

Dear Colleague,

This time of year is a time for celebration – and we have much to celebrate at BU this year. The break, and time spent with family and friends, also gives an opportunity to reflect on the things that matter to us and look forward to the New Year.

There have been many highlights at BU in 2016 – you can read about some of them in our [2016 Annual Review](#) and we celebrated with staff and colleagues recently at the [VC Staff Awards](#). Many congratulations again to the many staff and members of the BU community who graduated, were nominated for, or received VC staff awards, or were promoted this year. Of course in November we celebrated with our [graduates and honorary graduates](#). We have now opened the [nominations for honorary awards for 2017](#), and I encourage you to make a nomination – as well as recognising the contributions of individuals and celebrating success, we are looking for nominees who will inspire the BU community. Nominations for 2017 close at 4pm on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017. While you are considering inspirational and high-profile people, we are also looking for nominations for a [Chancellor and Pro-Chancellors](#) as some of our current chancellery will step down in the next two years – the deadline for this is 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

BU has achieved some important milestones in 2016, entering the Times Higher Education top 200 most international universities in the world, and the top 150 universities under 50 years old. Student satisfaction at BU rose by 3% to 82% in the 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) - the highest that BU has achieved since the NSS survey began in 2005. Six courses achieved a satisfaction rating of over 95% – BSc (Hons) Children's and Young People's Nursing, BA (Hons) Events and Leisure Marketing and BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, DipHE in Operating Department Practice, BA (Hons) Scriptwriting for Film and Television and BSc Physiotherapy. There has been a lot of change at BU and I am grateful for your support and resilience. I want to thank all academic and professional services and support staff of you for your continued focus on delivering an excellent student experience across BU. The increase in our ratings is an important achievement when the sector average has remained steady.

I am very proud of the important role that we give to the student voice in our decision making here at BU. I was delighted in the summer that SUBU won the Education Award at the NUS Awards 2016, for their work on student feedback, student experience and development, which is a key part of their partnership with BU. Student engagement and feedback are vital on our path to achieving our vision for BU2018. It has also been fantastic to celebrate diversity across BU alongside SUBU, including with events to mark [Disability History Month](#) and [Black History Month](#).

One very symbolic highlight this year as part of continuing investment in facilities across BU, was the opening of the Fusion building – the physical embodiment of our Fusion vision and our commitment to innovative and inspirational learning at BU. The building has also become a focus for some festive activity – do have a look at this [brilliant animation](#) by our Faculty of Media and Communication students.

This term we launched the Global Talent Programme: an exciting, new extra-curricular programme designed to prepare our students for the future global workplace. It is open to all BU UG and PGT students, regardless of course or year of study and I'm delighted that more than 400 students have already registered. Please encourage students to join the programme by visiting: [Global Talent Programme](#). It is great news that our work on Global Talent has recently

been awarded two grants from the [HEFCE Catalyst Fund](#) which will enable us to develop and expand this programme further in the coming year.

Politically this has been a turbulent year both nationally, internationally and in the higher education sector. Since the referendum, some progress has been made, with the government providing guarantees for current students and those starting in 2017/18, and for research funding awarded up to the date we leave the EU. Many issues remain outstanding and we end the year with on-going speculation about government plans for limiting or changing the rules on student visas – but the story is very much business as usual for now.

The Higher Education and Research Bill, with many structural changes for the sector and research bodies, is progressing through the House of Lords, there is a consultation out on the implementation of the Stern Review and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise for 2021, and work is starting to develop the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) at a subject level. There are concerns about the reputation of the higher education sector and the impact of increases in student fees linked to the TEF, and I recognise those - but from BU's point of view, many of the changes support or reinforce our strategic direction and our vision for BU in 2018. Both the TEF and the REF are seeking to strengthen links between research and education, and we welcome the focus of the TEF on the learning environment and graduate outcomes, as well as teaching quality.

As we look forward to the New Year, we have time to reflect on our values and the things that bring us together as a community. [BU's values](#) are excellence, achievement, authenticity, creativity and responsibility. These resonate particularly strongly at a time of change. In 2017 we will start to think about our vision for BU in 2025, and how we can continue to develop our unique Fusion experience where the sum is greater than the component parts. I look forward to engaging with you on our vision for the future.

In the meantime, [please join me this afternoon](#) at 3pm in the Fusion Building for an end of year celebration.

I hope you have a wonderful break and I wish you all the very best for the New Year.

Best wishes,

John Vinney

**Vice-Chancellor**

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