UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**An Inquiry into the Suitability of Organisational Change Theory to Embed
Optimum Change Process and Academic Acceptance at a UK University**

by

Elsbeth Caswell

Volume Three
Senior Management Transcripts

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education

March 2007

LIST OF CONTENTS

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TRANSCRIPTS

GUIDANCE NOTES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GUIDANCE NOTES

Please note that the reporting format used for the transcripts uses italics for the interviewer's questions and regular type for the respondents' answers.

Each respondent is identified by a numerical code with the letter A for academic and the letters SM for senior management.

Also, to further ensure anonymity, certain identifying words or phrases have been removed and replaced by either the letter X or an explanatory phrase in brackets.

A line of dots signifies either that the respondent paused and lost their train of thought or speech has been removed that was not part of the interview, such as a phone conversation or an aside to another colleague.

Senior Management Interview Number 1

The first thing I'm talking about really is talking about the drivers for change in the sector as a whole. How do you perceive, or do you perceive, the Higher Education sector to be changing in the UK, (SM1)?

Yes.

Can you talk a little bit about what are the changes that you've experienced?

I suppose there are a number of changes. I mean there's obviously change in response to government policy and related to that changes in market forces and perceptions of both industry and students and parents I suppose.

So you think it's not only market changes but sort of stakeholder changes as well?

Yeah.

Do you think these are changes within the UK or do you perceive any globalisation issues?

I think the main changes that we're dealing with are changes to do with the UK rather than global issues. Higher Education is very different in many other countries. It's funded in very different ways. Attitudes to it are very different in other countries. By co-incidence I was looking at a website for an American university yesterday and it's staggering to see that their fund-raising activity for 2002/2003 generated 1.2 billion US dollars. It's a different world.

How do you feel overall about the process of change in Higher Education, mostly positive, mostly negative, bit of both?

Mainly positive, but I suppose that reflects where we've come from, particularly as a post '92 institution where the issues are perhaps are in even sharper focus.

If we then come into SU, how do you perceive the work environment at SU to be changing?

For whom?

For the academics.

I think the demands are different, the demands are changing. Certainly my perception is they're changing for those that have been at (previous name of university) and whatever it was before then. And for a lot of people that is making significant change to the way they work and what they do.

Anything in particular that you think the academics find changing?

Well I think they find it challenging the move from a focus on teaching to a focus on teaching, research, enterprise and those sorts of things.

Do you think the academics believe these changes are within the university or do you think the academics perceive these changes as being driven from outside the university?

I think it's a mixture of both. I think they can see there are drivers from the outside but there are also drivers within this university particularly, because of the position it finds itself in, in terms of the fact that it tends to be very focused on teaching, even more than

many other post 1992 universities. So it needs to make significant progress. There's a long way to go and it needs to be done sooner rather than later.

How would you describe your relationship with the academics, (SM1), sort of a father figure, one of the team, management leader?

I would ... certainly not father figure ... I think leader AND one of the team.

50/50

Yeah because I'm very involved in the day to day business of the School. I consciously continue to teach. I do all the things that people within the School would be expected to do as well as the Head of School role. So I'm teaching, I'm supervising PhD students, I'm doing research, I'm bidding for research, doing enterprise, I'm doing (X) and that's not from a sort of 'I can do everything' perspective but more of a sense of being part of an academic community.

That's what you perceive your role to be?

Yeah.

OK. Do you believe that the recent strategic changes at SU have impacted in any way on your relationship with the academics?

Yeah, I think the need to move things on quickly creates some tensions because of course there are university agendas that we need to move and move fairly quickly and some staff need time to understand the moves, what we see as being forward. And that does create some tension in as much as we can't afford to spend a lot of time doing these things. We need to move forward.

Do you think these recent changes have impacted on academics' relationships with each other?

I don't know, to be honest.

Fair answer. Some theorists believe that change is a burden for people. Do you think change can be a burden for people?

It depends on your perspective. I won't say appreciated, it's whether or not you welcome change or whether you see it as a threat and I suppose the challenge is for people to see change as a good thing. Certainly I've worked in environments where change is constant, and then it becomes less threatening and is seen generally as a good thing, doing things differently, doing things better, and moving forward. I think there is quite a degree of inertia in the university. There are a lot of people who have been here for a very long time and remember a different world which was a very, I suppose, comfortable world that they enjoyed. They're not very keen on change in the light of that. There are also people at various stages in their careers. So I think change is not always welcome.

When I asked the academics what recent strategic changes to policy or process that they were experiencing, what do you think they said? What do you think the academics have noticed is happening, changing around them?

I expect they would say things like, although I don't necessarily agree, increased workload, more demands being put on them and those sorts of things.

What do you think their reaction is to that?

I don't think all of them welcome it. Some of the younger staff are much more positively disposed to the sorts of things we're expecting of academics, I mean the university.

Those, as I say, who've been here a long time find it, maybe find it threatening, maybe find it change that they don't welcome and they feel they don't need.

Well theory says that academics react to change in one of four ways. They either fight it, or they run away from it or they try to interpret it to their own rules or they just get on with it. Do you think that's applicable to SU, those four behavioral patterns?

Yeah I think so. There are groups of staff in each.

Any more so than any others, between the fight, the re-interpret, the runaway and the get on with it?

I think I'd probably say the second and third mainly.

Is there a best practice do you think from the university management perspective, is there a best practice for academic reaction to change? For instance is re-interpreting the rules?

From who's perspective?

From the academic's perspective. The academics are reacting to these changes as we're discussing all these different ways. Is there a best practice? Is there a way that you think the management would prefer them to react to these changes?

Well I suppose the obvious thing is they would prefer them to welcome change. But that's not always possible.

No. So is there a fall back position?

I think the fall back position is not to re-interpret on their own. It is to work with Senior Management to implement change in a way that is effective and meaningful for all groups. But I think it's always dangerous when people interpret change in their own way because the way I was reading that is that you get some colleagues who interpret something in a particular way which means they go back to the way they were before which is not always helpful.

When I talked to academics about recent strategic change, big changes in policy or processes here at the university, I asked them whether they thought it was embedded change or just surface change. How do you think they reacted to that? Do you think they see it as embedded change or just sort of today's fashion?

Well I think it's not embedded until it's happened and I think we're still working on that. I think there maybe some ... until fairly recently I think that some of our colleagues have seen these changes as surface change because there have been, as I understand it, a number of changes in direction over a period of years. So I suppose there is an element of if I keep my head down long enough it will go away. I suspect that, now the same things have been said for maybe two or three years, people are being to realise that it is change that is going to have to take place and it will eventually become embedded. But it's not there now.

OK. Do you think the best technique for embedding change is to basically stay the course?

How do you mean, for managers to stay the course or for people to stay the course?

Yes, to get academics to accept a change and to say that this is embedded and it's now sort of changed their attitude and changed their behaviour? Is it then staying the course rather than just chopping and changing?

No. Well I think it's more about being clear about what is required and being consisted in stating that and that being reflected in wider strategies across the university. Such that the goals are clear, not at every point but frequently. I think ... that's why I say I think increasingly people are coming to accept that because there are policies across the university that are interpreted within the context of strategic change. Things to do with workload planning, staffing, resourcing, appraisals and things like that. I think that people come to recognise that this is change that will eventually become embedded because it permeates the activities of the university.

Do you think that accepting change is part of the job of an academic?

I think its taking part in change is part of the role of anybody in an organisation, not particularly academic. One might argue that the role of an academic is to challenge and to debate and discuss and that can always be fun too.

If you look at change at SU sort of as a process, (SM1), where do you think ... are we at the beginning of a change process, in the middle of a change process, at the end of this change process?

We're still at the beginning of it.

You think we're still at the beginning, more sort of big changes to come?

No. I think the changes have been identified. They're just not fully worked through yet.

OK. Organisational change theory divides change into two categories; top-down, OK, management change, and organic, bottom-up by academics. How do you think the change process works at in SU?

I think in recent times I think it's probably been more a case of top-down with regard to things like research, enterprise and so on because again it's top-down partly because of external government and sort of national policy.

How do you feel about top-down?

I think there are times when top-down change is necessary. I think it needs to be consultative, but there are times in organisations when change has to happen and it has to be moved on or things have to be moved on.

Do you personally perceive any negative points to top-down change from an academic perspective?

Yeah I think academics sometimes find it difficult to see why change is necessary. They have been trained to think in particular ways and it is quite natural for academics to seek to challenge, to take up different positions and so on. But that's the root with people that we work with.

Where do you think the academics perceive the change driver to come from? Do you think they think it's top-down as well?

I think they probably do, yes.

In your opinion do the academics contribute to change process?

In what way? In terms of devising change or implementing change?

In strategic ... yes, developing change, planning change.

I think they can. I don't think they always do. Certainly in terms of the most recent strategic plan there have been discussions and debates, open forums and so on, but the academic community has not always contributed I don't think. Although, you know, if you include Heads of School, Senior Management teams and so on, those people are contributing.

So you feel that they have contributed or could contribute?

I think they have at a minimal level.

Do you think the academics want to?

I think there's a mixture. I think there are a number of different agendas and I think there are some academics that are in a state of denial with regard to the reality of the academic and commercial world that we live in now. And going back to the past is not really an option.

Do you think the academics believe they contribute? Do you think the academics think they had anything to do with the strategic plan?

I suspect that they probably don't think they had very much involvement in the strategic plan.

Do you think that the academics know enough about the big picture or the issues to contribute to strategic change if they wanted to?

If they don't it's because they haven't bothered to find out. The information is there but I'm not so sure that all academics keep themselves very well informed.

Do you think the academics feel part of the change process at SU? Or just that it's something that gets done to them?

I think they don't feel probably as part as they might do. But I don't think that's all one way. I think there are opportunities for them to take part and they don't always take those opportunities.

Any reason why you think we don't take the opportunities?

I suppose it might be, mainly because academics tend to lead a particular type of life in organisations which is often about ... I mean they might work in teams, very small teams, that often work on their own. So they often don't take the opportunity to become involved in certain activities.

But any reason why they don't because a lot of people have talked about the disengagement now?

I think it's as much as anything about the fact that they have become used to living in a world of their own, working on their own, working on their own units, working fairly independently. The downside of that is that they don't always engage. I mean it's not the case with everybody but there are quite a few who choose not to engage. And you see that at School level where there are activities organised and there is a proportion of staff who never turn up to any of these activities, but then who claim they're not involved in activities and claim they don't . . . they haven't been involved in consultation. When there have been opportunities to do that they're just not taking those opportunities.

Do you think the academics think they have a voice in planning strategic change?

I don't know. I suspect they probably think that they don't. But whether or not that's true is another matter.

Who do they think speaks for them when it comes to Senior Management and strategic change?

Oh they need to speak for themselves first of all and then to route those views through, I suppose, through academic groups, through Schools and so on.

(SM1) do you know what a change agent is? OK. Do you think a change agency strategy is suitable for Higher Education?

I'm not sure.

Could the strategic change process be improved at SU?

Yeah, all processes can be improved, communications.

Any ideas as to how you feel it could be improved?

Well I think there are ... my experience indicates that it depends on the, what do you call it, the life cycle of a university? The reason why I say that is that I've worked at a number of different institutions and, having observed those institutions, it's interesting how approaches to change are perhaps different from institution to institution. The reason I say that is that at (previous university) which is actually quite a well established, well it was a very well established polytechnic and therefore is a university that I think has greater maturity than this university or even the institution that I was at before, (previous university). And I think the problem is for an institution like SU or (X), for it to move forward it's got to catch up fairly quickly. And whilst it would be nice to do that

in a gradual organic way as other universities have over a number of, you know, tens or fifties of years, we don't have that time and I would characterise the managerial staff, both at (X) and here as managerial; whereas at (X) I would characterise it as collegiate. But I think there are good reasons for that. At (X) the challenges are different.

So could SU go more collegiate?

It could but it wouldn't make any progress.

OK. So you don't think it would be a viable option for us?

Not if we wanted to move as quickly as we need to and position ourselves within, as a university, a viable university in the university sector. Because, for example, at (X), it's my belief that they have much more of an academic culture at (X) and in many ways it almost doesn't matter what the Senior Management do, the right sorts of things are still happening within the university because they have the sort of staff who work in ... who are used to working in an academic environment. They know what university academics should be doing and they engage in it naturally. The problem we have here is that we have a lot of staff who are not really clear about what a university academic should be doing and still behave in the way that a member of staff at (old name for SU) would behave or even (local FE College), accounting, teaching hours and things like that, failing to engage in research or scholarly activity, not being here in the summer or even engaging in academic work during the vacation. So I think it's a necessary approach that has to be taken with institutions that are playing catch up, a managerial approach is necessary. But it's a difficult challenge.

In your opinion do the academics need anything to help them adapt to change at work?

I think they need, they need support and I think broadly we give them support. I think they need to engage as well.

Do you think there are any communication issues (SM1)?

Between who?

In implementing, planning and implementing strategic change between the Senior Management and the academics?

Yeah, I think there is.

Can you expand on that at all?

Yeah I think the failure of academics to engage in the communication process.

So it's there for them if they would take that step forward?

My belief is that there is, it is. I mean having just done the staff survey, it's almost a cliché that any group of workers, if you ask them about work, they'll talk about increased stress, increased workload and lack of communication. But, as we all know, communication involves two parties. There are many opportunities for communication. I don't think that we always take those opportunities up.

Do you think the reward process at SU has any impact on change implementation?

Only at the margins.

Do you think maybe some academics feel that whether they change or don't change it makes no difference to their pay cheque?

Probably.

So why would they bother?

Exactly.

So you do sort of feel that there's a thread of theory, reasoning there?

Yeah I can see that it's ... I suppose it's this sort of 'heads in the sand' view that, yeah you can carry on doing what you've always done and nothing will change. I don't know how long that will continue for. I think it's quite clearly the strategy that all academic staff are expected to engage in teaching and either research and enterprise. I don't know when the point will come when serious questions are asked about the failure of some colleagues not to engage in that. I don't think an option is just to have teaching only contracts.

