YOU'RE HIRED!
Students in Apprentice-style showdown

IN FINE VOICE
New lecturer's duet with pop legend

ON THE BALL
football funding secured

SILVER SERVICE
student thanks UoP for achieving medal dream
Welcome

Welcome to another action-packed edition of UPfront.

It has been a busy start to the academic year and in this issue we’ll be celebrating some of the key events including Graduation Week, the Vice-Chancellor’s Enterprise Awards and the launch of the Marine Academy. We’ll also be talking to the new Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and finding out about his plans for the future in the discipline, the challenges in this field, and the work being done to support students and academics. And we’ll be discovering what two former seafarers, who joined the University to run a new course equipping people to work on large ships, got up to during their many years on the ocean’s waves. As you would expect, they have some stories to tell! As always, we are keen to hear your stories – for example, about staff who have gone the extra mile, received recognition for their work, or have used their skills outside the University environment to benefit people, communities, businesses and organisations. And we’re also on the lookout for those quirky tales and amusing anecdotes that we know are out there! Remember, this is your mouthpiece, and we want to make it as relevant as possible to you. So if there’s something you think should be highlighted, then let us know!

I hope you enjoy this edition – and welcome any feedback.

Richard Turner
Editor

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The University is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. Our policies are available on the website: www.plymouth.ac.uk/equalopportunities.
It’s Graduation Week and students flock to the Hoe, dressed in black gowns. Some fidget with their caps, others pose for photos. Loved-ones are walking around as proud as peacocks. Everyone takes their seats, the speeches are completed and students take to the stage to warm applause to receive their degrees after their hard graft.

But behind all the ceremonial elegance and splendour a dedicated team from the University is working flat out, planning the event with military-like precision, to make it run smoothly. For the Exams and Awards Office it is the culmination of months of meticulous preparation. They ensured that everything was co-ordinated smoothly – from commissioning the marquees, catering and security to checking student names were spelt correctly in programmes and on certificates.

They also fielded more than 2,000 phone enquiries in the weeks leading up to graduation – an event which drew 16,000 people to the city.

Lisa Phillips, Academic Registrar at the University, who co-ordinated graduation week, said: “It’s a long week: long days, long hours, on our feet all the time and very tiring – but there’s such a buzz about it and that carries you through.

“It’s marvellous to be part of it and see the culmination of everyone’s hard work – students, lecturers and support staff alike.”

Around 4,000 students graduated at this year’s ceremony and television news anchorman Alastair Stewart was among those who received an honorary doctorate.

During his speech at the ceremony, he said: “To be given an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Plymouth is one of the high points of my career.

“It is a genuine and heartfelt honour... and I will cherish it. To me, education is our all and this is a great institution.”

There’s little time for Lisa and her team to reflect on this year’s event – planning has already begun for next year...

Key facts:
• 20,000 students, families, lecturers, staff and other dignitaries attended this year’s Graduation Week
• Guests were served 3,000 bottles of wine and 108,000 canapés
• The event contributed £530,000 to the local economy.
Journeying through outer space, meeting robots and rubbing shoulders with sports stars may sound like the contents of a ‘things to do while I’m alive’ wish list. But they were, in fact, just some of the highlights of recent University-run events – many open and accessible to the community – celebrating what’s going on here and also heralding local achievements.

People came face to face with our resident robots and received tips on how to improve their diet, as part of an event showcasing some of the inspiring world class science and technology on offer at the University.

Meanwhile, locals and visitors alike were given a glimpse into the technology of the future when they experienced a head-spinning panoramic programme of films, interactive games, concerts, performance and dance events on a special 360 degree high definition screen – the first event of its kind – at Plymouth’s City Centre Piazza.

Round-the-world yachtsman Conrad Humphreys and Plymouth Albion Rugby Chairman Graham Dawe were among a distinguished line-up of sports and recreation ‘champions’ to be awarded colours by the University at the Partners Through Sport Celebration Dinner.

And people journeyed through outer space via an immersive vision theatre at an action-packed community event marking the launch of the Marine Academy.

Finally, around 300 people attended the Vice-Chancellor’s Enterprise Awards celebrating the achievements of staff, students, community and business partners in helping to create socio-economic vibrancy across the region.

And, if that wasn’t enough, there’s plenty more happening in the coming months to keep those diaries full to bursting point...
The launch of the Marine Academy.

