At its meeting on 21 November 2013, the Group of Eight (Go8) Board of Directors elected Professor Ian Young AO, Vice-Chancellor and President of The Australian National University (ANU), to serve as its next Chair from January 2014.

Professor Young will replace Professor Fred Hilmer AO, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of New South Wales, who has chaired the Go8 over the last two years. Professor Ed Byrne AO, Vice-Chancellor and President of Monash University, will step down at the same time from his position as Deputy Chair.

The Board expressed its thanks to Professor Hilmer for his strong leadership of the Go8, and to Professor Byrne for his liaison with Universities Australia on behalf of the Go8.

Professor Ian Young was appointed Vice-Chancellor of ANU in March 2011. He was previously Vice-Chancellor of Swinburne University of Technology from 2003 to 2011. He was Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Sciences at the University of Adelaide from 1999 to 2003.

The incoming Chair stressed the importance of research to the nation. He said, “Research undertaken by Go8 universities plays a critical role in underpinning innovation and economic development in Australia. If Australia is to remain one of world’s wealthiest nations it will be important that we can build new industries supported by such innovation.”

Professor Young added, “It is often not appreciated that Go8 universities are critical to the Australian international student industry. International students choose Australia as a study destination because of the reputation Australia has as a world-class university system. That reputation is largely earned by the research excellence of Go8 universities. Thus, a key goal for the Go8 in the coming years will be to better communicate the importance of research and research-led education to the general public.”

In an interview with The Australian’s Andrew Trounson, published on 27 November 2013, Professor Young issued a call to strengthen pathways to university. He was quoted as saying, “One of the downsides of the demand-driven system, which I am otherwise a great supporter of, is that pathways into university have been swept away.”

The vice-chancellor of ANU explained, “Even students with low ATARs have been going directly into universities rather than through pathways through TAFE or sub-degree programs, and I don’t think that is good for universities or good for these students.”

Asked to comment on the imminent review of the demand-driven system, Professor Young told Trounson, “The minister has been fairly clear that, although there might be a debate about fees, the government isn’t going to deregulate, at least in this term of government. And the government isn’t going to walk away from a demand-driven system.”

Professor Young has indicated his priorities are: “to promote the case for research investment, particularly support for research-intensive institutions; and to further enhance the quality of Australian higher education. Additionally, I will also push for a funding model to better reflect the different roles of individual universities rather than have funding drive universities in the same direction.”
Much of 2013 has been marked not only by far-reaching changes around the world but also by uncertainty in Australia’s political-economy, not least washing over higher education and university research.

The year started badly even before it began, with the MYEFO decisions of October 2012 curbing SRE funding growth by $500 million over four years. The Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) program is the only formula-based block funding scheme for research with any element driven by research excellence (ERA ratings), albeit representing merely 4% of total research block fund allocations. The SRE cut was one of the more obvious costs borne by the blow-out of university offers under the ‘demand-driven system’ of laissez-faire access to Bachelor degree programs in publicly funded universities.

Then ahead of the May 2013 Budget, further cuts were announced, including a cap on self-education expenses, and an efficiency dividend in two tranches of 2% and 1.25% for 2014 and 2015, respectively, affecting recurrent funding for teaching and research block grants.

More positively, some headway was made in restraining the over-reaching TEQSA, initially through an independent review undertaken by Kwong Lee Dow and Valerie Braithwaite, following a joint refusal by Go8 universities to comply with TEQSA’s onerous data requests. A further year’s continuity of funding was secured for the Future Fellows scheme and major national research facilities, but ongoing funding has yet to be secured.

After the election, the new Government moved quickly to abandon the cap on self-education expenses. However, it legislated for the efficiency dividend tranches. In the light of questions raised by the Go8 and others about the sustainability and quality of the ‘demand-driven system’ a review was established to consider some of the issues, to be undertaken by David Kemp and Andrew Norton. The Education Minister accepted all the recommendations of the review of higher education regulation and reporting, including all those relating to TEQSA.

Now we await the 2013 MYEFO, which is expected to address the extra funding commitments to schools. Then we will wait for the May 2014 Budget, the report of the National Commission of Audit, the report of the Kemp-Norton review, and the Government’s responses to them. Much of this work will be completed before the end of 2013, and our efforts are directed largely behind-the-scenes to influencing their outcomes.