When I asked the academics whether or not they felt change implementation and carrots were joined in any way, what do you think the academics said?

I'm sure they said yes, that carrots would help.

Do you think the reward system should be adapted to reward change implementation?

No I don't. In one area, yes, I think, in terms of enterprise, yes there should be financial reward or increased financial reward for significant contribution. But the idea that academics should be financially reward for, what I believe they should be doing anyway,

engaging in research publishing, speaking at conferences, I think is a fallacy. That is what we should be doing anyway. That is our job.

What do you think the academic reaction to that question was?

I think it would vary. It depends on who you spoke to; whether you spoke to research active staff or non-research active staff. I suspect that they would claim ... I don't know whether they would expect financial reward although there seems to be that sort of question at Senate, which to me seems perverse.

Is there anything on this whole subject of change in Higher Education, particularly academic perceptions and reactions here at SU, that I haven't touched on and you'd like to say at this point?

No, I don't think so. I think the point I made about managerialism is one that's important and not easily denied. But organisations at different stages in evolution have to move in different ways. It always amazed me when I was at (X) that their idea of strategic planning was to ask each School to write a strategic plan and the university would then try and cobble that together as one strategic plan. It looked like madness. But the university seems to make good progress despite that. It wouldn't work here. Maybe in ten, fifteen year's time it might. But I think SU is going through quite significant change and it is challenging and difficult and for some people painful.

Thank you.

Is that it?
[End of Interview]

Senior Management Interview Number Two

So, as I say, this is just really a chat about perceptions. OK? So if we look, first of at Higher Education as a whole. How do you perceive the Higher Education market, if we can call it that, as changing?

Centrally? Nationally?

Yes. Higher Education in Britain. What's changing in your opinion?

To some extent we're continuing with the trend of the last ten or more years which is to do more with less. I think increasingly we have to do what, I think it was T E Lawrence said, which was to live largely on little. I think that . . . I think that government's intention to widen participation is laudable and I think that it's not working very largely because government policies are putting off many Widening Participation students. So that increasing numbers are being taken from the middle classes by lowering entry point, lowering entry requirements. I think that most universities now call themselves vocational and most universities now make an actual employment out of council. There's a lesson there for this university. I hope everybody's listening to it. I think that perhaps the most significant central development is the development of HE and FE and I think what government and everybody concerned are beginning to understand is that it actually isn't a cheaper option and is, in many respects, more expensive. Some of the funded challenges and some of the joining up that leads to . . . , we still have two separate funding bodies for that sort of thing. The other big change I think is that government and universities now see UK Higher Education as major earner in the world as an industry that makes a lot of money. But nobody, or many people have not yet faced up to some of the significant implications of that and I think, in particular, that we haven't yet faced up entirely to the . . . we haven't entirely recognised the impact this has on quality in terms of managing quality and standards. It's a particular challenge in a country like this where

the popular culture is so xenophobic, so hostile to anything not English and even not Home Counties. I think it's important that we also maintain our reputation because it would be very easy to recruit big time for a few years and then lose our reputation and really pull together. Now if you add all that lot together there's a theme coming out of all this and that is academic sustainability. If you talk about bottom line and they talk about needing to do this and do that and a target for this and a target for that, but we shall not sustain any income or any bottom line if we don't sustain reputation, and we do not sustain reputation if we don't have an eye constantly to what is . . . what we've come to call quality and standards which I prefer to think of as simply doing a decent job and knowing that we're doing it.

So this changing environment, are the drivers for this environment, (SM2), within the UK or is there is any global pressure?

Well there is a global element, a global recognition that education is important. And in very many countries, perhaps even a majority of countries there's ample provision. There's also a recognition with us and with many countries that US first and the UK second are very good places to do and achieve. There's also a recognition that there's an advantage in studying and doing HE/FE. There's also a recognition that doing HE in the West builds contacts. And you add that lot together and, you know, there is to some extent a global driver.

OK. How do you feel overall about this process of change, yourself? Mostly positive, mostly negative?

Well I actually welcome it. This office and my role is about change. It's about either driving or implementing change. I like it. I have a very low boredom threshold. If things aren't changing my mind starts to wander. So personally and professionally I think it's very important.

So if we apply these market changes then to SU, how do you feel the academic working environment is changing?

I think I said earlier on, before you switched the machine on, I think that my job ... I've been in this role for nearly eight years, and I think that a downside of it is that I don't meet enough academics. I don't spend enough time talking informally to people and listening. So a health warning applies to what I say. I sense that people are under a certain amount of pressure and that some of this is self induced and some of it is unnecessary. I think that there is a reluctance to change, a discomfort with change which is very British undoubtedly. It is quite unhelpful. I think that people have ... I think there's an underlying resentment, though it is underlying I think, that academics ... that academic salaries have been so whittled away over the years and so that when even The Times calls teaching salaries 'Third World' there is a recognition in fairly sober circles that the status and recognition and reward of academics is not what it was. That's a constant theme. I also find a theme, I find references and I hear from my colleagues, references to another theme in the university, which is a 'Them' and 'Us' theme. There are the academics and the administrators and I think what we want to do, what we should be doing is thinking corporately. And last, but not least, I think that a failure to think corporately is ... it does hold us back. And I think that the way the university's constituted in six Schools who much too easily put their wagons in a circle and sit behind their academic ring fence. I think there are positives to this, there are good reasons for doing it; some of them political, some of them not. But there is a downside as well and it's difficult in some ways to get people to think and act corporately from behind ring fences. Is that an answer to your question?

That's an excellent answer, yes. How do you . . . the academics, when I asked them this, do you think they felt changes were within SU or within the larger market? What do you think their perception was?

Do you mean the larger market or between the ... in the sector?

Between, yes.

Well I think the sector has grown enormously within our working ... our professional environment and because it's grown, because of the "massification" of Higher Education, because of the increasing diversity of Higher Education, some sense of academic infrastructure has been required. If we're going to maintain internationally and globally, if we're going to maintain something called UK HE with some sense of identity, I'm not going to use the word 'Brand' because I detest it and I think it's a foreign and an alien issue, a concept and issue. But identity and integrity are important and the latter particularly. And so we have the development of things like the QAA and QAA Code and so on and that does influence us. There is no doubt that this influences. I see these influences as being, in the first place, wholly beneficial, wholly helpful. If they help us as a sector to maintain integrity and each part to maintain its integrity within that sector, that's fine. Secondly there is a misconception that all this is imposed from outside. That is not so. All of these offices, all of these documents, were written by the sector for the sector, by senior representative players from right across the sector. There's no question of this issue.

But do you think the academics perceive that the drivers are outside of SU?

Some of the drivers are. I would say though that those weren't necessarily drivers. I would say that those are frameworks. The drivers remain our own and I think the drivers are our own perceptions. First of all, of what we're good at. Secondly, of what we see as our market and thirdly how best we judge our present and future in the market and that is about strategic planning. But I think the drivers are firmly from within and from our understandings, our capacity to observe and analyse and synthesize what's going on around us, you know, regionally, nationally, internationally, and our capacity, our

imagination in addressing it. But we're also influenced by frameworks, frameworks of thinking and frameworks of understanding. So I just think the drivers are frameworks.

How would you describe your relationship with the academics? Do you sort of see yourself as a manager, a father figure, one of the team?

I see the role of this office as being a point of connection, a junction between the devolved Schools, the point at which programmes are provided and the institution, the corporate ... the university in a corporate sense, which makes the awards. In a devolved institution you have to have points of connection. You have to have things, functions, roles which turn an institution into an institution and stop it spinning off into six Schools. There are certain things that only the university can do institutionally. One of them is to make awards and secondly it's to be accountable for those awards.

Yes. But your relationship with academics though. Before you said that unfortunately you didn't have a chance to talk to that many.

Yes, but can I move on from there. That means that there is always the potential for a role like mine to be an object of suspicion and even resentment and I don't think that's necessary. I don't accept it. I'm very sorry I don't have more time to talk to academics and I think that when I do get an opportunity to talk to academics and explain what we do and discuss with them, I find that it's very helpful and there's a better understanding of what we do and where we're coming from. Ironically I now spend more time in partnership centres talking about HE and SU's particular way of doing HE to people in FE colleges and that is because there is a greater need there and we only have so many hours in a day and days in a week. But I would like to spend more time with staff. I think I would probably be able to convey the messages better and hear what they're saying better if I did spend more time with staff. So I don't think that that's a strength of the way I do the job at the moment, too remote.

OK. Do you believe the recent strategic changes at SU impact in any way with your relationships with the academics? Is the changing work environment, changes to policy and procedures helping this relationship?

I don't think it's making a difference.

Making it worse?

Changes to policy and procedures. Well, people sometimes say, well, you know, we're being required to do more, to do more bureaucracy and all that sort of thing and yes I suppose that has changed the perceptions. But I think what I said a moment ago still applies. I like opportunities to talk to people about where we're coming from and why we're doing this. And when we do get these opportunities, I usually say to people 'What would you change? What would you like to get rid of?' And I don't usually hear any answers. But I do like to give people the opportunity and I am a talkative person and, to put it very mildly, I don't back off from an argument and I like a good debate. And so, you know, I'm always very happy to talk to people and to do what I can to try and persuade them. But, as I say, you know, when you're working something like 60-70 hours a week plus, the time just isn't there. I suppose I should have said actually that I think the centre of this university and the support services are under at least as much strain as academics in Schools and perhaps more so. We're quite thin at the centre.

This is simply a perception question. Do you perceive or would you think that all these recent strategic changes have impacted in any way on the relationship academics have with each other?

I don't know. I don't know. Given time, I suppose, I might put things together from different messages I've had but my instant reaction, in a tape recorded interview, is that I don't know.

Some theorists believe that change can be a burden for some people. Do you agree with that?

Yes. Some pragmatists do too. But as I said, change also, for some people, is a great joy and delight. Unfortunately not all of them.

So when I asked academics what recent changes to policy or process had they experienced, what do you think the answers were? What did they comment on? What's high on their radar right now?

Well it's fashionable to talk about bureaucracy, so I expect that came up. I don't know whether that would be a suitable response or not. It's almost Pavlovian in some circles and it reflects, it reflects themes in the media. It reflects themes in the world around us. In part it reflects post-modernity, you know, that we see ourselves as consumers, as individuals. We, you know, our liking or disliking, our feelings authenticate or invalidate things and nothing that constrains is very popular in that sort of environment. So you might widen this out and put it on a larger compass, on a larger canvass.

Anything other than bureaucracy do you think they commented on?

Some say that ... I do hear talk of dumbing down. I don't think that this is well-founded. I don't know what the evidence is for dumbing down. I think there's at least as much evidence that students actually do work harder. There's certainly evidence that students are better taught and their programmes, their learning programmes are better guided than they were, certainly when I was an undergraduate in the early sixties. So, while I hear

talk about dumbing down and doom and gloom about standards, in some circles, by no means generally, I don't think it's particularly well-founded but I think it may be out there.

Well again we're in the world of perceptions right now and expectations.

Ah expectations. I don't know, I don't know. I suppose if you're going to judge people's body language there's a mixture of optimism, pessimism and stoicism about.

So when strategic changes come down to the academics, what do you think their thinking process or action process is when they're faced with a change?

Oh fight or flight. Yes. I don't know. I sense that in some ... some say 'Oh no not something else.' Some attempt to ... some object and take a lot of time and expend a lot of energy and object. I think the vast majority, rather like the British Army, grumbles and does it and does it in the most efficient manner possible.

How would the university prefer them to react? What would be sort of best practice?

Best practice would be to say 'Well, this isn't an ill-considered knee-jerk reaction, that it's derived from reasonable thinking. It's not put in place for its own sake. It is a means to an end. If I don't understand the end, if I don't understand the reason to find out, to understand the rationale. So that even if you don't like or agree with the rationale, at least you know there is a rationale. And then to do it and recognise that it can be improved upon and recognise in the light of experience it can be improved upon. And to recognise, I think, that there are channels of communication through which changes can be mooted and effected.

In a place, structure like a university, do you think that best practice concept is feasible?

Well the university is a very interesting organisation isn't it? It's very complex. It contains people, by their very nature, who are original and independent and lively. So, yeah, I think it's possible to have best practice. I think it's possible for this to be ... that's a moving target, best practice this year is not necessarily best practice next year, it does move on. I'd like to engage as many people as possible in that process and I think it is possible although I think you always have ... you will always have people who, by their very nature, define themselves by what they're against rather than what they're for. I think you will always have the occasional drama queen and the wannabe martyr. But these people are in a considerable minority and I think I prefer to focus on the generality. So I think yes, it is possible and I think that, in many regards, probably most regards, we go a long way in that direction.

But there has been a lot of change in academic working environments the last few years. Do you think the academics view this strategic change as deep change or just window dressing?

I don't know how they view it. I suspect very many don't see the intentions behind it and that comes back to the point I made before that we don't have enough opportunities to rationalise these things and I think that many of these things .. I can think of things which have been objected to which have affected real change. Not quickly, because it's rather like steering an oil tanker, I think effectively. I think a lot of it is how you manage change. Let me give you ... has this got time for an example?

Well you're the one with the tight time I think.

OK, let's press on. A few years ago there are certainly some programmes in this university which were more like NVQs than degrees. Now what you can't do is say 'Oh that's no good' because they're on a continuum. You can't say that at this point these are all iffy and these are all fine. Everything can be moved higher up the scale of quality

effectiveness. So what you do is you establish frames of thinking, frames of reference, frames within which debates can take place, frames within which academics can go on being academics and frames which provide opportunities for debate and clarification of thinking. That seems to be the norm of academic life. And so that is why we have things like level descriptors. That's why we have things like qualification descriptors in order to establish some common frames of thinking, some common frames of reference and some basis for saying 'Yes, we are working in a lot of different areas and yes we do have some things that make this a university and some things that make all of these degrees and all of these Masters programmes and something which enables us to say to people yeah this is a Masters programme. It is not just a jumped up undergraduate programme.'

