

# Professor Graham Zellick

Professor Graham Zellick took over as Vice-Chancellor of the University of London on 1 September. He spoke to Julian Harris about what his role entails, and how he intends to pursue his objectives.



The Government's decision to charge students £1,000 per year in tuition fees to help resolve Britain's financial crisis in higher education poses new challenges for all those involved with running colleges and universities. For Professor Zellick the task of trying to foresee the consequences of the measures being introduced in the wake of Sir Ron Dearing's inquiry is complicated by the unusual nature of his position.

London University does not operate a collegiate system on Oxford or Cambridge lines, where the colleges and the university perform different but complementary roles, and no student could survive without being involved with both levels of each institution. The major London colleges, such as King's and UCL, and indeed the smaller specialist colleges (such as the School of Pharmacy and Wye College) can be regarded as individual universities with minimal dependence on the central body. Other smaller educational centres – such as those within the School of Advanced Study – are in a different constitutional position and the Vice-Chancellor has the same responsibility for them as, for example, the Provost of UCL would have for a department within the college.

Generally speaking, Professor Zellick's role as Vice-Chancellor is to act as a facilitator and to offer assistance to the colleges as required, without encroaching

on their independence – something he is well equipped to do given that he is – until next year – Principal of Queen Mary and Westfield College.

As far as funding is concerned, the new Vice-Chancellor is in no doubt that unless a new source of income for higher education is identified and begins to flow in the near future 'we will go into a period of devastating decline from which it will be extremely difficult to recover'. He can illustrate this by drawing on his knowledge of QMW's current financial position.

*'The situation will differ from college to college, but at QMW ... we are facing an accumulated deficit of £7m unless something radical is done within the next three years or so. To make economies that would reduce expenditure by that amount in a short period of time – coming on top of so-called efficiency measures taken over the last few years – would involve draconian reductions in activities of all kinds.'*

Underfunding will have other consequences, as the new Vice Chancellor points out.

*'Overseas students play an important role not only by paying their own way but by helping other students through supporting the system. If the reputation, as well as the substance, of higher education declines – as it will if funding is not improved – then it will not be very long before overseas students stop*


*coming. There is plenty of competition from universities in Australia, Canada and the USA.'*

*'In my opinion it is a good test of the quality of a particular college or university to see whether people from far away will pay to attend it. If overseas students do not come to the UK then our universities will cease to be international – and if they are not international they are not universities.'*

Professor Zellick does not think that the new requirements will result in an increase in the numbers of able students being forced to drop out by a shortage of money.

*'The scheme will take account of people's individual financial circumstances, and the essence of it is that money will be paid back subsequently – only after graduation, and only after earnings have reached a certain level. Also, students coming into higher education should be highly motivated and not easily put off. Provided that a proper system is in operation which does not deny access on financial grounds, if individuals are prompted to ask themselves whether they really want several years of higher education, then I do not think that is a bad thing.'*

In addition to addressing internal management matters, such as the running of the university estate, Professor Zellick would like to help London University develop a greater external influence.

*'I would like to try and project the University and its constituent parts. We are a very powerful institution, and I believe that we need to make ourselves heard more effectively.'* 

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Educated at Cambridge and Stanford. Became Professor of Public Law at Queen Mary College at the age of 34, serving as Dean of the Faculty of Laws and Head of Department. Also Dean of the Faculty of Laws of the University. Chaired the Committee of Heads of University Law Schools and was a member of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committees on Legal Aid and Legal Education before becoming Principal of Queen Mary and Westfield College in 1990 and Deputy-Vice Chancellor of the University in 1994. Graham Zellick is a barrister of the Middle Temple.

## Julian Harris

Senior Information Officer