Dear Colleague

I am pleased to report that in the current national dispute over the future of the USS pension scheme, the membership of the University and College Union has voted to accept the latest proposal from UUK.

64% of members voted yes to the proposal on a turnout of 63.5%, the highest in the union’s history.

This means that the current programme of strike action which has affected St Andrews and other universities has been lifted by the union. The strikes planned for next week in St Andrews will not now go ahead.

I know this will be a great relief not just to our students, but to colleagues who have felt compelled to strike to protect their pensions, and the vast majority of our staff who did not take industrial action, but have nonetheless been affected by it.

It is important to acknowledge that the acceptance of this proposal by UCU does not mean we have found a mutually agreeable solution to complex challenges facing the USS scheme, but we must all hope it is a key move towards that goal, and an opportunity for employers and staff to work more closely together than has hitherto been possible to develop a fair and sustainable plan.

The proposal now accepted by UCU membership nationally was first suggested by St Andrews and other universities in early March, and we are grateful to striking and non-striking colleagues for the dialogue and discussion which led us to argue for this. It will maintain the status quo while an independent panel examines the disputed valuation of the USS pension fund.

We will do all we can to ensure that members of USS are kept fully informed of the details, timescales and implications of this work, and have a full understanding of its likely outcomes for individuals, and for institutions.

As I have said previously, the lessons of this dispute must influence how we discuss and express in the future the kind of community we want to be, and how we do that while maintaining a culture of respect and courtesy to each other.

I will pursue discussions on these themes as fairly and openly as I can, and I am particularly concerned that all voices should be heard, and valued, in that debate.

Professor Sally Mapstone
Principal and Vice-Chancellor