The Partners Through Sport Celebration Dinner.

The ICCI Arena 360 Festival.

The rise of the robots at The Science and Technology Showcase.
The University has hit the right note after unveiling a set of new musical instruments rarely seen in British institutions.

Metallophones, xylophones, drums and gongs form part of the new Balinese gamelan. The 20 instruments – which originate from Indonesia – are made of bronze and are built and tuned to be played together as an orchestra.

They produce a unique rhythmical vibrating sound, allowing a variety of music to be played ranging from louder, flamboyant and dramatic pieces to quieter, contemplative arrangements.

Music lecturer Mike McInerney, of the School of Humanities and Performing Arts, visited Bali recently to choose the instruments and traditional costumes for the University’s new ensemble.

Plymouth is one of only around half a dozen universities in Britain to have the equipment, which costs £15,000 to buy.

Mike said: “It’s essential that our students have experience of music from sources other than Western cultures. It’s important that they understand that the ways people think about music differ around the world.

“The new Balinese gamelan produces unique rhythmical, magical sounds. Many of the musicians play interlocking parts, in which alternate notes are shared between two instruments. This technique enables the ensemble to play incredibly fast passages.

“This tradition – a classical music rooted in rhythm and aural learning – enables our students to meet on a common ground and, during the course of their studies, develop levels of musicianship that might not have occurred otherwise.

“The Balinese style is a living tradition that is still evolving rapidly. It is this vitality that has made Balinese music so popular in the Western world today.”

Around 100 students will learn to play the instruments as part of their studies – and some are expected to take part in weekly ensembles decked out in full traditional colourful clothing, including crowns, sarongs and tunics.

“The Balinese gamelan produces unique rhythmical, magical sounds...”
Transporting luxury goods and man-eating reptiles, keeping watch for pirates, and negotiating polar icecaps – all in a day’s work for two seasoned sailors before they recently joined the University as lecturers.

Bob Hone and Graham Adnitt – both experienced at commanding ships – are running a new Foundation Degree in Marine Studies course equipping people with the skills to work on merchant vessels or onshore in areas such as port management and ship broking.

Bob has racked up around two million miles working on the world’s oceans – and some of his most memorable moments on the waves were shared with pop legend David Bowie whilst working as Staff Captain of luxury liner the Queen Elizabeth 2.

Bob recalled how the pair sung Bowie’s signature tunes, such as Heroes, when the singer used to come up to the bridge on the transatlantic liner during his travels to gigs around Europe.

Bob said: “He was fun and relaxed and even made the teas and coffees when he visited the bridge.

“He was very interested in dolphins and even had a tattoo of them on his calf. He was also interested in the stars – the whole sea thing.”

Other famous faces to have sailed on the ship during Bob’s time as Chief Officer on the Queen Mary 2 include comedian John Cleese and Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow.

It was hard work on the Queen Mary 2 and Bob would work regularly up to 14 hours and walk the equivalent of 15 miles a day – but that was rewarded by the exhilarating experience of driving the ship across the North Atlantic in heavy weather.

He spent 33 years on the ocean’s waves in various roles – sometimes working up to five months at sea, away from friends and family.

He has worked on ships transporting cargo ranging from the world’s most expensive car – a Mercedes-Benz Maybach V12, 5987 cc, 550 hp – to the Olympic flame and live crocodiles.

Not many people get to see far-flung places of the world like the Antarctic – but that was one of the perks of the job as a seafarer for Graham.

He was Third Officer as part of a crew which took scientists on polar expeditions to look at issues like climate change as part of the British Antarctic Survey Trip.

The trips, which he described as a ‘great experience’, involved spending up to eight months carrying out research work at sea, or relieving and supplying research stations around the Antarctic peninsula.

Graham also worked as part of a team at sea off Britain guarding wrecked ships to stop other vessels running into them, before buoys could be laid to mark their location and make it safe for navigation. He also had to maintain buoys, light vessels and lighthouses.

Graham said: “We both bring a wealth of experience to this course – which will help provide the next generation of highly-skilled seafarers and address the predicted shortfall in resources.”
It has been another jam-packed term...here are some of the edited highlights as captured by our photographer Lloyd Russell.