On the international front, the signing of the Hefei Statement was an important milestone, one that caps a year of successful international alliances and collaborations, most notably with the AAU, C9 and LERU. There are prospects that other groups will be joining in this initiative and its follow-up activities, including the Association for East Asia Research Universities (AEARU), Canada’s U15, the Hong Kong 3, Japan’s RU11, and Britain’s Russell Group.

Our international programs are working to build Go8 relationships and profile, including researcher funding collaboration between the Go8 and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), doctoral studies development work with research schools of the Max-Planck Institutes (IMPRS), Student Leadership in International Cooperation (SLIC) Project, Young Researchers Exchange Program (YREP), Go8-C9 PhD Forum and the Research and Academic Executive Leadership Shadowing Program. Progress is being made with partner universities in Brazil and Chile.
The Go8 made its presence known at the AIEA conference in New Orleans in February and the EAIE conference in Istanbul in September 2013. The Go8 will support the Australia national day at the 2014 Lindau meeting of Nobel Laureates.

With regard to internal group matters, we engaged Ernst and Young to provide advice on avenues for making productivity improvements through shared services, and 1st State on ways on developing relations with the new government.

In the context of a change of government in Australia, and the expansion of our international network, the Go8 will launch a re-brand early in 2014. The re-branding will bring with it a new logo and look that captures the dynamism of our collective insight and influence.

A research video is also coming up soon. Called the Curiosity Campaign and produced by the UNSW TV Team, it seeks raise public awareness of the importance of basic research and how it often leads to amazing discoveries.

The Go8 Board will undertake a strategic planning session in May after the Budget discussions when the national policy agenda will be clearer. This will provide the newer directors an opportunity to help chart the directions for the Go8 in the next 3 years.

Around the same time, too, we will have finished a good number of backgrounder and policy notes we have been working on for the past months, all aimed at informing the decisions affecting public policy on higher education, in general, and research and innovation, in particular.

Finally, we hope to serve you better and, thus, have reinforced the Secretariat to respond to changing needs. A succession plan is in place and we take this opportunity to introduce, and re-introduce, to you our staff.

---

**Go8 Staff**

**Michael Gallagher**  
Executive Director

Prior to his appointment in May 2007 as Executive Director of the Go8, Michael was Director of Policy and Planning at The Australian National University.


From 2002 to 2003 he was head of Australian Education International within the Department of Education, Science and Training.

Michael has a long history in the education industry, including as a teacher and lecturer at secondary and tertiary level and as a member of the Wran Committee on Higher Education Financing in 1987. Michael has worked overseas for the World Bank and also continues to undertake work for the OECD on higher education issues.

---

**Mike Teece**  
Deputy Executive Director

Mike was appointed Deputy Executive Director in June 2013. He joined the Go8 as Director, Policy in August 2010, after ten years in the public service, including four years in higher education and five years in international education within the Commonwealth Department of Education’s various predecessors.

Mike is responsible for funding and regulatory policy and for a range of analytical work. He is a graduate of the Australian National University.

---

**Dr Sally Nimon**  
Director, Information and Analysis

Sally joined the Go8 in November 2013 from her role as the Director of the Planning and Quality Unit at the University of Canberra. Prior to that she was the Manager of Institutional Analytics at the University of South Australia, and has ten years of experience working in institutional research within the higher education sector. Sally has a PhD from the Flinders University of South Australia.
Helen Montesin
Manager, Information & Analysis
Helen joined the Go8 in 2008. Prior to that, she was the Statistics and Surveys Officer at The University of Canberra, and had worked in statistical consultancy for several years. Helen is a graduate of the Australian National University and the Canberra College of Advanced Education.

Tim Bradley
Principal Economist
Tim joined the Go8 in December 2013. He began his career with the Productivity Commission and has since accumulated nearly a decade of experience advising on public policy as a consultant with ACIL Allen Consulting and the Centre for International Economics. Tim has an honours degree in economics from the Australian National University and a Masters of Political Economy from the University of Sydney. He is currently working towards a Masters of Commercial Law at the University of Melbourne.

Dr Ian McMahon
Director, Research
Ian commenced with the Go8 in June 2009 being previously the Director of the Research Office at The Australian National University (ANU). He joined the ANU after spending ten years in research and science policy in Commonwealth Departments responsible for science, research and education. Ian is a graduate of The University of Queensland and ANU, holding a doctorate in Chemistry.

Dr Martin Grabert
Director, International and Business Relations
Martin joined the Go8 in December 2010. Before moving to Australia, he was Director of the COST Office (European Co-operation in Science and Technology) in Brussels. Prior to this Martin was the Inaugural Director of KoWi, the European liaison office of the German research organisations, in Brussels and Bonn. Before that he headed the research department at the Technical University Berlin, Germany. Martin has a PhD in aeronautical engineering.