But if we go back to academic perceptions, do you think the academics view that all this change as deep change or just as something they've got to do to ...

They often see the surface, others always see, because we have to and because we're fortunate to be in a position where we can do, so others see the greater significance of it. I think there's also a tendency sometimes for people at the coal face where I spent a great deal of my time, there's a tendency to see things in the short term. There's a strong sense at corporate level, at institutional level, of playing the long game.

So you could perceive with the fact of academics seeing it as short term change?

They could see it because ... and in part they would be right because a lot of changes are followed, are changed again in response, first of all to our own learning, realising that things could be done better. And that's inevitable in a complex organisation where you're trying to frame policies and practices for the generality. I mean you don't frame policies and procedures around exceptions. You manage exceptions. And this university, believe it or not, has a minimal approach to regulation. We look at some university regulations in far more detail. We have a policy which says we will frame policies, we

will frame regulations, we'll frame procedures and we will only add to them if the variation of practice within the original regulation has become unacceptably wide so as to potentially put students ... put standards or quality at risk. So . . . and staff doesn't always see that and I have sympathy with them. And there will be further changes because life goes on, because we learn and because external constraints and external developments require us to respond.

Do you think that accepting change is part of the job of an academic?

Yes, I fear so.

And as far as change is concerned then, do you see us sort of at the beginning of a big process, middle, end?

I think we're in a world where change is ... a change is a way of life, it's a part of the landscape, it's part of the environment. I wouldn't say we were at the ... I would say we were in the middle and I would say that we always will be in the middle.

Organisational theory divides change process into two categories; top-down change by management or organic bottom-up change from academics. Which process, in your opinion, better describes SU?

I think I would describe the management of change here as being a process where managers take a view as to how things are going. They have a number of sources of information available to them. They take a view, they discuss it, and there are a number of fora in which managers discuss so that we have things like Academic Standards Committee, Senate and so forth. They also listen and they consult; so that most changes that I'm aware of and certainly changes that are emanated from here have all been subject to wide consultations. Consultations with representatives and expert groups where, for

instance, when we set up School Quality Committees we drafted something, we took it to the Heads of Quality and we said 'You guys are going to have to run and chair these things, so tell us what you think.' And they significantly improved things. So it's a consultative process but in the end managers have to decide. If you let everything emerge from the bottom-up ... it's not that nothing would ever change, it's that the place would become entirely anarchic and phrases like 'lunatics running the asylum' would come to mind. I know that's not very politically correct.

If we then go to academic perception, where do you think the academics believe the push for change comes from?

I suspect they feel that it's coming from Senior Management and, in a way, that's healthy. It would indicate that the place probably has got effective management. They don't always

[tape end]
[new tape]

OK. So we left on the fact that you feel the academics probably believe that it's top-down change.

I wouldn't be surprised.

OK. You commented on the fact that you believe that the academics do contribute. It's somewhat of a mixed system? Do you think the academics believe they contribute to the planning process for strategic change? What do you think their perception is?

I don't know. I suspect they probably don't recognise the ways in which information does come from them, the ways in which things do change in response. But they also ...

they always take a localised view and that's inevitable because they see their research and their teaching and, if you're lucky, they see their programme. And then they become a Programme Leader and then they do see the whole programme. And then they become a Senior Academic and they have to see the whole School. And then they take a university level job and they have to see the whole university and it's difficult to see until you get to a corporate level, it's difficult to see how you have to think in terms of the whole and not simply of a few local perceptions. I can think of some very good examples at my own learning process when I was attached half time to this office, when (X) was Head of (X), and I used to come up with suggestions and he used to say 'No, that won't work.' And I used to say 'Yes it will, I know it will. I could make that work in our School.' And he would say 'Yeah, yeah, you could make that work in one School, even two, but you have to devise something that will work in the generality.' And therein lies the need to construct balances between frameworks and the need to preserve plenty of opportunity for local variation. And you have to establish a principle of thinking to guide the choice there and our principle is this that we set floors, benchmarks, base level expectations below which we don't expect people to fall but above which you can add value as much as you like. And I think that's reasonable thinking and I like opportunities to try and make that thinking over to people. I don't think it's always generally understood.

Do you think that the ordinary academic, lecturer, senior lecturer, knows enough about the big picture or the big issues to contribute to strategic change if they wanted to?

I'm not sure that people avail themselves of opportunity, sufficiently of opportunities to meet in their Schools, to sit in on School Committee Meetings, to go to whole School meetings and then get engaged in discussions of this kind. I think if people did, and they did get involved in these discussions it might ... they might be surprised at how well they are listened to. At least they might be aware that people, that changes really do come from the products of thought and consideration and that they had a rational answer for them.

So do you think there's a certain element of disengagement there in the academic?

It may be the people that you visit ... on the other hand it may be that they don't listen and that there aren't enough opportunities for people to be able to talk. And I think there's also insularity, parochialism in Higher Education in this country and no doubt it goes beyond this country. I don't think we realise when we're well off in some regards, so that people say that they don't like the bureaucracy. Well in Further Education in this country there's far more of it, school teaching has far more of it. And they look abroad, in Higher Education in many countries people are on ... many on much less secure contracts. In some HE establishments in many parts of the world people lose their jobs on the basis of student questionnaires. They're a managerial instrument. They're not an enhancement instrument and I could go on.

So you feel that if academics wanted to know the big picture or the issues they could?

I hope they could. I hope ... I think that there are enough opportunities for them to discuss things. I wonder . . . I mean I was a Senate elected representative once and I don't think I did my job very well on reflection. I wonder whether Senate elected representatives provide people in their Schools with enough opportunities to talk back. I think, particularly, there's a bigger role for people who are members, School representatives on things like Academics Standards Committee, and I think that we would look to those people to be much more of a two way street, much more of a communication line between the Committee and it's a very, very exciting Committee, a lot of interesting things take place there, a lot of important discussions. To carry that back to Schools as well as carrying effectively from Schools, being a focus of debate, being a channel of communication, being a conduit, I think we could . . . and individuals, some key individuals in positions of privilege and responsibility could perhaps make more of their opportunities to engage people in discussion.

In your opinion (SM2), what are the positive and negative attributes of the way strategic change works now at SU? I mean you said that you felt that it was an efficient way, top-down management, change gets ... things happen.

There is something of efficiency about it. It is efficient.

Any other positive or negative?

I'm not always certain that people in Schools take on board the significance of the Strategic Plan, for instance. I think that ... now that Strategic Plan was exhaustively consulted about and I don't think there's a ... possibly at management and at academic staff level in this instance, I don't think the significance of it and the extent to which there's a personal engagements ... I don't think there's sufficient personal and team engagement in delivering on the Strategic Plan. I think there's a tendency to assume that it's out there somewhere. I think there's a tendency, as I said earlier, not to think corporately and not to think ... I mean some people think 'School', but many people don't even think 'School', they think 'me', they think 'my units', 'my programme', 'my students'. I think there's parochialism, there's a narrowness of view in some cases. It may be that we haven't gone about this in the right way in the university, maybe that we haven't created the right opportunities. But I think we would say in the university that we've created enormous, very wide range of opportunities for discussion of these things.

Again we're talking perceptions, do you think that the academics do feel part of the change process or just a change is something that gets done to them, and they're a victim?

We're into the realms of psychology here aren't we? And it's too easy in discussions like this for it to become saloon bar psychology. I don't know. I think you could always find

people who think that they were ... it was being done to them. I don't like and don't identify, I'm not attracted by that kind of thinking, that kind of world view.

Do you think that the academics believe they have a voice in planning strategic change? I mean according to due process they have a voice but do you think they think they have a voice?

I don't know, I suspect you would find some who said one and some who said the other thing. You'd probably find some who didn't really think about it very much at all.

Do you think change agency strategy is suitable for a university environment?

What do you mean by change agency strategy?

Well in reading the literature, a lot of universities have said that the way that we get change done is we get a couple of academics on side in each School and then sort of send them out to seed the concept.

I think in effect, more or less ... I think we've actually done that in quite a lot of different ways. We probably do seed changes. We make appointments like Heads of Learning and Teaching who seed change among other things. We put in funding, you know, again in teaching and learning. There are funding, there is project funding to seed and promote change. Yes I think we do do that. I wish we could do more of it.

OK. We're in the closing stretch now. In your opinion now (SM2), could the strategic change process be improved at all at SU? Or do you think this is as good as we can get?

We could. I don't think any structure, any government I think is forever. I think all these things are open to criticism and open themselves to change. I have a lot of ideas in the

back of my mind, things that I know we could do with but these aren't things that we can introduce into the university like the up-ending of a bucket or turning on of a tap. They have to be managed, there has to be some sort of strategic direction and there has to be a sense of balance, a sense of making changes which don't sacrifice and important principles. I can think of a lot of things we could do that and I think most people in my sort of position can see that. I can see that in many respects they require resources we don't have now and it may be that we need to acquire more resources or free up more resources to do these things. I think in making change you do need some guiding principles and I think that, for me, they are things like institutional integrity and reputation. And I think that if you subject all these changes and rejection of proposed changes, you subject all these things to that kind of kind of test then you probably won't go far wrong. But that is a matter of discussion and debate and that's why we need to have discussion and debate. And yet you can't have discussion and debate that goes on and on and on because you ... until you have persuaded the last person, you can not go on with that. Organisations don't work like that. You have in the end to make decisions. You have to draw a line and you have to say 'OK well we've probably arrived at the best we can do at this stage. We know we won't please everybody but this is the best thing to do. Let's do it.' And that I think is what some people find difficult.

In your opinion do academics need anything to help them adapt to changes at work? Are there any sorts of communication or staff development issues?

Well we do put on quite a lot of staff development things and they don't always attract the kind of audience you want.

What about communication issues?

Well, yes, I think communication in this university has improved. It probably needed to improve. It has improved. But on the other hand communication, for some people,

communication is when the institution does what they say and if they don't get their way they've not been communicated with. So I think you need a fairly robust, you need to be fairly robust to deal with this at times.

Right I'm finishing with the No. 1 issue that came up from academics without me even prompting and that is do you think the reward process at SU, and by reward I mean money and time remission, has any impact on the success or failure of change implementation?

I think it's helpful to think in terms of recognition as a reward because reward has a sense of tangibility about it. I think recognition is important. It may very well be that some people do feel under appreciated and under recognised and even under rewarded.

And does this impact on change implementation though?

I think it's also true that some people feel resentful that others are getting away with minimal effort and minimal contribution and so some of these things are demotivating some times. I think some people by their nature and temperaments are more vulnerable to that sort of demotivation. And if people do have ... if morale does slip then it is more difficult to manage change. It is more difficult for people to accept a change because they're much more likely to say 'it's being done to me'. They're much less likely to take a balanced ... they're much less likely to take a corporate view if they feel that the corporate . . . that the university in a corporate sense isn't listening to them or doesn't appreciate them. So yes I think you can make a difference and for that reason.

What do you think the academic reaction was their perception when I asked them that?

I would imagine that you got some mixed answers but perhaps ... I would imagine that quite a number would say they felt under appreciated and under rewarded. We referred to

this earlier on, things like salary levels, it's a sector which ... I think ... I don't think people realise sometimes the extent of the privilege and the standard of privilege and the advantage of working here and being academics. I mean, this is very cheesy I know but I mean I still feel very lucky to be working here and to be an academic.

Could or should the reward system for academics be adapted to reward change implementation?

Well attempts to do this in the past have been often more controversial than leaving things as they are, you know, payment by results, performance related payments. Very controversial stuff. Hasn't previously proved to be a very ... hasn't usually, hasn't always proved to be a very good remedy. I think inevitably I think as national pay demands, pay and conditions of service become policies and developments kick in, I think we would find that we do need to look more closely and re-evaluate what people do. That may come up with some interesting answers.

Now bearing in mind that I only spoke to 17 academics; how do you think they feel about pay by results, performance pay?

I would imagine you got a range of views. I would imagine that probably more, there were more against than for. But that's a very instinctual answer on my part. I may be out of date.

Is there anything I haven't asked you about this whole idea of implementing change at SU that you feel you'd like to add?

No, I think you've given me ample opportunities to pursue the case. Thank you.

[End of Interview]

Senior Management Interview Number Three

(SM3), the first area that we were looking at was your perception of what's happening in Higher Education as a whole. Some people refer to it as the market of Higher Education. Do you perceive the market for Higher Education to be changing in the UK and if so how?

Well the Higher Education activity, and I'm not sure 'the market' is quite the right word, has been growing significantly in the last ten years and looks set to grow for the next five years, although I'd add a little coda of caution there. It's in the spending plans for the government, but, since it's, in the end, public money being spent in a democracy which is funding this expansion, if the economy took a sudden downturn I think the universities would find a very cold wind blowing. But, in practice, the universities have been a fairly benevolent environment economically for perhaps five to six years since Labour came in 1997 because of the increase of investment. But that followed a long period of decline and constriction. And also, as everybody's aware, regarding the nature of what a university is in this society, there's probably not a consensus either within the academic community or within the general public at this point.

So you see changes in really sort of what a university is and in resources? Any other changes?

Well I think it's wider than that. First of all, what is the purpose of the university? It's clear that society's been more explicit about its expectations than it might have been a decade ago. It's been more explicit about the fact that that research should have outcomes, that students have a right to participate in the judgements about the quality of their teaching, that it's possible to benchmark institutions against each other. In other words the disciplines which apply in other areas of the economy and society are being introduced into universities. I don't think people working in universities are terribly

happy about that because they weren't there, necessarily, eight or nine years ago, and academic freedom is sometimes equated to freedom to spend however you want, in both your time and the university's. Of course it isn't as easy as that. Universities work within budgets. So I think that the universities' missions have been redefined in the last three years and there's an increased emphasis on knowledge transfer to associate the other two major strands of original research and learning and teaching. Again, the word 'learning' has been introduced far more into the language in the last five years than it was in the previous fifty.

What do you think is causing these changes? Is this a UK driver or do you see any globalisation issues?