The University has said a fond farewell to three senior stalwarts who between them racked up over 100 years’ service. Brian Chalkley, Roland Buckley and Martin Berkien all retired during the summer – definitely a case of ‘gone but not forgotten’ – and UPfront gathered them together for their curtain call.

Kind-hearted staff at the University will hand over a sack full of toys and books to children staying at a local residential rehabilitation centre treating their mums for drug and alcohol problems. Around 30 presents are being donated to Trevi House – a residential rehabilitation unit – by staff from the Faculty of Science and Technology.
The University has paid tribute to the late Charles Seale-Hayne by re-naming its library after the renowned Devon businessman and politician. Sir Harry Studholme, Chairman of the South West Regional Development Agency, unveiled a plaque inside the building in honour of the former Liberal MP for Ashburton, and Paymaster General in the Gladstone government at the end of the 19th century.

Pudsey Bear caused quite a reaction when he visited the campus as part of this year’s Children in Need fundraising event. He visited the science labs and witnessed a controlled explosion under the supervision of our resident academic experts. The University hosted the regional Children in Need TV programme.

Culture vultures swooped into the city centre to celebrate the diversity of the area – catalysed by the University’s staff, students and partners. Fashion, food, music, languages, activities and sports from around the world were heralded at the Cultural Garden Party, held in Drake’s Place Gardens. The event was the brainchild of the University’s cleaning team – who between them represent around 12 nationalities – and was organised by the Enterprise Enablers.
PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR
SCOTT IS THE NEW
FOR RESEARCH.

Here we put him under the spotlight to find out about the discipline, how it's developing and plans for the future.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAXIMISE OUR RESEARCH HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY?

It is important to fully realise our research potential so that we can make a real, meaningful, and lasting difference to our society.

Research has a particularly vital part to play in the social, economic, and cultural development of our region and our aim is to be to be the key partner with public and private sector organisations in driving this forward.

In these tough economic times, our research excellence must be a key driver in helping to lead transformational change in the city and region. A good example is the work of our Socio-economic Research and Intelligence Observatory, which is working very closely with Plymouth City Council and other statutory partners to provide data and intelligence that can inform their policy and decision-making.

We also have a wider role in developing and leading research on the national and world stage. This has been strengthened through the introduction of 18 new Research Centres and three Research Institutes, around which our world-leading research can grow. These centres serve as a focus for the vibrant and dynamic research that is being undertaken across the University.

To help to develop new areas of research we have launched a new networking scheme using Quality-related (QR) funding. This provides seedcorn funding specifically for researchers to develop international collaborations and plan new research projects.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE QUALITY OF RESEARCH HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY?

Since making the transition from a polytechnic to a university, we have developed our research base considerably.

We are now ranked as a top 50 UK research university, with 80 per cent of research judged in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 as being of international-recognised quality. Plymouth was the ‘most improved’ university in the last RAE, and this improvement enabled us to effectively double our quality-related income.

We have clear research priorities and are building up research in the five key areas identified in our Research and Innovation Strategy: marine and maritime; environment, social and economic sustainability; creative economies and design technologies; pedagogic research; health and community well-being.

WHICH AREAS OF RESEARCH IN THE UNIVERSITY HAVE YOU BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED WITH?

The University is home to one of the largest Marine Institutes in Europe, and that is something that we should be particularly proud of. We are currently building a new world-class marine building which will contain state-of-the-art research equipment and facilities.

Other areas of excellence across the University include areas as diverse as humanoid robotics, climate change, the arts, and IT security.

One example of current research activity is the new panoramic collections viewer, invented and patented at the University. This is a clever piece of software that can be used for planning exhibitions by providing a means of manipulating photographic quality images in a virtual space, including panoramic environments.

Another example is the work of our IT security researchers, who are developing new safeguards against identity fraud on both PCs and mobile devices. This could have significant benefits for businesses and individuals.

WHAT MEASURES ARE THE UNIVERSITY TAKING TO SUPPORT ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS UNDERTAKING NEW RESEARCH?

We have established a number of Research Centres to help coordinate the delivery of research in key areas. The centres were represented at a ‘Research Expo’ event on the Hoe, held during Graduation Week to celebrate and showcase their research. The expo included a major Science and Technology exhibition and open day. The whole event generated a lot of interest and really raised the profile of the University’s research.

