provision of resources, convening power and skills education to local stakeholders
- ‣ Above and beyond their core teaching, universities support human capital development, provide professional development and lifelong education especially critical to capacity building in local communities

Universities are critical to local and regional resilience

- ‣ Universities play a key role in community resilience, including through the provision of infrastructure and services and by providing crucial support in response to emergencies
- ‣ Universities are often hubs for providing community services, and for training the future workforce to provide community services
- ‣ Universities are critical contributors to the cultural and social life of their communities

Community engaged research is critical to democratising research

- ‣ Universities can provide extensive benefits to communities through respectful, equitable, accountable, co-designed research
- ‣ Community engaged research supports improved student experience, strengthens bonds between campuses and communities and contributes to capacity building across sectors
- ‣ Well-designed and resourced community engaged research democratises research and drives transformations to tackle critical social and environmental issues

Despite institutions understanding these many benefits the lack of support was noted across multiple of submissions. Many of the projects described in the submissions and examples above of anchor institution projects fall between the cracks of current university funding models. For universities to successfully engage with and serve their staff, students and broader communities there must be coordinated, visionary governance and leadership. This requires sector-wide policies and support for community-oriented impact as a core part of the higher education sector's mission and a move away from the narrow framing of research impact through the lens of university-industry profit-generating partnerships.

The *Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper* included the following question: 'How should an Accord help Australia increase collaboration between industry, government and universities to solve big challenges?' We suggest that this be re-framed as 'How should an Accord help Australia increase collaboration between universities, community groups, civil society organisations, non-government organisations, industry and government to solve big challenges?'

This is quickly followed by a further question, 'How should Australia leverage its research capacity overall and use it more effectively to develop new capabilities and solve wicked problems?' an answer is, at least in part, found in expanding the field of those we are engaging with through our research. We are not going to be able to solve big challenges without the input and collaboration of those who are most impacted by these challenges.

Further, long-term, place-based, and impactful research partnerships and policy innovations are difficult in an environment where insecure work is an ever-present issue. Too often innovative ideas are driven by individual champions within institutions. As these champions leave the higher education sector progress is lost and intergenerational knowledge transfer fractured. Secure jobs in higher education are critical not only for the wellbeing of individual staff but important for better research and teaching outcomes, and for stable, long-term community-based partnerships and projects.

Recommendations

Based on the issues set out in our submission, we make the following recommendations for consideration in the development of the Australian Universities Accord

Recommendation 1:

The University Accord must understand the mission of higher education institutions as more than just teaching and research. We recommend the Accord creates a visionary framework that recognises research, teaching and the many critical contributions universities make to their communities and regions.

Recommendation 2:

Drive sector-wide engagement with anchor institution strategies, including engagement with international best-practice to enable and incentivise university operations towards developing local and regional community wealth building. Recognising that anchor institutions are central contributors in both urban, regional and rural settings.

Provide specific funding support for research, projects and infrastructure development which supports anchor institution engagement within higher education institutions.

Recommendation 3:

Expand the current focus of policy and funding beyond a narrow view of university-industry collaboration and commercialisation to include broader understandings of university-community collaborations for research impact.

Provide predictable, stable funding, policy frameworks and support for initiatives to encourage collaboration between universities, communities, community-embedded businesses and organisations to support research and real-world solutions to complex social, economic and environmental challenges.

Recommendation 4:

Create structures through which small and medium-sized enterprises, social enterprises and indigenous-owned enterprises are able to collaborate with universities, benefit from collaborative research endeavours, and work with universities to supply goods and services.

Recommendation 5:

Create a stable, securely-employed workforce that can develop visionary medium and long-term research and community projects. Support universities to build the capacity of academic and professional staff to lead meaningful and equitable community engaged research, programming and teaching.

Recommendation 6:

Support models of community-service learning as part of Australia's higher education curriculum without placing an unfair burden on students to engage in placements for no compensation, disadvantaging low-income students and increasing existing cost-of-living pressures.

Thank you for consideration of our submission. Correspondence may be directed to Dr Sophie Lamond via sophie.lamond@unimelb.edu.au or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