Gina dela Vega-Cruz
Director, Communications
Gina joined the Go8 in May 2013. Formerly Country Head of Corporate Affairs for the Philippines of a big international bank, she had also served two Philippine Senators, and was a news presenter and public service program host for two Government TV networks. Gina holds a Bachelor’s degree in Communication with honours from the University of the Philippines.

Priscila Trevisan
Director, Latin America
Priscila joined the Go8 in October 2012 and is based in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She has over ten years of experience in international education, with previous roles including Manager Brazil at AEI, Senior Education Manager at Austrade, and Marketing Manager at IDP Education Australia. She holds a Bachelors degree in Business and Marketing from FAAP in Brazil and a Masters in Tourism Management from Griffith University.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Biography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belinda Toll</td>
<td>Administration Officer</td>
<td>Belinda commenced with the Go8 in June 2013. She has worked in administration for the past seven years. Belinda is a graduate of the Australian National University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Witheridge</td>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Amelia joined the Go8 in July 2012. She has extensive administrative experience and holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Canberra. Amelia also holds a Masters of Project Management from the Australian National University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Mackay</td>
<td>Director, Health and Medical Sciences</td>
<td>Prior to joining the Go8 in February 2008, Alan had worked at senior levels in the Australian Bureau of Statistics and in the Commonwealth Department of Health. His career has included responsibility for economic, industry, social and labour statistics, health financing policy development and program administration. He is a graduate of the University of New England and the Australian National University, with qualifications in Science (Mathematics and Statistics) and Economics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec Webb</td>
<td>Economic Analyst</td>
<td>Before commencing with the Go8 in August 2012, Alec was employed within the National Accounts branch at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Alec holds a Bachelor of Business from Queensland University of Technology and a Master of Management from the Australian National University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Les Rymer</td>
<td>Policy Advisor, Graduate Education</td>
<td>Les has held senior positions in both the Australian and New Zealand public service, and worked for the Australian parliament and CSIRO. His experience covers a variety of policy areas including research, innovation, intellectual property and industry. Les works primarily with the Go8 Deans of Graduate Studies and has responsibility for driving the research training agenda for the Go8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Liang</td>
<td>Director, Web Management &amp; China Engagement</td>
<td>Jane joined the Go8 in 2008 and is currently a PhD candidate in International, Political &amp; Strategic Studies at the Australian National University. She holds a Master of New Media Arts from ANU and is a NAATI accredited professional translator. At Go8, Jane has responsibility for developing Go8-China collaboration and managing Go8 websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerrie Thornton</td>
<td>Manager, International Engagement</td>
<td>Kerrie joined the Go8 team in Canberra in 2006 and was Director of Communications and International Relations until she took maternity leave in 2012. Prior to the Go8, Kerrie worked as a media/policy adviser in the Federal and NSW Parliaments, in international student recruitment for the Australian National University and in media relations for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. She speaks fluent German.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Professor Kirill Alexandrov**

Professor Kirill Alexandrov is working to improve the technology used in medical diagnostics and drug development in a project that has already attracted industry attention.

Professor Alexandrov, from The University of Queensland Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB), holds a joint appointment with The University of Queensland’s Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology, and was awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship in 2009.

The fellowship is allowing Professor Alexandrov to engineer protein molecules that allow researchers to monitor complex biochemical processes in living organisms.

“I established a method for constructing sensor molecules that report on different processes in the cell or an organism, such as the changes in cellular processes that occur during malignant transformation, viral infection and ageing."

Professor Alexandrov says.

“The sensor molecules mimic natural proteins and display different activities depending on their functional state, allowing us to observe the different functions carried out by specific proteins at various stages in metabolic and signalling pathways.”

The technology has attracted a number of industrial partnerships, most notably with Brisbane biotechnology company, Bioproton Pty Ltd. It has also led to a provisional patent application disclosing synthetic signal transducing molecules and receptors.

Professor Alexandrov says the project was prompted by the fact that researchers’ ability to extract quantitative information on signalling and metabolic processes in living organisms was lagging far behind the advancements in genomic science. “This was due to the lack of appropriate methodologies for monitoring biochemical processes in complex environments,” he says.

These processes are central to biological research and drug discovery so a better understanding of them will deliver new technologies for use in diagnostics and the engineering of organisms with new capabilities not found in nature.