

# Meet the Board of Governors

The AECC University College Board of Governors consists of 16 members; this includes a Chair of the Board who is an independent member, 11 other independent members, the Vice-Chancellor (ex officio), one member of academic staff and two Governors from the Students' Union.

Please find out more about the members of the group below.  
(Last updated June 2024).



## **Monika Barnes**

Monika joined as an Independent Governor in September 2021 and is Deputy Chair of the Board of Governors. She is also Chair of the People & Place and Remuneration Committees and is a member of the Governance & Nominations Committee. She has a MSc in Organisational Behaviour from Birkbeck, a post graduate Diploma in Management Studies from Kingston University and is a History graduate of the University of Manchester. She also has a post graduate qualification in Executive Coaching from the Institute of Leadership and Management.

Monika started her career heading up a variety of training and development roles for organisations such as the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. She then set up her own consulting practice specialising in organisational and culture change delivering a range of pragmatic and transformational solutions to a variety of clients across the commercial and not for profit sectors. During her career she has advised global film studios, broadcasters, media agencies, global luxury brands, engineering design specialists, law firms, workplace design experts, unions, universities, political parties amongst many more. As a result of an increasing focus on diversity, Monika created a separate strand to her business and launched Career Savvy Women to offer specific support to increase the numbers of women in senior roles.

Monika is an independent board director of Goldsmiths College, University of London where she sits on the Governance and Human Resources Committees and is a board director of Lighthouse, the largest regional venue for performing arts outside of London.



### **Jeni Bremner**

Jeni Bremner joined as an Independent Governor in October 2019 and in April 2020 became Chair of the Board of Governors. She is also Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee and sits on the Finance & Performance Committee.

Jeni graduated from Leeds University and, after then training as a Nurse, worked with People with HIV and AIDs setting up support and services in the 1980's and 1990's. She gained an MSc in Health Economics in the mid 90's and returned to work in the NHS as a policy advisor. In 1997 Jeni was seconded to the Local Government Association where she spent ten years leading the health and social care agenda and was a member of the LGA Board. In 2007 she moved to Brussels as Chief Executive of the European Health Management Association, a pan European membership organisation that focused on innovation and good practice in health management and health management education. In 2016 she gave up work to care for her Stepfather who had Alzheimer's during which time she also became deputy chair of Southern Health Foundation Trust.



### **Joy Conway**

Professor Joy Conway joined as an Independent Governor in October 2022 and sits on the People & Place Committee. Joy is the Professor of Respiratory Sciences, Centre for Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (CHMLS), Brunel University London. Joy has extensive experience as a researcher and educator with over 25 years in UK Higher Education Institutions.

Joy has a strong interest in lung disease, the care of those with lung disease, respiratory physiology and pathophysiology and lung imaging. Following qualification as a chartered physiotherapist and a Masters in Rehabilitation (University of Southampton) her PhD (University of Southampton) investigated the use of three-dimensional lung imaging techniques to quantify inhaled aerosol deposition in the lung and structural and functional changes that occur with disease. Joy then progressed through to a personal Chair at the University of Southampton in 2009. In 2019 Joy was appointed as Professor of Respiratory Sciences at Brunel University London, where she is co-Director of the Smart Technology Advancements for Health and Rehabilitation research centre and Director of the Applied Respiratory Research Group.

Joy is also the national research lead for advancing clinical practice for Health Education England; and maintains visiting Professor status with the NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre for Respiratory and Critical Care and the University of Winchester.



### **Michael Gibson**

Michael has been an Independent Governor since November 2019 and is a member of Finance & Performance Committee and Chairs the Digital Sub-Committee. Michael is currently Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors at Arts University Bournemouth and leads major capital projects oversight for the board.

He is also a careers advisor for a career and enterprise company. Prior to his retirement, Michael was a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers where he served in a number of key leadership roles. He has also spent time in management consulting and at Ford Motor Company (UK and North American HQ).

Michael served as Efficiency Advisor to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam for two years at the start of the Blair administration.



### **Kim Frost**

Kim has been an Independent Governor since September 2021 and is Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. He is also a member of the Governance & Nominations Committee.

Kim worked for over 15 years as HR Director at the University of London (Senate House) and was National Chair of the Universities Human Resources Association for two years.

He took semi-retirement in 2018 and is now an independent Trustee and Board member of the Royal Agricultural University and the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, and a non-executive Director of PHES (an umbrella body for various professional organisations in HE).

He also works as a consultant on HR projects for various universities and institutions.



### **Mark Gurden**

Mark is an independent member of the board and has been a Governor since 2011. He sits on the People & Place Committee.

Mark is a registered chiropractor and President of the Royal College of Chiropractors where he also chairs Health Policy Unit. Mark is currently chair of AECC Enterprises Ltd.

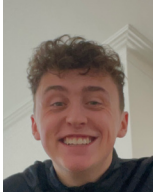


### **Vice-Chancellor Professor Lesley Haig**

Lesley is Vice-Chancellor of AECC University College and appointed in January 2019.

Read Lesley's full bio:

<https://www.aecc.ac.uk/about/who-we-are/executive-staff/lesley-haig>



### **Louie Jenkinson**

Louie Jenkinson joined the board as a student governor in 2023. Louie is currently studying Chiropractic within our MChiro course (Year year).

