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Regional Board Report

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

Subject: Principal's Report	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☒
Prepared by: P Smith, Principal & CEO	**Date of Committee:** 09 March 2023

Purpose: To update the Regional Board on matters of interest not reported elsewhere

Executive Summary:
Key items:
This report provides the Board with updates, including the following: -

Rural and Landbased pathfinder Project
Innovation Vouchers
Awards and Accreditation
Immersive Classroom
Curriculum Planning
Turing Project
"Think the Unthinkable"
Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit
National Bargaining on Pay and Conditions
Job Evaluation
Key Performance Indicators
External Engagement

Questions that Members should ask themselves when reading the paper:

n/a

Linked to Strategic Ambition(s):
Choose an item.
n/a
Choose an item.

Performance Measures:
Choose an item.
n/a
Choose an item.

Linked to Strategic Risk Register:
Choose an item.
n/a
Choose an item.

Recommendation: Paper is for information	
Previous Committee Approvals: n/a	
For publication ☒	**Not for publication** ☐ **If not, why not?**

BORDERS COLLEGE
REGIONAL BOARD

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09 March 2023

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper is summarises College activities not reported elsewhere, as well as items which may be of general interest to the Board, including external engagements undertaken by the Principal and CEO. It also provides an update on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

2.0 MATTERS OF INTEREST

2.1 Rural and Landbased Pathfinder Project

2.1.1 The College has now completed Stage 1 of the Landbased Pathfinder project with Scottish Funding Council (SFC), South of Scotland Enterprise and SRUC, delivering a joint prospectus in Rural and Landbased Studies for the South of Scotland. This will ensure clear, achievable learner pathways for students and has already realised some positive curriculum developments to enhance articulation, retain talent and address workforce planning for the landbased sector in the South of Scotland.

2.2 Innovation Vouchers

2.2.1 Following award of our first Innovation Voucher for work with Roxburgh Estates to develop drawings and scale models of historic artefacts, we now have a further three underway or scoping: -

- Craig Farms Ltd – development of drawings for a scalable hydro-electric system;
- Thorburn Group – reverse engineering of cattle crushers; and
- Fleming Homes – project to be decided but related to 3D modelling of property portfolio.

2.3 Awards and Accreditation

2.3.1 The annual College Development Network (CDN) awards took place on 25 November 2022. Evelyn Chelley, Lecturer in Health and Social Care won the category for Colleague of the Year and the College was commended in the category for Sustainability Action.

2.3.2 As a result of our win in the UK and Ireland awards, the College has been shortlisted in the International Green Gown Awards for Climate Action 2030.

2.3.3 On 14 February 2023, we were confirmed as a Great Place to Work for Wellbeing, demonstrating our commitment to supporting and developing our staff.

2.3.4 The College also recently achieved STEM Assured status, providing independent, industry-backed validation of our science, technology, engineering and mathematics provision. Particular mention must go to Jimmy Louth, Curriculum and Learning Manager – STEM for taking the lead in what was a rigorous process

2.4 Immersive Classroom

2.4.1 Our Immersive Classroom has now been completed, offering our staff and students the opportunity to experience state-of-the-art technology as part of their teaching and learning. Our staff teams will be able to develop and deliver their own materials in this virtual environment. We are hoping that Jamie Hepburn MSP. Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science will be available to formally open the facility later in the spring.

2.5 Curriculum Planning

2.5.1 The Executive Team, Director of MIS and E-Learning, and the Assistant Principals have now met with all Curriculum and Learning Managers to consider options for increases, decreases or changes to curriculum delivery in 2023-24, along with resourcing requirements. This will inform our budget planning for the forthcoming but will be dependent on resource allocations from SFC.

2.6 Turing Project

2.6.1 We have now confirmed offers to ten students who, along with two staff, will visit Centennial College in Toronto, Canada to enhance their learning experience and develop global citizenship skills as part of the UK Government-funded Turing Scheme.

2.7 "Think the Unthinkable"

2.7.1 As discussed at previous Board sessions, work has been continuing across the college sector to "think the unthinkable" considering what fundamental changes may be required to the sector as a result of unsustainable funding levels. The fourth session took place on 25 February 2023, with priorities now agreed to inform proposals to the Scottish Government. A verbal update on those themes will be given at the meeting.

2.8 Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit

2.8.1 The College's annual engagement took place on 17 November 2022. We were very pleased with the final report outcomes, which will be presented to the Board by Lead Inspector Margaret Rose Livingstone.

2.9 National Bargaining on Pay and Conditions

2.9.1 There has been little change since my last report. Both teaching and support staff trades unions have submitted pay claims amounting to a flat rate increase of £5,000 per annum for all staff. Support unions have also requested a range of changes to terms and conditions. The increase alone

would generate a cost of around £1M to Borders College and over £50M to the sector.

2.9.2 Both groups have been offered a 2% increase, which was the level of funding available to the sector as part of the funding announcement and financial forecasting exercise. The staff side has advised that this is unacceptable. Teaching unions are currently undertaking an indicative ballot to support strike action; we understand support staff unions are expected to follow suit. Both have been advised that, without additional funding, any increase to the offer is unaffordable.