No, no, this is world wide. For example in Finland I think it's 70% of young people go on to Higher Education. Around the world increasingly developed societies are taking the view that to compete in a modern world you've got to have highly skilled graduates and that means extending the benefits of Higher Education to a much wider segment than you would have done in the past. So there's nothing specialist to the UK, this is happening everywhere.

Overall would you say that you're personally happy at what's happening?

Yes, I believe it's actually something which is very much in the interests of the people involved. And I believe, at the end of the day, if you don't want to be confined to a service society or to primary jobs like mining and manufacturing which can equally well be done in countries which are at a less developed stage of the economic growth cycle, you have to invest in skills.

If we now look at SU, how do you perceive the working environment of SU to be changing?

Difficult for me because I'm not sure I was there before, so I don't have any comparator. I didn't work in the university before (date) and ... I think the (X) School is in better shape than it was in (date). But then I would think that, wouldn't I? I'm that kind of person.

Would you say the changes then are coming within SU or outside?

Well I think that they're prompted by external events, but the degree to which they're coming from within depends on the degree to which you believe universities are autonomous, self-governing bodies.

Would you say then that you're overall happy with what's happening in terms of changes within SU?

The hesitation is simply that I joined the university to head the (X) School and I'm most concerned about the (X) School. Therefore my answer, in a sense, is going to be rather narrow and you asked me about SU.

Yes.

I think the university is certainly better focused than it appears to have been 10 years ago. I think its academic reputation is higher. I think its academic standards are higher. I think its strategy is clearer. Overall I think it's a more focused environment than it was. But, as with every institution, I think that it takes a long time to communicate that sense of purpose throughout the whole staff, particularly in a situation where you've got a massive workforce where there are very few incentives for individual excellence. To my mind a unionised reward system drives down ambition.

Which are actually coming right into that because that was an interesting response. How would you describe your relationships with academics? Do you see yourself as a sort of a management figure or father figure?

No, I see myself as a management figure and I don't think you muck around. I think if you're a manager, whatever you think you are, people see you as a manager and they judge you on your ability as a manager. Separately they may or may not get on with you but what they look to you for is leadership in the broad range, both academic and management. So that, although the task of being Head of School is a job of academic leadership, it involves a good deal more than that. It means that, if somebody's having problems with their computer, you've got to say to yourself 'I've got to sort that out' because it's going to affect people's general perceptions of their environment. You know, that's what managers do. They try and create an environment in which good people can do their best work. So the most important thing you do is to select people, by the way. And the second most important thing is, having selected them, to ensure that they work at their peak.

OK. Do you think that the recent strategic changes within the university are impacting in any way in your relationship with the academics?

I'm going to take a roundabout way of answering this … Why do people become academics? Why don't they go for something which is better paid and, in many areas, offers them more scope for individual satisfaction? Is it because they're nervous about the big wide world? Is it because they're driven into research? I'm not sure I know and I'm not a psychiatrist. What was the question again?

Do you find the changes that are coming through the university and Higher Education is changing your relationship with the academics in any way?

I don't think so. But, if they think so then the answer to that is yes.

Do you think that these recent changes have changed the way academics relate to each other?

Yes I do because some of them will see the value of change and will actually embrace it because they believe that something's happening and that the universities' role in society is being more clearly defined. In other words they will broadly support change. Others will take a different view and not be happy with change because it may disadvantage them or they may do well but they don't agree with it. So it depends on what their views were of their working environment and the nature of the university to start with.

Some of the academics said there was a burden to change. Do you think there's a burden to change?

Yes, it's always more difficult. It's easiest to do the same thing. If you're bringing up a child, you know that if you just did the same routine all the time life would be easier. It doesn't mean to say it would be better because in the end you would be in trouble. But change involves development.

So if there is a burden of change (SM3), who's picking up the pieces in your perception?

I'm sorry I don't see quite that a burden necessarily means picking up pieces.

This is feedback. People are saying that there is a burden there and ...

Well then you've got to explain the question clearly. I mean with change and progress always comes discomfort and awkwardness. But that goes with change. I don't think it's necessarily a burden. It's an opportunity.

What recent strategic changes to policy or process do you think the academics have reported back as having experienced? What do you think the academics are picking up on?

I think they pick up on the tightening over the years, and the consistent tightening of academic procedures. So I think academic standards are a concern to them, particularly if they feel that decisions that they used to make are now being made by others. So I think there will be a problem there. I think that many of them feel that the knowledge transfer agenda has been imposed on them and why should they do that. Although, I have to say, I find that bizarre because, if it isn't about knowledge transfer, what's the university for? And I think it just depends on, if you like, what their aspirations were when they started.

OK. So when academics get these strategic changes, what do you think their thinking or action process is? What would you expect it to be?

Well I don't think of academics generically in this way. So I don't find I can answer that. I don't believe when I look at my colleagues that there is any consensus in what they really think. I think that when they get together, there may be some areas where they would generally agree. But I don't think there are as many as one might think.

Do you have any sort of feeling as to how the university would prefer academics to handle change?

Oh the university would like academics to embrace change, to cheer when the words 'Knowledge Transfer, Research, Innovation' are mentioned. I mean all managements, everywhere in the world, would like people to agree with them entirely. And all of them had to learn the hard way that life isn't like that.

So is this feasible then?

Is what feasible?

The university expecting this sort of a reaction?.

The university has to expect that kind of reaction, given that, if you sit people in front of you and say we can go on as we are or we can do something different, round about 50% is likely to say 'I'm pretty suspicious of change because I've been here before and it's never quite as painless as it's pointed to be.' I don't expect people to embrace change and development.

Do you feel the academics feel that this strategic change right now is profound, embedded or do you think they think it is window dressing?

Oh I suspect that it depends on who you're talking to. Some of them will believe that they've been here before and nothing will happen if they just keep quiet and keep their heads down. And I suspect the only way that would change would be if jobs were at risk, particularly in the (X) School, where, you know, we've had no redundancies for my time here. It's been a time of steady growth and a fairly stable environment. But elsewhere in the university system there's been quite massive redundancies and I want to make sure I hand on a going concern to my successor, like an (specific job) which is where I've spent most of my career. And you don't want to hand on something in decline; you want to hand on something that's healthy and growing. But you have to be aware and alert all the time because there are dangers wherever you face, there are risks. However, if you stop moving forward, you will get hit from behind.

Do you think that accepting change is part of an academic's job?

I think it is part of everybody's job. It doesn't mean to say you don't question it. That's perfectly reasonable. If you put this a different way ... do you think that accepting no change is part of everybody's job? ... I'd say what a stupid question. Change takes place, time moves on, the environment changes. What happens if the pension crisis goes into a spiral? I mean people would be very worried. What would happen if there were a threat to people's pensions? Do people believe they will always be there? In which they're not even reading the newspapers. I do worry about that. I do worry about colleagues who don't seem to me to be, in a (X) School, who aren't actually (specific School-based interests). What are they doing here?

If we look at the change in the university as a sort of line, do you think we are at the beginning of a change, middle of the change process, end of the change process?

No I think it's a process of continuous change.

The push for change within SU, you know, the sort of designing and planning of big strategic change. Where do you think the academics think the push comes from?

The academics? Well first of all you have my view of academics. To treat them as a kind of coherent group is a mistake. But if you're asking where many academics think this push comes from, I imagine they think it comes from societal pressures, if they think about it at all. I've noticed in one or two of the debates, like for example Outreach and Widening Participation, areas where the university or they might not have been involved in the past, people tending to somehow believe that this is something to do with political short term pressures. I think this ignores what's going on in the Higher Education sector, not just in Britain, but throughout the Western World. And I think that one of the things that most disappointed me about my time here was, in the first year, I got a group of five quite young academics into a room, presented them with a book of essays about the future of the universities which contained a whole range of radical ideas and asked them to think

about the (X) School in that context. They really didn't want to think about it. And what's more they thought this was shorthand for introducing some fairly dramatic change next year. In other words they were suspicious of the purpose of the event. So they didn't do it. I thought that's ... there's no point in wasting time on something that they don't regard as valuable because in practice my intention was that it should be a form of development for staff who might play a key role in taking the whole thing forward. But people are quite suspicious aren't they?

Yes, yes.

But do you think they're right to be suspicious. I'm the one who's supposed to be politic.

OK. Alright. Now there's a lot of theory on change in Higher Education and some people say that the push, in a modern university, should be coming down from management and some people say 'No, it should be coming up from the academics, right. How do think people perceive it to be working here?

I would imagine they imagine that it's coming from management.

And how do you feel academics feel about that?

Well I think they all whinge a bit.

Do you think the academics contribute to change at SU?

Yes, because many of them are foot soldiers in the process.

Do you think they think they contribute to change?

I don't think I've thought about it... you're asking me what I think about other people's perceptions. It's not that I'm not sensitive to them, one is, but I'm not sure that they should affect your actions as much as the questions imply. I think that what's important is that you should try and do what you think is right as long as you try and take people with you. If you try and respect their individual views and differences, but recognise that, when something's happening where you're not taking the lead, you're bound to be a bit resentful. There is a solution which individuals have and that is to get engaged themselves with the process.

Do you think academics want to get involved?

Again I can't accept the generic question.

Do you think many academics . . . ?

I think some would prefer not to be involved. But that may go back to an unwillingness to engage with events which would need, not a manager, but a psychiatrist to debate and discuss.

If we leave out right now what's happening, (SM3), or what perceptions are right now ...

What is the perception by the way?

So if we leave out what's happening out right now, OK. Do you think then, OK, that academics could contribute to policy or process or that it would work better actually as a Senior Management top-down process?

If an army moves across ground very fast it's because they all know where they're going and they share a common goal. And therefore I think that it's a good idea for all

institutions contemplating change to try and ensure that people have had a full opportunity to get engaged in the process of debate and discussion which precedes change. In other words, with a highly skilled workforce, we would want those people to be engaged. But you can't wait for every last person to agree every jot and tittle of the change. Let me give you an example. The university spent a year and a half agreeing, I think it was the pass mark for post graduate degrees at 50 rather than 40. Numerous meetings were held. In the end it went to Senate and the university's proposal was knocked back and people saw it as a major achievement. Well, it was a healthy debate. It took up a fantastic amount of time. There were probably one or two more important issues that people could have devoted the same amount of time to, but they chose not to in a way because people, I suspect at times, self-select minor items to have a little war about instead of trying to address major items where it may be possible to have a bigger impact. So I'd like to think that individuals would believe that they can make a difference and I think many of them have made a huge difference. But some take the view that, whatever they do, nothing will happen; which I think is a mistake.

Do you think that if academics wanted to get involved in strategic change, they know enough about the big picture or the issues?

Well I don't know because there's been plenty of attempts to communicate and inform both at the university centrally and the Vice Chancellor sending out strategic plans. I suspect that, for many people, it's just in the 'too difficult and I'm too busy' category. They've got lives to lead, they might have difficulties at home, they're not terribly well paid and, anyway, it's quite difficult to establish a forum where it takes place. I mean, for example, should we have held three days of School Committee to try and reach a conclusion of something. I don't think so as a matter of fact. Four or five years ago the Professors and School Executive met together for quite a bit of time to try and identify a Mission Statement for the (X) School and it will probably be time to do that again in a year or so. So it will be five years after we last did it. But you can't keep on talking

about things. You've got to, in a sense, move forward. You will never take everybody with you is what I'm really trying to say.

Yeah. So do you perceive that the academics feel part of the change process or do they just feel to be like objects with change happening to them?

I think probably my view is that most people would fall into the latter category and some who are built a different way will fall into the former category.

Do you feel that academics they have a voice of change?

Well, their unions don't appear to be terribly interested in change. So the representative bodies of academics certainly don't, in my view, appear to contribute positively. But there are people like (X), and I'll just choose one name, but he's not the only one in the (X) School, who's interested in what's going on and is prepared to participate. But as we can see from the elections to School Committee, not enough academics step forward to participate. I think it's because it's seen as time consuming without a rewarding outlet.

Are you familiar with the terminology of change agency? What a change agent is?

No.

It's when you want to implement a strategic change and you get some academics on side and then ask them to go out and spread the word. Are you comfortable with the strategy within the university?

Yes I'd be comfortable with that. It is in practice that's happening because you've got the Vice Chancellor holds seminars twice a year and School Executives are broadly on board.

The real question is whether they communicating more widely. And if they are, are they doing it successfully?

From your own perspective, do you think change planning and change implementation could be improved within SU?

Yes of course.

Any particular way that you could see we could move forward on this?

Well I've tried to do all the things I've thought of in the (X) School. It sounds a bit cocky, but the answer was if I hadn't done those things, what on earth was I doing. So I've tried to do them. And I believe that above all what the (X) School wanted was a stable environment, with more time for people to do their own research, no threats of radical change, an ability to address key issues themselves rather than having them imposed on them by the rest of the university. But I think the (X) School has been fortunate in that it's recruited well and because of that it's had enough income to avoid being "bullied by the university". I think that also the fact that I've been a senior manager somewhere else was a benefit because the university tended to leave me alone. So I haven't felt that I'm anybody's poodle and have felt relatively free as a manager. I think elsewhere in the university it's been quite tough because very stringent economies have had to be made, cuts have had to be made and one or two people have lost their jobs and change has not been seen as trying to do things better but as trying to do things cheaper. So I think it depends on where you are and where you sit.

In your opinion is there anything that academics need to help them adapt to change at work? Bearing in mind that change seems to be very hard for somebody. Is there anything the university could do to make this change process easier?

I haven't found academics are that different from people in other companies and organisations where I've worked. You always have a vast bulk of the workforce who, at the end of the day, does not want to get engaged. We're not talking about a crusade here; we're talking about people who have a life to lead. I've found that most people are far more concerned about what's going on in their private lives than they are about what's going on in the university. So that they are relatively, most of the time, relatively content about the world of work. Although if you ask them to think hard there are lots of things they would improve. But I think that, on the scale of the things that concern them, issues at work are usually fairly low. Its issues at home that matter, issues to do with their emotions, issues to do with their identity, agenda, their growing up. A lot of your questions are ones I find difficult to answer because you're asking me to talk about academics as a group. I don't see them as that. I just see a range of individuals who need to be managed in different ways according to what they're like.