He began experience at AECC University College as a student ambassador within his first year, having now reached the role of ASU Vice President.

Louie is determined to continue improving the AECC UC student experience.



### **Barney Larkin**

Barney joined as an Independent Governor in October 2022 and is a member of the Finance & Performance and Digital Sub Committees.

Barney qualified as a Bristol chemist in the late 90s and also holds a postgraduate MSc in Public Health from the LSHTM. He started work as an analyst and report writer in the petrochemical sector and has experience working on projects and administrative roles within central government.

In 2006, he started work in marketing and has held a number of roles within start up and SME businesses, specialising in digital marketing and commercial data analysis.

He's studying counselling with a view to helping armed forces veterans and also has an interest in safeguarding.



### **Silja Tast**

Silja Tast joined the board of governors as a student governor in May 2023. Having previously studied psychology in Finland, Silja now has been studying on the Master of Chiropractic Course since 2021.

Holding the role of international officer on the AECC Student's Union for the second year in a row, she is excited to expand her current knowledge about AECC.

Silja is also ASU charity trustee, speaks 4 languages and has a passion for sports, especially sailing.



### **Greg Thornton**

Greg joined as Governor in June 2022 having been a co-opted member of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee since September 2021. He remains a member of that committee and also sits on the Remuneration Committee.

Greg has always been a keen advocate for training, mentoring and promoting young people at the start of their careers to help them to achieve their goals. After a career working for some of the largest American IT corporations in various Project/Programme, Quality and Risk Management roles, Greg is used to reviewing projects, programmes and ongoing operations to evaluate their outcomes, strengths, threats and weaknesses. He has worked with stakeholders at all levels in organisations on identifying and implementing corrective and preventive action plans.

Having taken early retirement Greg feels that now is the time to “give back” and to bring his skills and experience to the community to help enable today’s students to achieve their potential.



### **Peter Vandervelde**

Peter joined as an Independent Governor in September 2021 and is Chair of the Finance & Performance Committee as well as sitting on the Remuneration and Governance & Nominations Committees.. He has a BSc Hons in Actuarial Science but his career has been in accountancy, starting with Coopers & Lybrand in 1987 as an auditor and moving to due diligence in 1996.

He qualified as ACA in 2000 and worked for two years in Atlanta, USA on secondment. In 2005 he moved to a legacy firm of RSM where he started a new DD team and now leads the 100 people strong RSM due diligence business.

He typically works with acquisitive companies and private equity houses in a diverse range of sectors from financial services to waste management. While an auditor Peter worked extensively with a number of HE institutions including the University of Portsmouth. At RSM Peter sits on the Board of RSM Corporate Finance LLP. Peter was born in Southampton and has lived in Ringwood for the last seven years.



### **Nick Palmer**

Nick joined the board as an independent governor in October 2023 and is a member of the Finance and Performance Committee and Digital Sub-Committee.

Nick is currently a Senior Partner for Gartner where he acts as an advisor and coach for CIO's, CTO's and other c-suite roles. He has over 25 years of experience in technology leadership roles across multiple sectors including Financial Services, Consulting and UK Government.

Nick has specialist experience in digital strategy & digital transformation; IT strategy & operating model; large-scale organisation and culture transformation; supplier and vendor management.



### **Professor (Emeritus) Keith Wilkes**

Keith joined us as an Independent Governor in October 2019 and became a Senior Independent Governor in August 2023. He is a member of the Finance & Performance Committee.

His career has taken him from University College, Swansea, where he completed his undergraduate degree, to doctoral research at the University of Liverpool and then to Bournemouth University. Keith played a key role in the development of tourism education for 30 years and held key senior management positions culminating in nine years as Executive Dean before he retired in 2017. Keith has been External Examiner at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level for many HEIs both within the UK and overseas.

In addition, he has considerable external involvement in course validations and approval and was a QAA Specialist Reviewer. He has been a member of the Association for Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE) Executive Committee since the early 1990s variously as Member, Secretary and Chair. Keith is currently Chair of West Moors Town Council.



### **Adrian Reyes-Hughes**

Adrian joined the AECC University Board as an Independent Governor in October 2023 and is a member of People and Place, and Digital Strategy sub-committees.

Adrian has a MSc nursing and health service management degree from City University, London and various post graduate qualifications in strategic leadership, management studies & organisational development. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society Public Health, a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Nurses and elected member of the International Nursing Honours Society Sigma Theta Tau

Prior to retirement he held various senior leadership roles within the NHS including: Executive Director of Nursing & Patient Care for an east London NHS Trust, Director of Policy and Standards at the Nursing & Midwifery Council and National Clinical Director for Multi-Channel Services at NHS Direct. Adrian has worked with the Department of Health in developing health policy initiatives related to improving the patient experience and in setting-up NHS Choices, along with the Expert Patient Programme. Adrian has spent the last 12 years working in the University Sector as an operations director for a Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton.

He has extensive experience in leading and developing health care and education strategies; governance, risk & resilience; leading and managing complex organisations, and capital developments. Adrian also has substantial experience of managing people particularly matters related to performance, & professional regulation. He has been actively involved in developments and accreditations related to equality, diversity and inclusion. He was District Nursing Officer for Greater London District - St John Ambulance for a number of years. Adrian was an external assessor for the NICE-NHS Evidence accreditation scheme and is joint editor of the book 'Clinical Effectiveness in Practice'.