We have also restructured our Research and Innovation Committee to include more participation by active researchers. Of particular importance is the inclusion of early career researchers and postgraduate research students, who can now have a greater say in shaping our strategy and direction. We see this as an important aspect of nurturing the next generation of researchers.

We are actively supporting research students and early career researchers in a number of other ways. For example, a regular forum for early career researchers has been established and the work of early career researchers has been recognised in the Vice-Chancellor’s Enterprise Awards.

FINALLY, TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY MAY NOT KNOW...

I love the south-west of Britain and my move to the University has allowed me to settle in Cornwall and take advantage of the coastal and inland environment for relaxation and (non-strenuous) walking.

I am also interested in music, and I am taking advantage of the many musical events in the region. I used to play in a jazz trio — many years ago — and hope to find time to relearn some guitar skills and, perhaps, learn to play the saxophone.
Gone are the days of learning a new language by dissecting information played on a crackly old tape recorder, watching flickering videos or keeping to someone else’s pace. The digital lab integrates the latest learning resources, bringing together listening, speaking, reading and writing materials in a slick and interactive way so students can improve their language skills with ease. It will also provide greater flexibility about what, when and where to study and replace the University’s analogue facilities, enhancing the quality of sound and imagery. Chelo de Andrés, Spanish lecturer and Teaching Fellow, received the University’s Business School Entrepreneur of the Year Award for her role in driving the digital project forwards after the School of Hospitality and Tourism – which has languages under its remit – received £50,000 University funding to upgrade the current facilities. Chelo, who will use the digital lab to enrich and enhance her students’ learning experience, said: “Through digital media, authentic material and easy communication around the world is now just a few clicks away. “This will significantly transform the language learning environment, allowing students to be in contact with real-world resources, which will be fun and engaging for them. “In a global economy, having another language – and with it, international work experience – is an increasingly valuable skill, enhancing career opportunities.” Students will be able to access learning materials online, contributing to the University’s sustainability values by reducing paper use and travel. It also ticks the internationalisation box, by providing an opportunity for larger numbers of students to add a language to their degree title or top up their skills by taking a language elective. A pilot of 20 students from the Plymouth Business School will be testing the new digital suite during this academic year, prior to it being rolled out to the next intake of students in 2011.

STUDENTS TRANSPORTED ABROAD AT THE CLICK OF A BUTTON

Language students will feel like they’ve been transported abroad during their studies thanks to a new state-of-the-art multimedia digital suite.

“...language is an increasingly valuable skill, enhancing career opportunities”
Two University students proved their business flair after reaching the latter stages of an international spin-off of popular television series *The Apprentice*.

Final-year students Daniel Smith and Abigail King used their business acumen and ‘wheeler-dealer skills’ as they pitted their wits against fellow hopefuls all competing to hear the words: “You’re hired!”

Creating a new flavoured pizza, selling fish, and designing an advert for a cough sweet were among the tough business tasks they had to complete on the show *Ideators* in Sri Lanka.

The pair negotiated boardroom showdowns, handled the strong personalities of their fellow contestants, and were alive and alert to make crucial decisions despite having to start some tasks as early as 4am.

Daniel and Abigail used skills learnt at the University in business studies and marketing respectively to see off most of their fellow contestants.

“The experience has strengthened my people and team-working skills, made me think about how to address business issues in a logical way, and developed my understanding about how trade is conducted in a different culture,” said Abigail.

Daniel added that the experience would be like ‘gold dust’ for his CV and joked that completing tasks in a day, as part of the series, had made him appreciate the longer deadlines at University to finish coursework!

*Ideators* was organised by the British Council Sri Lanka and was viewed by around three million people across the world through the internet.

Daniel and Abigail spent a month in Sri Lanka on the show and during their spare time went on safari and immersed themselves in the country’s culture.

The students were entered into the competition and mentored by Dr Dulekha Kasturiratne, Lecturer in Marketing at the University.
Antony James, who studies psychology, scooped an individual silver medal in the pool in the 100 metres butterfly and also bagged a bronze as part of England’s 4x100m relay team in Delhi.

On his return from India he expressed his gratitude to the University for giving him a sports scholarship to attend competitions to test himself, put his skills into practice, and gain that vital edge needed at the highest level in a sport where the finest of margins determine success or failure.