Do you think there's any communication or issues here (SM3)?

Yes, I'm sure there are better ways of communicating than I've chosen. One of the reasons why you need change of management is because you need people who can adopt a different style, you know, following somebody else. So, yes, of course.

Any staff development issues?

Always - although a lot of it seems to me to be just an excuse not to do the day job. Most people, I think, should be able to manage their own development rather than wait for it to be "done to them".

Now you picked up on my next question before and this was probably the most ... got the most vocal response, OK. Do you think the reward process at SU has any impact on the success of change implementation?

Yes I do. I think the reward process at universities is based on a common pay structure, with little reward for great performance and little penalty for poor performance. This means that people tend to believe that whatever they do nobody notices. I've found, over the years, that I can praise people verbally (and I try not to do it so that they don't think you're doing it just for the sake of doing it), do it when it really means something, write them notes, praise them, do all the things you can to encourage them. But, if it isn't accompanied by something in the pay packet, they don't believe you. And I think academics are no different from anybody else. If you're doing the job well, it should be recognised in the pay packet.

And what do you think the academic reaction was?

I think some of those who think they would not get so rewarded find this a dreadful idea. They think that we depend on our colleagues, they depend on us, and we march together. Others would regard themselves as doing exceptionally good work and would back themselves to be more successful in that environment. So again you come back to the nature of individuals.

So bearing in mind that it is really sort of rewards by service rather than rewards by merit, can anything be done within the university to encourage people to implement change?

Well yes. I mean you can create posts where people can play a lead in areas of change, advertise for those posts; put somebody into them who really wants to achieve something and to make change. So it's very important we do that. You've got to find ways of encouraging your best people to move forward. You really have. Management isn't about trying to walk at the pace of the slowest; it's about trying to encourage the best to move forward and hoping that the others will catch up.

But how can we encourage the best to move forward when we can't give them any more money?

Well we try.

[End of Interview]

Senior Management Interview Number Four

Right, so what I'm doing for my EdD is 'Change in University' but from the academic perspective. So the first thing I wanted to chat about is, if we look overall at the sector, Higher Education as a whole. Do you perceive the Higher Education sector to be changing and if so how?

Very much so, the goal posts are moving all the time. We've got a number of agendas running concurrently, the Widening Participation agenda, fulfilling the aspirations of government, along those lines, increasing the prominence of research and knowledge transfer and couple that with the increased burden of bureaucracy which I think stands to reflect a lack of trust.

(SM4) what do you think is causing these changes? Are they within the UK or is there any global driver here?

I'm not sure there's a global driver as such other than increasing costs of education and the increasing difficulty of governments to fully fund Higher Education. I think increasing aspirations of the institutions is something from within those institutions. It's something that I observed in (an American state) as well. I went to a (X) university, very much like a former poly, but I was recruited for my research. In a part time role I was in the Graduate School, helping to support the increasing research element there. It's very similar to what we see here.

So you think these drivers for change are mostly within the UK?

I think very similar to some of the drivers that you do see in North America and the United States in particular but I do not perceive the same drivers on the continent.

How do you feel overall about this change process in the sector personally? Are you positive, negative, bit of both?

I think you have to be positive because you have to come to work every day and you have to enthuse others.

But are you positive?

Quietly, sometimes when I reflect, yeah. I do not believe in working in a sector where there isn't a degree of trust. And I think you have to earn trust. But I mean the accountability burden is out of proportion and the constant change for the sake of change across the whole of the educational structure. We have to pick up the pieces in our sector. We obviously see the ramifications of change, which is a separate subject in particular, and that has a direct impact upon what we do. So I think the plethora of government initiatives doesn't help at all.

How do you think the working environment is changing here at SU for the academics?

I think it's just become more frenetic and I would say not just for academics. I think it's more frenetic for everybody. I mean, not just necessarily for academics. And some of the academic issues I think become subverted or it's easy for them to become subverted.

And when I asked the academics that, 'How do you find your working environment changing?' Do you have any sort of perception of what their opinion would have been?

I think, I imagine their perception is that they're running faster to stand still and when you look, yeah, it's not just the paper trails as it were, but they have to double mark and things like that. You know and each of these in themselves not necessarily a bad thing but the combination of them all and with a Head of School saying 'Yeah, but we've got income

generation work to do and the number of hours in a day doesn't increase. So something has to give.

How would you describe your relationship with academics? To you sort of see yourself as a manager, father figure, one of the team?

All of those.

Any one more so than others?

Well I think I have the responsibility to be a manager but I believe that the best way to manage is to be part of a team and I wouldn't like anything else. Staff has to feel that I am approachable. One of the problems with sitting up here is that I don't come into contact with a lot of academics—those who form part of the various committees that I chair and groups I do work with, Programme Leaders. I have had a number of development sessions with Programme Leaders which have been informative. That's good for me and I think it's good for the Programme Leaders because I get to meet more academics.

Do you believe that the recent strategic changes that we've had over the policy and processes impact in any way on your relationship with academics?

It's difficult to judge. I haven't received any feedback, positive or otherwise personally, although having been an academic before being a manager I'd imagine degrees of scepticism.

Do you think the recent changes impact on academics' relationships with each other? Our relationships with our colleagues? Do you think that they're helped or hindered in any way by the strategic change?

I think it's bound to create tensions. Any time ... I mean we all have comfort zones and at any time there is a threat, which requires somebody to leave a comfort zone, it creates tensions. And I think there are tensions, there are already tensions which could be exacerbated, the tensions between academics and administrators, the tension between researchers and those focused on bringing the teaching. So I think there is a chance that those tensions will work destructively.

Some of the theory I've read, describes change as a burden for people. Is change a burden do you think (SM4)?

I think it usually is perceived as a burden and I think it comes back to moving outside your comfort zone. It's always easier to stay still. But I think one of the challenges for all managers at all levels of the institution is to ease that burden.

I asked the academics what recent strategic changes they'd experienced from their own perception. What do you think the academics said? Or what have they particularly noticed about that within SU?

I would imagine a reinforcing of the message that we must continue to build our research profile and engage in knowledge transfer activities or whatever we call them this year.

And what do you perceive the reactions of people might have been?

Mixed. We've got some very feedback from some who've said 'Yes, this is the sort of university I want to work in,' and others, well you don't get it directly. You don't get the negative feedback directly, just a feeling that 'this is not the sort of institution that I can accept or the institution that I want to be part of.' This has emerged recently with the budget difficulties that are being discussed at the moment. Some see this as an opportunity to say 'No, we can't afford to do so and so let's just focus on learning and

teaching.' So there are quite a number of people still needed to be focussing on learning and teaching and I have some sympathy with that.

When academics deal with strategic change, they tend to think, or they act in four different ways according to theory. They say that academics fight the change, run away from the change, re-interpret the change or just get on with it. Any thoughts on this theory?

Spot on. It's an easy job to put names on [the types]. I think that there are some who are hoping to dodge the change.

What do you think . . . in terms of academic reaction to strategic change, what do you think best practice would be?

From who's perspective?

From your perspective as the manager. How would you like us to handle strategic change?

I think as a team and it's not just OVC pontificating. I think one of the disappointing things is for me is the new Strategic Plan was developed by OVC and all the Heads of School as a team with lots of discussion and consultation. But within some schools the level of consultation and the level of commitment from the Head of School were disappointing. So I think it's that reinforcing of the importance of strategic change to the others. Staff cannot support, if people understand why the change is necessary. It's a very difficult thing to buy into.

So you do think best practice would be a team approach. Is this feasible (SM4)?

And cascading, because it has to be and I think one of the things, you know, to look at is how we do manage the university. There's an emerging feeling that you having devolved very significantly, to be more effective I think we've got to reign back some of that devolution.

When I asked academics how they viewed strategic change, do you feel that the feedback that I got was its just window dressing or yes, this is embedded deep change within our institution?

I would be amazed if you got any of the former category.

If you want to say pass to any of these (SM4)

[inaudible] No I think some will see it as a revolution, some will see it as evolution.

But do they see it as deep change or just surface change do you think?

It's a difficult one. I think will see it as deep change but I would imagine most would see it as an evolution from what was in the previous strategic plan.

Do you think that accepting change is part of the job of an academic?

I think its part of the real world today, whatever job you do whether it is public sector or the private sector. If you don't change it's difficult to survive in a world that's changing rapidly around you.

If we look at change in the university as a sort of ongoing process, are we at the beginning, the middle, the end of this change process?

It's a continuum.

Now organisational change theory divides change process into two categories, top-down change by management, or bottom-up change from academics. Which process would you say describes SU? Is this change coming down or is this change coming up or is it coming from somewhere else?

Well I think it comes back to the best practice in managing change and I think increasingly I've felt, you know, and a number of people have said this to me both academics and non-academics, that perhaps the OVC should be more prescriptive in terms of the way that we do things, learning and teaching strategies [inaudible] and not leaving for the Schools to interpret things. You run the risk of that interpretation being different. But coming back to the way I've spoken about the development of the Strategic Plan and the idea, the hope was that the discussions going out on to the Schools and the support departments would feed back into the Strategic Plan and we would get the top-down and the benefit of the bottom-up. And to some extent that happened. I mean through the consultation process there were changes.

I'm not saying one's right and one's wrong I'm simply saying how the process is working right now.

No, no, no. . . . And I think that's the way it ought to be, a combination of top-down. I think management is expected to lead but also to listen.

So when I asked the academics where they think the push for change comes from here at SU, what do you think they said?

From the top!

They perceive it to be a top-down.

Yes.

Any reason why you think they perceive it that way?

It is human nature and I think a lot of it ... it comes back to this notion [inaudible] it is easier. Each day is similar.

So you believe then, simply your own perspective that academics do contribute to strategic change at the university. Do you think they think that?

Some do. But I think a lot ... and I think this is where we need to work more ... I think a lot depends on the way it is managed, the work, and the rest, and whether the academics feel that they've been acknowledged. I'm not sure that that was the same question.

Yes, that's the key bit. It was the feeling. So do you feel that academics should contribute to policy and process? Or do you think this really is, in today's world, the Senior Management function?

I think everybody should contribute. We are a non- [inaudible] organisation. I think academics should contribute. Which is not say that there shouldn't be a strong steering role to take because I think it's unreasonable to expect academics to be in tune with [inaudible] financial controversies with the Bank.

That sort of leads into the next sort of question actually and that is does the regular academic know enough about the big picture or the issues to contribute to strategic change?

Possibly not and that's one thing that I think is a block. One of the things that I've done is to try and run things about the problems, PVC academic folders with lots of information for example on QAA and things like that. I'm not sure people have the time to look at it but when I was a Dean at the last place I got nothing on the equivalent of OVC. So I got onto the website and so on and found that I was more effective in being able to do that and telling and sharing that with my staff.

So are you saying the information is there but the average academic is not pro-active in seeking this out?

Yeah, but I think, and again I think it comes back to the way we manage. I've started a series of OVC Briefing things for the UMT basically but the expectation is that they cascade these down and discuss them within Schools where the support services is run. There was one of them that I discussed at (a meeting) in the morning, and I had a response back from an academic in one of those Schools the afternoon that I discussed this, its having already been shared. So again it's that variability across the piece. I think there are some Schools where the discussions that take place up here are discussed in the Schools and the feedback from the Schools, from the academics, comes back and we get to hear very quickly.

In your opinion are than sort of positive or negative attributes to the way strategic change happens right now?

Within the university?

Yes. What's good about it and what's bad about it?

I think that what's good is the intention to consult and to listen. I think what's not so good is ensuring the consistency of that. A lot comes back to that. I mean this is

digressing but I've been looking at committee structures and the way that we work within the university. With a few exceptions, what I've concluded is that it's not the committee structures that are wrong it's the way we use committees. In the way that people are not representing the institutions on those committees. They're coming without having a discussion with the School and they're going back without stimulating the discussion in the School. They just come to the committee meeting, some people. They just come to the committee meetings and that's it. The purpose is to come to the committee meetings and to go away again. That's not the way we need to work. But I think it comes back to the way that we roll out the strategic plan.

Do you think academics feel they're part of this change process? Or do they see themselves as victims of change? Change is just done to them without them participating in any way?

Some will feel victims but particularly those that don't understand why. Those who we collectively fail to reach and explain the context about the reason for change. There'll be some people who won't believe our analysis. There will be some who will be inclined to think that they don't want any ideas that management comes up with and there will be those who have been engaged, and I've quoted examples before, of this. This is the sort of icing [inaudible].

Do you think academics believe they've got a voice then in planning strategic change? Not do they in your opinion but do they think they have a voice?

Again not in full, some will and some won't.

Do you know what a change agency is (SM4)? Using a change agent?

Yeah.

Do you think this strategy is suitable for universities? Where you get a couple of academics on side and then get them out to sort of to seed the change process.

Yeah. I think that can be very helpful. I mean it's something that I've used in the past. And I think that was the sort of thing that we had in mind with the rolling out of the Strategic Plan we didn't have early success and maybe that was regrettable.

We're on the closing questions now. Overall then, could the strategic change process be improved at SU?

It can always be improved.

Any ideas as to ... ?

Well I think the idea that you match their ... but I think that it's ensuring that discussions have taken place. I know that (previous university) went through the same sort of exercise, consultations on the Strategic Plan. At the time I felt that this was a little over the top but every Dean, every Head of Support Service had to report back on how the roll out had gone, how the discussions had gone within the faculty, and that was cascaded down. So there was a sort of check that the discussion had taken place and the people had been reached. Here, I think, we took that on trust.

In your opinion do academics need anything to help them adapt to changes at work?

Well more time would help. We're not succeeding in doing that. I think understanding the context is important. Understanding is important. And I think they need to understand or to realise that we know it's not going to be easy and I think we have to

continue to think of ways in that we can work more effectively to create more space for our academics.

So you see communication issues here?

