



Address given to an IWA Lunch on the 26th September 2002 by David Grant.

Ambitious Cardiff

Cardiff University's proposed merger with the University of Wales College of Medicine will help it gain the critical mass needed to put it on a par with other leading members of the Russell Group - Britain's top 20 research-led universities - the vice Chancellor, Dr David Grant, told IWA members at a September lunch meeting.

It would create a more powerful institution, roughly one third larger than Cardiff University today, and this would be a vital step to achieving the breadth, depth and reputation needed to recruit the best academics and best students. "We must develop or recruit more academic superstars. We must also encourage greater entrepreneurship," he said.

"Cardiff's vision is to be a world-class university. Our strategy is well aligned with Wales's strategy described in the *Reaching Higher* paper produced by the Welsh Assembly Government in March 2002. Cardiff will continue the drive for internationally-leading research and teaching excellence. Cardiff will continue to recruit students from an ever-wider range of backgrounds. Cardiff will increase its strategic partnerships in Wales as well as with the world's leading institutions and businesses," he said.

The challenges faced by Cardiff and the rest of the university sector would have to be surmounted, however, in a context of financial stringency:

- Student numbers in the UK have doubled in less than ten years, while funding per head had declined from £6,500 in 1990 to £4,700 in 1999/2000. Cardiff had been able to earn extra funds from research and overseas recruitment but still made only a modest financial surplus last year of £3m-£4m on income of £160m (double the figure of 1992).
- Wales takes 5.4 per cent of the UK's students (with only 5 per cent of the population) but receives only 4.7 per cent of the total funds made available to UK universities. In research the figures are even worse with Wales receiving just 3.9 per cent of all UK university research funds and only 3.2 per cent of the hugely important Research Council funds. (Scotland has 9 per cent of the UK population and wins 12 per cent of the UK's university research funds.) Business in Wales spends just 1.3 per

cent of the UK total business expenditure on research and development compared with 3.5 per cent for Scotland.

Dr. Grant, who took up his post a year ago after a career with GEC where he became technical director responsible for engineering and technology development in a group employing 25,000 engineers and scientists, spoke of his further concern at overall research trends within the UK in spite of increased collaboration between industry and universities.

Whereas in 1981 Britain was spending 2.4 per cent of its GDP on R&D, this figure had fallen to 2 per cent by 1995, a fall of 17 per cent over a period when most other nations were seeing growth of 15 per cent or more. The latest figures show expenditure has decreased further to 1.83 per cent of GDP.

Many studies had shown, Dr Grant said, a direct relationship between long term national economic success and national investment in science, engineering and technology. The Government-appointed Foresight Panel into the future of manufacturing, (part of the wider Foresight Programme aimed at improving UK wealth creation & quality of life) and which Dr Grant chaired, came to the conclusion in the 1990s that manufacturing and the fast-growing service sector were much more integrated than before. However, the UK's strengths in services could not add sufficient export business to make up for the declining strength in the export of manufactured goods, the panel concluded.

“One of the key issues addressed across the whole Foresight Programme was the interface between the science base, largely in universities, and business or business sectors. It was clear in the mid 1990s and even clearer today that the UK has huge strengths in its science base. With one per cent of the world's population we produce five per cent of the world's science, eight per cent of the world's science papers and achieve nine per cent of the citations and ten per cent of the leading international science prizes.”

Despite this, the pathways between scientific discovery and practical application could be difficult and deep pockets were sometimes needed. Only four per cent of UK manufacturing companies were working with universities, though business funding of university research was growing by 10 per cent per annum. This represented 12.3 per cent of contract research funds received by universities and was up from 10.9 per cent in 1996. However, this still represented only two per cent of the total annual UK business expenditure on R&D.