Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP  
Chairman, House of Commons Education Committee  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

14 November 2018

Dear Mr Halfon

House of Commons Education Committee report “Value for money in higher education”

The House of Commons Education Committee report “Value for money in higher education” makes an important contribution to the current debate about the purpose and value of universities, and their role in meeting this country’s future skills needs. I can assure you that as the recently-appointed Chair of Council at the University of Southampton, I and my Council, along with the Vice-Chancellor and his leadership team, are wholly focused on the need to ensure the highest quality teaching and research experience for all our students, delivering strong value for money.

I do, however, need to correct for the record one inaccurate and unfair assertion in the report. In paragraph 21 the report states “... Sir Christopher Snowden, Vice-Chancellor of Southampton University, received £352,000 in 10 months in 2015-16 despite the university receiving a bronze in the TEF.” Firstly, the Bronze TEF was actually awarded after that period, in 2016-2017, and the metrics which contributed to it were largely based on a period before Sir Christopher joined the University in October 2015. Moreover, it was precisely in order to improve the University’s performance that we recruited in Sir Christopher a Vice-Chancellor with unrivalled academic and commercial experience, and a global reputation, to develop a new strategy which in the last nine months has seen the University awarded a Silver TEF, and has seen the University rise in all national and international university league tables, including being the biggest riser in last week’s Times League Table of League Tables.

Your report rightly addresses the legitimate public interest in senior management pay at universities, but it is unfortunate that it included this misleading and personally damaging information without providing the opportunity to respond or to place it in context.

Yours sincerely

Philip Greenish  
Chair of Council

Cc Richard Ward  
Clerk to the House of Commons Education Committee  
Chairman, House of Commons Education Committee  
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London SW1A 0AA