Oh very much so. I mean no organisation has communication solved, emails not excepted. In fact, if I were to do any research at all, I would like to follow up the hypothesis that email impedes communication.

Do you think the reward system, or as some people say, the lack of reward system at SU has any impact on change implementation?

I think it always does. I think what concerns me more, it's not so much the reward system, it's our ability to manage poor performance and I don't think poor performance is a major issue in the sense that there's a lot of it but it's demotivating for those who see others, and I've heard it expressed in this way, getting away with it when they themselves are giving 110%. For me I think that's a greater problem than the reward system. We're looking at the reward system and the teaching fellowships. Hopefully giving the signal that it's learning and teaching is important, but managing poor performance that's an issue.

What do you think the academics said when I asked them if they felt rewards went hand in hand with implementation of change?

I would expect them to feel that the reward systems were not tracking the change and it's quite … I think you find that it polarizes. There's always an element for us it's greed. But we introduced the learning and teaching fellowships because, you know, we felt it was very important to say, as I say, that learning and teaching is very important and feeling that researchers are rewarded and it's more obvious that the values which in the

rewards systems set criteria for change than value of learning and teaching. Some of the reaction from that, from the researchers, was that we dumped on the research. So we can't win.

Do you have any final comments on this topic area? Areas that you don't think I've covered that are important that you'd like to state?

I think the cover is very comprehensive. I think managing change is, I think it's the biggest challenge and we've got to get it right. We've got to. Well I think the bottom line is we've got to take people with us and in order to do that we've got to communicate. [tape ended]

[End of Interview]

Senior Management Interview Number Five

The first area I'd like to discuss is basically HE as a whole, as a sort of sector. How do you perceive the Higher Education sector to be changing in the UK?

Well obviously with the movement to a much more mass Higher Education sector which has been going on now for quite some time but accelerating, I suppose, particularly in the last decade, and the abolition of the binary line, I think it's becoming a much more diverse sort of sector and probably going, in the future, to be driven much more by market considerations.

Any other changes to the sector as a whole?

Obviously the Widening Participation agenda has meant, I suppose, that the age profile and perhaps the socio economic background of much more of the students is becoming increasingly diverse and so, although we still tend to think in terms of 18-23 year olds, in terms of a lot of what we do, when you actually look at the reality, we've had quite a lot of mature students and a lot of now international students obviously in the sector.

So these are all sort of factors of massification of Higher Education?

Yeah.

(SM5), where do you think the drivers are coming from for these changes? Within the UK or is there any global pressure?

I think the drive is largely within the UK. I think the UK's a bit sort of schizophrenic about it actually. I mean if I look at some other countries I think that the idea of a mass Higher Education system, a non-elitist type of Higher Education system is much more

prevalent, if you look at the States and some other places. And I think it's partly a reaction to economics and the need for knowledge based economies and this is where I think there's a certain amount of, within the UK, as I said, people aren't quite sure and there's an argument that if you've got all the people into Higher Education where are the plumbers coming from; which seems to me to miss the point really.

So how do you feel overall about this process, about massification?

Oh I'm absolutely firmly in favourite of it. I really do think that to stop people's learning process if you like at, pick whatever age you like, 16, 18, is crazy and because of the way the world is going, particularly the way that business is going and knowledge based enterprises are going I suppose and people will just have to continue adapting and learning. And therefore I do think, dealing with that instance sort of formalise both FE and HE into people's early twenties and beyond is very important. And I do think there's a ... one of the things that's often sort of occurred to me is there's a lost generation, it seems to me, of people who are maybe in their thirties or even early forties who've got 20 years of their working life left, with all of these people coming behind them with Higher Education type qualifications and those people, I think, are in a bit of a dilemma really as to how they might progress in the future; a huge number of [inaudible] like (X), my PA.

So basically, overall, you think it's a positive step.

Absolutely!

OK. I asked the academics how they found their working environment changing. What do you think the academics commented on?

Being asked to do more and no time to do things properly I suspect, one might say, increased bureaucracy I'm sure they will have said and more emphasis now on efficiency

perhaps. And they may well say at the expense of quality. I suspect some of them will also have significant reservations about the ability of many of the students coming into Higher Education to benefit from Higher Education.

How about positive comments? What do you think they thought positively about the changing work environment?

It's difficult to say really. I suppose they would ... I think many of them, philosophically, would sign up to education as Higher Education ought to be available on a wide basis. Particularly I guess whether there's any sort of divide between females and males on this would be interesting, but I would guess many female academics would see it very much as a way forward in terms of reducing inequalities; sofrom that point of view, positive. Hopefully here ... are we still talking sector wide?

We're talking within SU.

If it's SU, some I would hope would have been positive about better opportunities in terms of being able to engage in research and some even, maybe a minority, in terms of exploiting the technology and stuff like that. I mean much more interesting I think if some of the rest were probably making but I suspect we have quite a number who would be quite concerned about the way things are going.

And where do you think academics think changes are being driven from? Do you think they think it's coming from within SU from outside pressure?

I would think they would largely think it is being driven by outside pressure but that perhaps a fair few management is sympathetic to those sort of changes in any event.

So you think they conceive that it's outside of SU?

I think they would see that its, a lot of the agenda is clearly being driven by the government and through ... by the government through the Funding Council. So you've only got to look at all the special initiatives, funding initiatives, which clearly identify that. There is ... if you want additional funding you have to sort of follow the government path, so to speak, and I would have thought that would be fairly obvious to a lot all staff as well.

How would you describe your relationship with the academics?

My relationships?

Would you say you're a sort of a father figure, manager, one of the team?

I would think most of them would see me as a manager.

And would you describe yourself as a manager? Do you see yourself as a manager?

Yes.

Do you think the recent strategic changes at SU have impacted in any way on your relationship with the academics?

When we talk about academics, some of my contact with academics is clearly with the academic trade union.

I'm talking about individual academics at the lecturer and senior lecturer position.

I don't think so because I don't think I have that much day to day contact with them. So it would be fairly casual. No, I can't say.

That's fine. Do you think the recent changes have impacted on academics' relationships with each other?

Not hugely. I mean I have ... I mean this anecdotal but my perception will be that those of our academics who have come in, perhaps, from a professional or a business background, will have a different view from those who've come through more traditional routes. And so some of those former may be less tolerant of what they would see as resistance to change amongst some of the latter. I don't know that that's a huge issue really and it's probably, of course, over simplification because I'm sure many people who have been here a long time as academics, quite a number of them have actually changed and developed and are as just ahead as anybody else really.

Some theorists say that change is a burden for people. Do you think change can be a burden?

For me personally, no, I enjoy change, but I think it's ... yes, I mean I think for a lot of people . . . it's not so much the change, I think, it's actually the concerns about the change, the fears of change. Once they actually get into it I think . . . a lot of people actually enjoy change if that sort of fear factor is removed from it.

When I asked academics what recent strategic changes to policy or process had they experienced or noticed, what do you think stood out? What do you think the changes were? Here at SU, the academics.

I would have said some of them would certainly say an emphasis, a much better emphasis on research. That would, I think, be the main one. And maybe a devaluing of teaching co-incidentally, some of them might perceive.

They might perceive that.

Yes. But the career structure ... I've certainly heard some say that, you know, we have a career structure for research, we've got a career structure for management, we haven't got a career structure for teachers.

When academics have this strategic change to policy or process, what do you think their reaction is when this change comes up? How do they deal with it?

It's difficult to say really. I mean I think some of them will not see it as affecting them quite frankly and just carry on life as normal. I mean what I would be interested to know but haven't sort of got the evidence as yet, is through the appraisal process I suppose. I mean that's what would be given, sort of giving the evidence in terms of the sort of objectives that people are appealing with their academic group in relation to themselves. We're about to do an exercise with each Head of School in terms of we're wanting to go through a sample of academic appraisals with them just to sort of see how it's looking at the moment. I mean the new format of learning and teaching, research, enterprise.

There are four sorts of theories in terms of academic reaction and they're sort of fight, flight, interpret, get on with it. Would you see these reactions here at SU?

Yes. I think a majority of ours would get on with it. Some would maybe fight but in a fairly low key sort of way. Flight?

Interpret, is where you take out the bits that you like.

Yes I think there would be quite a lot of that.

And get on with it?

Interpret or get on with it. I would think that would possibly cover the majority of all staff, seen it all before reaction.

When big changes come through to strategic policy and process, what do you think would be best practice for the academics?

What do you mean? For them?

In terms of their change.

How should they react, do you mean?

Yes, yes, their reaction.

I would have thought ... well, to sort of seek to understand us really. To get engaged, perhaps, hopefully through attending open meetings. Try and understand the thing. Try and look at it in the context of why is it happening and if it's actually perceived to be for the benefit of students then hopefully embrace it.

So you'd prefer them to engage with it.

Absolutely!

To just sort of blindly engage with it, or have this interpretation engagement?

No. Well I think any strategy really, once you take it down to ... or take it to other levels, in some way it's got to be interpreted to fit the circumstances. But as long as it's broadly in line with the strategy, then I don't have a problem with that.

And with these big strategies coming through right now, do you think the academics view it as embedded deep change?

No.

Do you view it as embedded deep change?

Yes. I mean if I could take an example, I think we have a major task with our academic staff in terms of being able to demonstrate that, as time passes, their knowledge base is sufficient for purpose really. I mean people, you know, that they have either kept themselves through scholarship up to date, preferably actually by engaging in research and certainly knowledge transfer. That's from an academic credibility point of view. There is an additional factor which is that, from an economic point of view, the funding we actually get for learning and teaching will never actually fully fund the institution. In other words we have to be able to secure funding from other purposes as well. So I think every academic, by and large, has got to accept that there's something just beyond teaching that they have to engage with for those reasons.

And do they accept, understand that do you think?

I'm not sure that many do. You see we've managed the efficiencies of this organisation. We've managed to pay pay rises and increase numbers of staff by growing student numbers. When that has fairly got to stop as it has more or less now for undergraduates on running our partner colleges, how you then go about getting additional funds becomes much more difficult. So I think our track record for a lot of our academic staff is they've

put up with it in a sense, you know, numbers have grown and numbers of staff haven't grown as much, but it was relatively painless in some ways, and we were able to pay the pay rises that are a bit beyond inflation each year, or a bit beyond HEFCE funding certainly. The new sort of dilemma we're facing is that easy option, in some ways, is no longer there. It's got to be funded as I told you and it's very difficult to bring in funding for research and enterprise. And I think a lot of the staff hasn't necessarily seen that. I've seen signs certainly talking with NATFHE in the last twelve months a growing realisation there. The other thing I think that has perhaps, is bringing it home to staff is we have regrettably over the last five years on a number of occasions gone through compulsory academic redundancies and that, for the wrong reason, it does bring it home to people.

Do you think that accepting change is part of their job as an academic?

Absolutely. It's almost ipso facto really because if it's about development of knowledge being an academic that in itself is helping to fuel change in the world all round them. Why should they be immune?

If you look at change at the university as a sort of process, are we at the beginning of a process (SM5), the middle or the end of the process?

We're fairly well still towards the beginning I would think as an institution. We have a long way to go in terms of maturing academically I think. But we've come an awful long way as well.

If you read organisational theories in Higher Education, they divide change process into two categories, top-down change by management, or bottom-up change from academics. Which process, in your opinion, describes SU? Are we in a top-down model or a bottom-up model or a mixture of the two?

I think we're in . . . we started, when I came here, it was very much a top-down model; absolutely driven from this floor by one or two people. With devolution we went fairly dramatically in the opposite direction. I think we're in the process of actually saying . . . and it's a bit of a mixed mode because some of it as well is coming in and driven by external factors still, but a lot of it, I think, is at being driven at School level and hopefully by the academics in School level. I think our feeling, certainly in OVC is that we probably need to have some sort of greater corporate input for the future because with things like top-up fees and things like that, I think we're going to have to look to see whether there are areas that we shouldn't be in any more because either we're not really got the appeal, quite brutally we may not be good enough. And there are areas that we are very good in that maybe we should be doing more of.

So top-down or bottom-up?

Mixture.

Mixture, OK.

But with more, a bit more top-down than we have at the moment. But top-down in terms of leadership, in terms of initiation, not in terms of necessary final decision.

When I asked the academics that, where do you think they see the push, the change coming at SU?

I would think it would be a mix. I would have thought that in the last few years a lot of them would seem, certainly from a curriculum point of view have been fairly well within the Schools' control. Although numbers of course, control of student numbers of course is a fairly significant factor, I suppose. So that's top-down in the sense that we're controlled by HEFCE anyhow.

Yes.

So that's a limiting factor. So I guess academics might see it fairly significantly being centrally, 'them up there', which could be anything from OVC to HEFCE.

In your opinion (SM5), do academics contribute to change in policy and process here?

Oh yes.

How? Give me specific examples of how you feel the academics contribute.

Well one good example I'd quote which is in the (X) School. It's an isolated incident perhaps but something called (a defunct degree) clearly had no future and the academic who was sort of fairly junior actually but was responsible for that small area, began to look at (this degree), you know, that we must relate to and (new issues) sort of came into it. And out of that in fact grew our entry into (new degree area), (X) being part of it. And in fact it's become a major feature of the School almost fortuitously. But that was an initiative by one academic, partly self preservation I have to say but equally very commendable in the sense it got us into a growth area.

So you do feel that academics contribute?

Yes. I mean again you look at ... I mean I'm only aware of some of the things, the (X) School has got some; in (this School) I think a lot of initiatives come directly from the staff.

Do you think the academics believe they contribute to change?

Well I think those of them that do it clearly do. Many others may not see that in the same way.

Should they contribute or is this really a senior management function?

I think they should do. I mean one of the disappointing features about this, maybe it happens in other institutions as well, but I mean we have a feeling that in some way the place almost ceases ... not ceases to operate but I mean sort of five or six o'clock it becomes dead. There isn't much of a life beyond the core working day and one of the things that are quite disappointing in this institution is the lack of support from academics when you have a Professorial Inaugural Lecture. You know their own colleague is being elevated to Professorial status. You might get some ... you will get some from other immediate colleagues in the School but you won't get a mega turn out for the School and you certainly won't, probably won't get it from any other Schools. So, we still don't seem to have that sort of culture of supporting and celebrating academic achievement.