2.10 Job Evaluation

2.10.1 Colleges were issued with the rank order outcomes from the scoring exercise in late December; however, a number of issues with the data across the sector have been highlighted. Urgent discussions are ongoing with staff side representatives to agree a way forward that will deliver desired outcomes and protect the funding set aside by SFC for the project.

3.0 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

3.1 This section provides an update to the performance indicators provided to Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee on 16 February 2023.

3.2 As at 01 March 2023, the College has seen a decrease in early withdrawal rates in all modes and levels based on the same time last year. It is worth noting that, with the exception of FTHE, these figures will fluctuate until the end of the academic session due to new provision commencing between now and July. However, the improvement against this time last year is a positive indicator to achieving a lower early withdrawal rate overall than in 2021-22. This is shown in **Table 1**, below: -

Table 1: Early Withdrawal in comparison to same point last year

Early Withdrawal				
Mode	**Level**	**21/22 at 01 Mar 2022**	**22/23 at 01 Mar 2023**	**Variance**
FT	FE	7.4%	5.9%	-1.5%
PT	FE	3.3%	3.1%	-0.2%
FT	HE	3.0%	3.4%	-0.2%
PT	HE	0.5%	0.0%	-0.5%

3.3 Further withdrawal rates have also decreased in most areas based on the same time last year; however, there has been an increase in HEFT with a

3.5% difference compared to the same time last year. This is shown in **Table 2,** below: -

Table 2: Further Withdrawal in comparison to same point last year

Further Withdrawal				
Mode	**Level**	**21/22 at 01 Mar 2022**	**22/23 at 01 Mar 2023**	**Variance**
FT	FE	13.9%	13.8%	-0.1%
PT	FE	5.7%	4.3%	-1.4%
FT	HE	10.1%	13.6%	3.5%
PT	HE	4.5%	3.2%	-1.5%

3.4 The impact of current withdrawal rates on overall learner success is relatively low risk at present, with the best possible learner success rates significantly higher than our Evaluation Report & Enhancement Plan (EREP) Targets, as shown in **Table 3,** below: -

Table 3: Learner Success against Evaluation Report & Enhancement Plan Targets

Learner Success				
Mode	**Level**	**EREP Target**	**Best Possible as at 01 Mar 2023**	**Risk Indicator**
FT	FE	67%	80.2%	
PT	FE	80%	92.6%	
FT	HE	73%	83.0%	
PT	HE	88%	96.8%	

3.5 As at 01 Mar 2023 we have exceeded our overall credit target of 26546 by 326 credits, and expect to end the year with a surplus of 675 credits. This is largely due to the increase in demand for Foundation Apprenticeship places; however, we have also seen an increase in demand for places in Landbased, Digital and Engineering subjects. See **Table 4,** below: -

Table 4: Current Credit Position

3.6 Applications for full time courses starting in 2023-24 opened on 01 December 2022 and, as at 01 March 2023, we have seen an increase in applications overall in comparison to the same time last year. Whilst full time FE applications are marginally down by 6 applications, full time HE applications are up by 56 applications. See **Table 5,** below: -

Table 5: Applications Received Compared to Same Date in Previous Year (01 Mar 23)

3.7 On reviewing the monthly performance, FEFT applications received in December were down on the same time last year, with HEFT applications remaining a similar level. However, in January we received 20% more FEFT applications than the previous year, and 17% more HEFT applications than the previous year.

3.8 Overall, we are in a strong position to post significantly improved results for 2022-23 in comparison to 2021-22, and to exceed application and enrolment targets for 2023-24. This must be tempered by the expectation that SFC are extremely unlikely to grant any additional funding in 2022-23 and there

remains the possibility that, along with the rest of the sector, our overall activity target for 2023-24 will be reduced.

4.0 EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Since my last report, external engagements have included: -

- With Vice Principal – Student Experience, met with Scottish Borders Council senior Education staff to discuss future provision for schools in the Scottish Borders.
- With College Executive Team, held a joint discussion With West Lothian College Executive Team to consider areas of potential collaboration
- Welcomed Rachael Hamilton MSP, to our Galashiels Campus to discuss the pressures and opportunities facing the College and further education in Scotland. Ms Hamilton also viewed our new Immersive Classroom and was impressed by the sector-leading technology now available to our students and staff.
- Along with other members of the Senior Leadership Team, attended three Borderlands Place Programme Engagement Workshops, ensuring the impact of further education is properly articulated in the process.

4.2 Upcoming engagements include: -

- Visit of Emma Harper MSP to Hawick Campus.
- Visit of Craig Hoy MSP to Hawick Campus.
- Meeting with John Lamont MP at Scottish Borders Campus.
- Launch of Immersive Classroom, as noted above.
- Engagement with the South of Scotland Visitor Economy Week (8th March to 14th of March) which will showcase qualifications and opportunities available.
- Planning to hold a Sustainability Summit in May or June, to be attended by public and private sector regional partners and elected representatives. Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Climate Change and Biodiversity had been invited to deliver the keynote address.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications:

No specific financial implications.

5.2 Learner Implications:

As noted above.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment:

No specific implications.

5.4 Staff Implications:

As noted above.

5.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications:

As noted above.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Report is for information.

P D Smith

Principal & CEO

02 March 2023