



# Aspiring Deans Leadership Scholars Event

## Notes – 9 February 2018

This event brought together the Council of Deans of Health (CoDH or the Council), the Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF), scholars (current and alumni) of the Aspiring Deans Leadership Scholarship and one of the FNF Chairs. Attendees outlined the current positions of both FNF and CoDH. Discussion focused on the benefits and challenges faced by individual participants as well as the wider scheme and examined areas to strengthen the programme. CoDH and FNF will use feedback from this session to inform future developments.

## Summary

FNF will be launching a new strategy to be agreed in March 2018. It will be embarking on a programme of change and modernisation. The intention is to improve patient care, develop leadership capacity, and influence national policy. FNF is also keen to increase its visibility and ensure value for money. Examining programmes such as the Aspiring Deans Leadership Scholarship is part of this.

The CoDH values its relationship with FNF and wants to continue with and develop the scholarship scheme. Three previous scholars are now on the Executive. The Council has funded 11 scholars in the last 4 years. The average cost is £4,000 per person, with a total investment of around £45k. There was a need to build a story about the impact of the programme and demonstrate to the wider membership what had been achieved through this initiative.

Scholars gave reflections on their personal experience. The overwhelming view was that it was a highly valued programme and the scholarship had been beneficial for future career progression. It was noted that its added value was the bespoke nature of the programme, which was unique when comparing it to other leadership initiatives. Discussion moved on to how the scholarship currently operates and how it could be developed in the future.

### Programme mechanics

It was noted that in the past the Council was not involve in the development and delivery of the programme and that needed to change in the future. Scholars supported a co-creation/co-production approach between the CoDH and FNF. It was noted that the programme needed to be more focused on the higher education sector.

Scholars were supportive of the bespoke nature of the programme. A consistent approach is needed and in the future participants may be offered a 'menu of opportunities' which could include: the mechanics of

being a dean; political leadership; and financial management. The overseas visit may be optional and not necessarily essential for all scholars.

The current duration of the scholarship could be extended to up to 18 months. The increased flexibility would consider the length of completing workstreams and the busy lives of scholars.

Guided planning and coaching would be beneficial. The bureaucracy of the application process could be reduced. A more robust selection process and criteria should be introduced.

## Inclusivity

The inclusivity of the scholarship should be enhanced as at the moment the scholarship was only for 'aspiring deans'. It is too limited both in terms of the audience of potential scholars and the career pathways that applicants envisage.

The scholarship currently does not have an offer for individuals at different points in their career from Head of School upwards. It would be beneficial to open it up to people who want to advance their career but not necessarily to a deanship or be open to those who are already deans and wish to progress in a VC role.

The title 'Aspiring Deans' may exclude applications from a wider pool of candidates. However, these people may aspire to change policy and practice through taking on other senior higher education or health service roles. Universities would benefit if more vice chancellors came from healthcare backgrounds. It may be better to reposition the scholarship as a programme for 'Aspiring Senior Leadership' in healthcare higher education. Applicants would need to be limited to take into account the Council's membership.

The programme should also ensure that it speaks to the needs of all four countries of the UK and can enable scholars to succeed wherever they come from. It needs to be less London centric. Health and education are devolved matters and innovation is taking place across the UK, therefore it is not the best use of time and funds to concentrate visits on London and the South East. There is also a question about the equity of travel budgets if you are based in London.

Support for allied health professionals needs to be examined separately if this is something that FNF cannot offer in the future.

## Increased role for the Council

More input from the Council is needed on both the co-creation and co-delivery of the programme. There is a need for joint working between the Council and FNF. This would better enable both organisations to articulate the mutual benefit of the scholarship. Council branding could be used for scholarship events and by scholars when acknowledging support, as is the contractual obligation to FNF.

Better utilisation of current and future scholars should be a priority. Scholars could be used to cascade learning to the wider Council membership at events. Increased connection with the Student Leadership Programme and sharing joint lessons would be helpful. Scholars could also help the policy team with

annual planning and bespoke projects. An alumni network, perhaps meeting on an annual basis, could be used to increase links with past and future scholars. Greater expectations on scholars is something they would welcome as a means of giving back.

### Next steps

- FNF and CoDH to co-design programme for next year's scholarships with interested scholars as critical friends
- CoDH to design with interested scholars a 'menu of options' for scholars to be engaged in Council's work, to be tested with this year's scholar
- Alumni scholar network to be formalised with an annual face to face

### For more information contact:

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