So if we are mostly in a top-down model at SU, what are the positive and negative points of the top-down model as far as it works here?

I'm not sure I'd agree that we're mostly in a top-down ... it depends where you say the top is. I suppose within Schools if they see it as still being driven by the Head of Schools.

Do you still see it as a mix?

Yes I do, yes.

OK. Fine. Do you think the academics know enough about the big picture or the issues in Higher Education to contribute to strategic change?

Well yeah, I think they have the opportunity to do so. It's whether, to what extent ... I mean there is a saying that applies I think in many institutions, not just here, maybe more so in other places, that an academic's first loyalty is to the discipline, subject area, and secondarily to the institution. I'm not sure how true that is here. I think it's probably very true in some traditional universities. It's probably also true, but maybe there is more understanding of the role of the institution here because it is so tight economically for us. I think from time to time some members of staff sort of say ... they recognise that the institution needs to be well managed because actually that's their security as well as everything else. That wouldn't be an issue in (Redbrick) quite frankly. They could lose ten million quid on an accounting system and it doesn't seem to matter.

So do academics know enough about the big picture about the financial base of the university?

No, they certainly wouldn't know about that and to be honest when we go on and do sort of road shows for OVC I mean the attendance is pretty limited and even the trade unions will say that getting people interested, they find a struggle.

Do you think academics feel part of the change process? Or just change is something that happens to them and they go with the flow?

I think the majority would be the latter and if it happens to them they'd go with the flow.

Do you think academics feel they have a voice in planning strategic change? Not do they but do they feel they have?

Probably a lot of them probably feel they haven't.

And do they in your opinion?

I believe so. I mean when we launched the current strategic plan we did a whole series of sort of road shows about getting people into talking about values and the sort of values and things like that and certainly the current strategic plan was very much a bottom-up approach by trying to engage with staff. But again people would still say and feel I suppose 'That's all very well but actually a lot of it, a lot of the factors are given. So we can't change it that much.'

Do you think using change agency strategy is suitable for university? That's when you get a couple of academics on side and get them to sort of to seed the news.

Yes. I think it is. I mean it's in a sense what we try and do with the learning and teaching strategy. Things like Learning and Teaching Fellowships I mean are an attempt to do that, (X) Fellowships are an attempt to do that. And I think it has worked to some extent.

Could the strategic change process be improved at all at SU?

Oh I'm sure it could be.

Any specific ideas?

One of the things that bothers me in terms of official sort of representation of staff is, and there are two trade unions, NATFHE, I don't know how many members they have but it's probably in the order of about 200 from 650 academics. Unison I know has about 100 from about the same number of support staff. It makes my life quite easy to sit down and talk to them but I actually know that I'm not really talking to genuine … they represent a particular point of view but they would admit themselves that they could not claim to represent the staff. I believe we need to try and find some way of engaging more directly with staff. It's not going to be easy to do but getting people to take on the

representational role, go back and consult with people and bring you a consensus which is distinct from their own individual view or the view of the last person that they met in the corridor. It's not going to be easy to do but I do think we need to greater buy in and probably even better communication would help us to do that.

In your opinion do the academics need anything to help them adapt to change at work such as changes in their work environment. Is there anything the university could be doing for them to make it easier for change to implement and become embedded?

I'm sure that . . . I suppose better communication of really directly to academics on some of the key issues as to why we're doing things. But I mean I do actually believe that a properly run appraisal scheme, where somebody can sit down and have a good discussion with their immediate manager is a very powerful way. So I think a lot of people see appraisal as a chore both managers and staff and I actually see it as quite an important opportunity for people to sort of have in input and to relate their own working life into more corporate goals.

That leads very nicely into the last area. Do you think the reward process at SU has any impact on the success of change implementation? When I say reward I mean time remission, salaries.

I think in terms of salaries we have the same culture as many other public sector organisations in this country in that we … an annual increment is seen as an automatic entitlement and there financial reward, in that sense, I think has never been a hugely major factor. As we move more into more discretionary sort of payment in that way or based on some sort of assessment of contribution and performance I think that will. I think time is a more powerful as I would see it. I mean people see themselves as having a less, as they would see a burdensome teaching role. That would certainly be seen as a

reward and sometimes people see that there are inequities and it's one of the things we saw when we investigated different Schools that they teach on average less than we do.

Interesting remarks, thank you, nearly finished. So does the reward process then encourage people to change and implement change?

I hope so. I mean I haven't ... it would be difficult for me to say that it's working, but through the HR strategy for instance we have funded quite a significant amount of freeing up academic time to gain, engage specifically in research and to a lesser extent a sort of enterprise knowledge transfer by buying people's time. So that message I guess would have got out. But I don't ... I'm not sure that there are dozens of other people queuing up saying 'I want the same thing'. So I'm not sure that the evidence is there exactly.

When I asked the academics if they felt they got rewarded for changing, what do you think they said?

The majority of them probably said no.

Should the reward system encourage change implementation? Should people be rewarded for changing?

I think so, but I mean it would be much better for the university if actually people, especially people on professional contracts, saw that a change is just a part of life really and therefore, to some extent, it's almost a negative . . . it's almost the stick rather than the carrot. I think that more and more people are realising that if they don't change that in fact at some point or other it's going to catch up with them.

And when I asked the academics whether they felt the carrots should be associated with change, tied in as a reward for change. What do you think the academic said?

Some would agree with that, I think. Others would see that as divisive. They sort of see things like performance related pay as a divisive thing, as not encouraging teams and that we work in teams.

Is there anything in this area that you feel we haven't discussed and you'd like to have on the tape (SM5)?

I think one of the issues that is genuinely puzzling is that when you try to give academic staff I suppose in particular, an opportunity to engage or to find out more, or to be involved more, there's a sort of marked reluctance. And that shows itself through . . .

[tape ended]

[End of Interview]

Senior Management Interview Number Six

The first item I want to cover (SM6) is Higher Education in the UK. How do you perceive this Higher Education sector to be changing right now?

That's a big question to start with.

What would you say the main changes are?

I'd say the main changes probably are a greater government interest in Higher Education than perhaps has been the case in recent years when quite honestly Higher Education has not been a high political issue and therefore has been rather left to itself with gradually reducing funding, reducing investment in Higher Education. And I think what the government is now doing is essentially, in its own way, seeking to address some of that under-investment and interest over many, many years. One could argue about the means and ways in which they're trying to do that, but nevertheless they are getting it onto the agenda or have got it onto the agenda where previous governments have chosen not to put it as one of their priorities. So certainly government involvement is one of the major factors why, I think, Higher Education is changing. And I think then it becomes a ... as it is becoming in the Health Service or in other parts of the public sector, should essentially the user or somebody known as the customer or sometimes known as the student, should the user pay or should the State pay? So I think that is one fundamental change. I think the other major change that is impacting on Higher Education at the moment, is the social changes in what I would crudely term consumer behaviour. And that can be manifest in terms of a more litigious society about consumers, the customers and clients knowing their rights or claiming to know their rights. And I think we are seeing that more and more in Higher Education, certainly since the last time I touched Higher Education which was what twenty years ago or so, where now students expect to have certain things, you

know, set out in the course specification, therefore I expect to get it. I'm sure that that was not the case when I last touched Higher Education twenty years ago.

What do you think the driver is for these changes? Are these drivers within the UK or is there any sort of global forces at work?

Take the second one first. Is this what I would regard as an increasing consumer driven society. That is a global trend. It is a global trend, the importance of brands. The importance of customer choice and so on is something that, yeah, it's come across the Atlantic apparently over a significant period of time, certainly the last ten to fifteen years. And certainly in service sector and not just in the product sector, a good education in business terms in the service sector. So I think that is a trend that we're seeing. But we're seeing across a wide range of consumer buying behaviour. It's not just about Higher Education. So I don't think Higher Education is unique, I just think it's getting the backwash of a more general trend in society that's primarily being driven by or influenced by North America, United States in particular. I think on the former, that is the government influence, I'm sure that government would dress up a case about 'Yes this is a response to global trends, lack of competitiveness within the UK, the UK being a high knowledge based economy because that's the only way it's going to survive in the future.' I can't put my hand on my heart and say 'Look, yes, I believe the government has got real joined up thinking here.' I think that is how they would rationalise it. I'm not sure that's really driving what their changes are. I think it's more that they think they've got to do something with Higher Education. They don't know where the money is going to come from to put more government money in, so therefore they'll come up with some other solution.

So how do you feel overall about this change process in this sector? Are you overall positive, negative, bit of both?

Positive, yes. I can't say I'm totally positive with everything the government's doing on that side of things, but no, overall, I feel it's positive. I feel these forces for change are positive changes. There's always the question about 'What will we lose?' if we change and do things differently or doing different things. But no, I feel positive about these changes.

How do you think the working environment is changing at SU for the academics?

I speak with some detachment. I don't have day to day working contact with academics now. Of course, you know, we go to the same meetings and I know and value the colleagueship of many of my academics. But nevertheless I'm not in the classroom every day. I'm not mixing with them in a School based environment. So I suppose it a perception from a distance a little. But I can well understand if academics are feeling significant pressure. I've seen it before in another public sector organisation, (X), which was a civil service organisation. A lot of civil servants there felt very threatened by change in the early '90s while I was leading a significant change programme there. And I can see many parallels, all be it in a different context, here. Academics perhaps have joined an institution, maybe it was (very old name of SU), maybe it was (next name for SU), maybe it was SU, and they have joined essentially with a view to the teaching and teaching environment. And now they're being challenged that teaching is not enough for a university. The university has to do more than that, particularly the research and enterprise side and you as an academic have to play your part in doing that. And I can see that that could, may well generate fear of change for many people. 'Am I capable of making this change? I've been here for twenty years or whatever. I joined to do this. Am I really capable of making that change? Do I want to make this change? I never signed up to a contract that said I had to do research or enterprise or whatever.' So I can well understand the changes in that regard having some concerns for academics. And even, quite frankly, I mean just comparatively simple things like accommodation pressures and so on. I can some of that having an impact on academic colleagues and

their concerns about what's going to happen to the place that I work. I do find the culture is one of stability and not an appetite or experience of significant change. It's always a relative joke, the relative thing about how big is change, well it's as big as it seems. And, for an organisation that's not experienced much change, although it itself thinks it's been significant change, it's not. Compared with outside the university it is not.

Do you think the academics perceive the changes they're going through as being just within SU or coming from the outside?

I would think and expect them to think of it as things that have been imposed on SU from outside. That is what I would expect.

How would you describe your relationship with the academics? Do you see yourself as a sort of father figure, one of the team, their manager?

I would be interested to see what they think of me, an outsider and a stranger, somebody who doesn't know their way around. I suppose I don't really think 'What is my relationship like with academics?'

Do you feel you have a relationship with academics?

I feel it is just a relationship with colleagues and I'm talking now about the people that I know in the academic disciplines. It is just one of colleagues. They happen to have a different role here than the one that I have. I see mine as being the greater emphasis on management and perhaps leadership, and that's academic leadership, but management and their role are as the professionals delivering the core business of the university. I mean I quite frankly am an overhead but I'm seen as, yeah, managing the operations of the university. I don't see myself as managing the academics except those who are with the (name of department) and work directly for me. But I do see myself as managing the

operations of the university. I have a significant part to play in that. But the academics are really the ones primarily delivering on our core business which is learning and teaching and it's a bit of research and it's a bit of enterprise.

Do you believe that recent strategic change at SU has impacted in any way with your relationship with academics?

No. I joined just after the Strategic Plan was delivered and I don't think that my relationship has changed because it was probably too early in the day for that to happen. It could be seen that my appointment was in support of what the Strategic Plan means to deliver. In fact I hope it would be seen in that way.

Again it's just your perception I'm after. Do you think that recent changes have impacted on academics' relationships with each other?

Probably not enough. No. No I don't think ... around the edges but not materially. There will be individual cases where that has happened but, no, I don't see it otherwise.

Some theorists say that change can be a burden for people. (SM6), do you think change can be a burden for people?

Yes. It can be a burden for people. I don't think it needs to be but it can be a burden for people. Different people have different appetites and different abilities, different capacities to accommodate change and people need support through change. And there will always be ... there'll be the 25% of people who encourage, enthuse and are hungry for change. There will be 25% who will be resistant to change and who will always find it difficult and some of those may never really be able to accommodate change. And there will be 50% in the middle that will be ambivalent about change and if they see the change is going to take place then they will move in that direction and if they think 'no

this ain't going to happen' then they will be more in the camp of the resistors. It's a very broad generalisation but, yeah, I'm sure, for some, it is seen as a burden.

So I asked the academics, top of mind, what recent strategic changes have you experienced. What do you think the academics commented on?

Probably increased workload.

Anything else?

Probably car parking charges. I would hope that some of them commented on the broader agenda than just learning and teaching. But my anecdotal experience is that has not yet touched enough people. And as a result I can well imagine some people not really having felt that. But they ought to have done, quite frankly, by now. I don't mean that in a negative way. But if the university's strategy for diversification beyond learning and teaching has not yet touched everybody in the university a year after the Strategic Plan, a year and more after the Strategic Plan was delivered, then we haven't been very effective in delivering our Strategic Plan.

Two of these strategic changes that you have just commented on, that you think the academics have probably experienced and were able to chat about. What do you think their reaction were or have been or are ongoing to the strategic change?

It will absolutely vary in the same way as I said 25% for, 25% against, 50% undecided. Let's see which things are going. How do the runes read? I would expect that there will be a small percentage that will always be able to accommodate a larger workload or whatever. In fact it's the old thing, if you want something done; give it somebody who's busy. And I would expect there would be a significant number who will feel put upon, who will feel resistant to an increased or a more diverse workload. I won't comment on

the impact of the car park charges because I see that as neither strategic nor, quite frankly in the overall piece of things, important. But it is important because it does matter to some individuals and so it is therefore important. But I do not see that as being strategic.

Theorists said that academics react to change in one of four ways. The either fight it or they, flight, they run away from it or they re- interpret it or they just seem to get on with it. Any comments on that applicable to SU?

I think that would be applicable not just to academics when it comes to change but to anything. I mean by flight I would say it's more sort of ostrich, put their heads in the sand rather than run away. I don't think that ... I don't think, particularly in the public sector, I don't think there are many who would essentially leave an organisation because they're frightened of change, I think they're more like to stick their ... put their head in the sand, that sort of flight habit. I can well imagine, and indeed I think I've seen some evidence of it, that academics, of all people, will take the framework for change and re-interpret or misinterpret it or put their own personal views on what change is about. And so the importance of leadership and clear communication is critical in that sort of environment.

When we talk about academic reaction to change what do you think is best practice?

In terms of what, getting them to accommodate change or what?

With this accommodation of change, do you like them to re-interpret?

No I don't think it's helpful. I mean it is fine to have academic discussions and debates and so on, or debates about things in an academic way. And I accept that that is part of the way that things happen at SU. And I'm absolutely sure it happens at other universities in spades. You know, we touched on the Senate before the interview and there's a deliberative approach there as well.

So best practice would be, once the consultative sessions have finished, accepting the change and then implementing it.

Yes.

Is that feasible for cats?

Yes. Yes it is.

Do you think the academics view the recent strategies at SU as deep embedded change?

Sorry do I think that's what's happening?

The academics consider the changes that are coming through to them as deep change, embedded change?

No.

How do you think they perceive it?

Today's good idea!

Yeah.

I mean these are very general statements, but yes, yes, I do think that there is a view that 'Well OK so that's the agenda for today. Let's see what tomorrow's plan says.'

Do you think that accepting change is part of the job of an academic?

I think it is part of a job full stop. And I think academics have to accept that. There's nothing special or unusual or different about academics in terms of acceptance of change. There is a different context there and anybody who's trying to bring about change has to be mindful of that context, be it in a NHS hospital, be it in a civil service organisation, be it in the Local Authority, be it in a university. They have to be mindful of the differences of context there but nevertheless there is a responsibility for anybody who is part of this university to ultimately buy in to the corporate direction that we're trying to set.

How do you see the change process at SU? Are we at the beginning of a change, (SM6), the middle, the end of the change process?

I think we would see it as being somewhat at the beginning of a change process. But I actually think when one moves on a couple of years and looks back we'll say that actually that was no more of an extrapolation of where we were. Perhaps the pace of change has become more rapid. I hope it has. And I also think, in a couple of years time or three years time, no doubt there will be other things coming through that will require further change and we'll look back on this one as just a comparatively small change, because our individual and corporate capacity for change has to increase and will increase I'm sure. We'll look on this one and say 'Well, so what was the big deal there?' That's what I believe.

Well having an (advanced degree) I'm sure you're well aware that organisational change theory defines change process into two categories, top-down change and organic bottom-up change. Which process do you think best describes SU?

I wouldn't recognise such a bi-polar theory.

Is it a mixed system do you think?

Well if it is effective change it has to be. Certainly, in terms of how is change happening at the moment in the university, it is more top-down than bottom-up. I think it is not top-down enough and not bottom-up enough. But it is more top-down than bottom-up. I don't sense there is a lot of, if I can put it in these terms, a lot of grass roots hunger for change, pushing for change. There are one or two bits of excellence in terms of trying to drive change forward from the bottom-up. But no, I see it largely as being driven from top-down. It's been, you know, setting business plans that cascaded down through parts of the organisation and that is how the change is actually happening in practice.

Where do you think the academics perceive the push for change to be coming from? Do you think they think it's top-down or bottom-up or mixed?

Top-down I'd say. Top-down and the question you touched on earlier, largely externally driven. It is the Senior Management's response to the changing external political agenda that is driving a lot of the change within SU.

(SM6), your own personal opinion here, do you think academics contribute to change in policy and process at the university?

There are some academics who contribute very significantly to that change process and really make it happen in their own work areas.

How?

I think by demonstrating best practice, by enthusing. I mean these are the 25% or whatever percentage it is who are enthusiastic about change. They identify what the benefits of the change will be and they have their own role within it, I'm thinking about some of the business fellows for example who are now driving forward a significant part of the enterprise agenda in their own work areas, their own Schools. And they are really

bringing about meaningful change in what we do. What I don't have a strong feel for is how strong are the ripple effects from that across the whole academic community and are they actually only touching 20% of all academics. Are there actually 80% who just carry on doing what they were doing two years ago, five years ago or whatever? But nevertheless, yeah, there are some academics that are really making a significant contribution to change. I think there are a number of others who are not. But I don't, in any way, hold ... I don't largely hold them responsible for that. I think there are responsibilities at more senior levels for really helping those people understand what change means for them in their environment. And then I would expect them to be also supportive of change. I'm not expecting everybody in the university to be a driver for change but I would be disappointed if having been given the opportunity to change their contribution to the university that they don't pick up that challenge.

Do you think the academics perceive they contribute to the planning process for strategic change? I mean you think they do. Do they think they do?

In general, no, no, I think they think it is something that the management does to them.

Should they contribute?

There should be opportunities for them to contribute. But I'm not so open that I would say let's go into a big consultation every year about what we should be doing. No, I think it needs top-down leadership. But then there should be active contribution from everybody about how does this change happen in my own work area or my own area of responsibility; because they're best placed to do it. They know what they do, they know how things can be done. It is the responsibility of senior management to explain the context of change and for them ... and to help people interpret that in their own areas. Ideally then individuals would then ... academics would see 'OK, so I understand how I might need to change what I do to fit in with that overall corporate direction.'

Do you think the academics know enough about the big picture or the issues involved to contribute to planning change if they wanted to?

No.

So what do you think are the positive or negative attributes of the way change is happening now? You seem to feel it has like a cascade effect coming down from the top.

That's how it should be. On the positive side we have made significant progress over the last twelve months in changing what we were to where we want to be. Nevertheless I feel that that is a minority activity. There are ... after the last senior staff seminar, which was back in September, which is whatever the senior ... 200 or so in the organisation are invited to attend although not many do. I had quite a lot of feedback after that. I gave a session on strategic targets and how we were doing against our Strategic Plan. I realised afterwards that it was the first that many people had heard about our progress against strategic since the Plan itself was launched in August, or July or August, twelve months previously, thirteen months previously. And so, whether I like it or not, a lot of people probably had received a copy of the Strategic Plan with their August payslip or two or something like that, and had put it on their shelf. And they probably, unless they could remember what they read at that time, had probably not had much contact with what that plan was trying to achieve in the intervening twelve months. I think we are ... I think there are great opportunities for improving our communication channels and I think that of itself would make a significant difference to embedding change, reinforcing where we're trying to get to, through more effective communication. In fact I've set up a small working group with members of UMT to try and drive that one forward.

Do you think academics feel part of the change process of SU? Or just that it gets done to them?

More that it gets done to them.

Do you think that the academics thing they have got a voice in planning change? Do they recognise they have a contribution?

I think they ought to. Do they or not? They probably, many of them would probably say that it's something that's done to them and I've got no voice in the process. They do have a voice in the process. I have some sympathy that perhaps those opportunities aren't used either by them or they're not made available to them as well as they could do. And therefore they may well be justified in feeling that change has been done to them.

Do you think using a change agency is a suitable strategy for university? That's when you get a few of academics on side and then send them out to seed change implementation.

I think that is happening. I'm not sure I'd be quite as explicit as saying they are change agents with a capital C, capital A. In practice that is how they are and I mentioned the Business Fellows earlier and there are several of those who are making a difference in their own areas. They probably don't think of themselves as change agents. Their colleagues probably don't think of themselves as change agents. An academic looking at change might see them as that they are taking on the role of change agents. And it really is those people who, yeah, who do just by their day to day activity. Not by evangelizing or standing up on soap boxes but just by their day to day way of doing things in a different way bring about change. And to a degree I suppose I've been brought in, again, I'm sure nobody thought 'Oh yes, let's bring (SM6) in as a change agent.' But I come from a different background. I do do things in different ways. I know that that has an effect of some of those who work closely with me and so I suppose one could rationalise that and say 'He's a change agent.'

OK. We're in the final straight now. So could the strategic change process be improved at SU?

Yes.

Any specific ways you feel it could be improved?

Communication is a key, key thing. Visible leadership and a clear leadership is the other single thing that I think would make the biggest difference. There are many other things that could happen as well and one could spend vast amounts of money on bringing about change which I don't advocate in the situation that we are essentially part of a sector that's had under-investment for many, many years. But I do think clearer communication, effective communication to the whole university body and the role of leaders, particularly senior leaders in the organisation. Those two levers, I think, communication and leadership are the two things that would make the biggest difference. I've got other things around management as well and management processes which I feel are immature in this sort of environment which I think also could make a difference but that's not going to happen overnight. Those are big things to change.

In your opinion do the academics need anything to help them adapt to change in the work environment?

I think they need greater exposure to what we're trying to do as a university. I haven't encountered before an environment where an employee of a corporate body has their first loyalty to, for example, their academic discipline, which runs right across the sector and not just within the organisation. I have encountered, but not so starkly before, allegiance, cultural allegiance to a particular tribe. In our situation that means a School or perhaps a Support Service. Where if you ask several academics 'Where do you work?' 'I work in

the (X) School.' or 'I work in (X)' not 'I work at SU. And their first allegiance is to their
School and that is very strong at senior management level as well. That is ... it seems to
be a challenge in bringing about corporate organisational change.

*Do you think the academic reward process at Bournemouth has any impact on the
success of change implementation?*

I think it's a bit of a red herring. I think there are some aspects of our reward policy that
could be improved to encourage, well two things, one is to encourage the process of
change. So essentially it is a ... ensuring we've got some sort of congruence between our
pay and reward system and our organisational values. Which themselves cascade out of
what we're trying to achieve in our strategic plan. So if we value flexible working,
people who will try different things or try doing things differently, then that should be
recognised in a reward structure that we have. Our reward structure is pretty rigid, it is
not very flexible. There are not many opportunities for rewarding different behaviour. I
mean just as an example I have had emails or heard from people who've said 'I haven't
had a pay rise for three years. In fact I've had 3% for the past three years or whatever.'
And that perhaps is a difference between outside the university and inside where people
just assume that they will get a cost of living increase. To many people outside a cost of
living increase is great, thank you very much. Here it is regarded as no pay increase. I
think with that sort of attitude towards pay rises then it will be several years before a
more appropriate reward system could be in place.

*When I asked the academics if they thought the reward process at the university had an
impact on change implementation, what do you think they said?*

I can imagine them saying 'What's in it for us?' 'Why change?' I can imagine them
looking at differentials between what they earn and what they perceived others outside the
university sector earn. And I can see 'Why should I? Why should I bother?' or 'Why

should I contribute, for example, to the university's enterprise agenda when in fact I can earn more myself by just doing it on my own? Or something like that. So I can imagine some of that feedback coming back. I think ... I do think that academics in general are underpaid, particularly the senior ones who are showing a wide range of competence across a wide range of areas, expertise and so on. I do think that there are quite a lot of academics who may complain about pay differentials with the other side, outside sectors, having a serious wake up call if they ever went into those outside sectors. There's a whole different value infrastructure outside. But yeah, I can imagine them saying, some of them saying 'Why bother changing? What's in it for me? I'm not even paid a decent wage at the moment.'

Do you have any final thoughts on this whole idea of change implementation at the university?

I think compared with other Higher Education institutions and I haven't got wide experience of that ... I think we ain't bad. I think we've got to get a lot better and I think if we did ... I think it's imperative that we do bring about change. I did not have a part in constructing the Strategic Plan but I'm absolutely sure it is the right way forward for the organisation. And unless we can change ourselves to better stand behind that Plan and deliver the sort of things that the Plan is looking to deliver, unless we can do that then I can see us slipping back over time. I can see us becoming less competitive in the Higher Education sector and I can see us having quite a few difficulties in the future which will ultimately manifest in financial difficulties. However I am confident that we do have the capability to bring about change, but we're not yet going fast enough. I actually think if we bring about change and really deliver on what we're trying to deliver in the Strategic Plan, bring about not just doing different things but doing things differently. And that means the whole community, academic and non academic community to do things differently. If we can bring about that then not only will this ensure we continue to survive and indeed thrive, it will actually mark us out as a significant competitive

advantage when it comes to whether it's awarding funds from (X) or whether it's attracting students or whether it's attracting the best staff and so on. I do really think it can make a difference to us. It's not going to suddenly raise us from, you know, (X) in the league table, or (X) in the league table, depending on which league table you read to you know to 5th or 6th. And in fact league tables aren't our type of thing at all but I do think we have the capability to bring about effective change. If we do do that effectively then it could really mark us out from the crowd. If we don't bring about the change then I think we will always be on the back foot and we'll always be struggling a little bit from one year to the next and we'll never be able to think 'Where are we going to be in 5 years time? Where do we want to be in 5 years time? Let's make sure we get there in 5 years time.' It will be much more, not quite a hand to mouth existence but it will be living one year on its own in isolation and then getting on with the next year and so on. So I do think we've got to bring about effective change. I think we're doing quite a lot already. I think we have to do rather more, rather more quickly. I've touched on the area of communication and leadership as the two levers that I think could really make a difference.

Thank you.

Was that OK?

[End of Interview]

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUT .... Association of University Teachers

CTM.. Course Team Meetings

FE...Further Education

HE .... Higher Education

HEFC .... Higher Education Funding Council

IHCS .... Institute of Health and Community Services, a SU School

ILT .... Institute of Teaching and Learning

NATFHE......... National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education

NVQ.. National Vocational Qualification

PA .... Programme Administrator

QAA... Quality Assurance Agency

UMT..University Management Team

ARPM..Annual Report of Programme Monitoring

OVC...Office of the Vice-Chancellor

VC...Vice-Chancellor

PL...Programme Leader

EdD...Doctorate in Education