Antony said: “The University has been very supportive and helpful in my swimming. Being a sports scholar, money I was granted helped me travel to competitions and cover accommodation costs.

“The lecturers have also been really helpful if and when I miss lectures, in helping me catch up. It’s so reassuring when you’re in a foreign country like India to know you have the support of such a friendly university like Plymouth behind you.”

It’s a delicate balancing act: juggling studies and training, and a typical day sees Antony get up in the early hours, train from 5:30am-8:30am, go to lectures, and then pack in a couple more hours of training in the evening before going to bed.

He said: “The University is playing a big role in the ‘next step’ of both my swimming career and life. I don’t think I would be able to get through a full degree and swim full time – about 20 hours per week – without them behind me all the way.”

Antony is only 20 and said that as a sprint swimmer he doesn’t expect to reach his peak for another six years – so the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics are firmly on his radar.

“Until then, I just have to keep my head down, keep training and hopefully improving,” he added.
University inspires Chernobyl kids

Two totally different worlds came together when a group of youngsters affected by the Chernobyl disaster visited the University.

A pyrotechnic demonstration with flammable ingredients was a highlight for the 13 youngsters from Belarus and their two adult supervisors, during a tour of the University.

They also enjoyed an interactive music workshop and a 360 degree cinematic experience.

The party stayed with local host families, thanks to Chernobyl Children Life Line, a charity which sends youngsters on a four-week holiday to help them recover from illnesses such as cancer and leukaemia.

Joan Gavin, a Learning Technologist at the University, who helped co-ordinate the tour, said: “The children were all smiles and we were overwhelmed by their enthusiasm. We hope that in some small way the University has touched on their lives and inspired them.”

“The results are very positive and something for everyone to be proud of.”

“However, we are not complacent, and are maximising every opportunity we can to use this invaluable feedback to focus in on key areas that can further enhance the quality of working life for our staff.

“Fully committed and engaged staff are crucial to the University’s performance and progression – particularly during periods of economic downturn and organisational change.”

The University will continue to engage with staff about the survey results so that actions to make a positive difference across the organisation as a whole, as well as in specific directorates and faculties, are informed by staff and taken forward.
NURSERY’S 20 REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

There was fun, smiles and laughter when around 100 children, parents and grandparents attended an indoor picnic to mark the 20th anniversary of Freshlings, the University’s childcare support centre.

A children’s entertainer performed magic, puppetry and balloon tricks for the youngsters and everyone tucked into a birthday cake made by the Catering team.

Hundreds of youngsters aged up to four years old have used the service in the last two decades, experiencing learning opportunities in a safe and friendly environment.

And three staff – childcare manager Barbara MacPherson along with nursery assistants Moira Fox and Carole McDougall – have worked there since it opened in 1990.

Much has changed since then, with the service now running from a new building and operating a more flexible service for 50 weeks of the year, to meet the childcare demands of the University’s students and staff.

Barbara said: “We are a very close-knit team – staff have high energy levels and enjoy their work to help give the youngsters a good start in life.

“The job is very satisfying, particularly as we often get to hear how lots of the children have progressed in their lives from staff whose youngsters attended the nursery. Some of the youngsters even return to the nursery on work experience with their schools.”

And the Freshlings ‘family’ has welcomed a few new additions themselves – nine of the 27 staff who work there have either had children in the last three years or are expecting shortly!

Key facts:
• Provision for 83 children to be cared for daily
• 130 children on the nursery’s books
• Nursery rated ‘Outstanding’ in last Ofsted inspection.
University has the world at its feet

The University has hit the ‘back of the net’ by becoming one of just a handful of higher education institutions to be awarded specialist status to strengthen its football provision.

It will put the University at the top of the league in providing more opportunities for students to be coached to develop their skills and increase accessibility to play the game during their time studying in the city.

And it will enhance the University’s links with football clubs and organisations at both local grassroots level and in the highest echelons of the national game.

The University has been recognised as a Focus institution for Football by British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and the Football Association.

Other benefits of the scheme include students having the opportunity to receive training to become football coaches or professional referees.

Louise Francis, Coaching Development Officer at the University, said: “It is a real boost to achieve this status and means there can be significant time and support put into the planning and ongoing management of our football provision here under the guidance of BUCS.

“This status will mean we can support all our clubs more closely and attract better players moving forward, as well as working more closely with clubs in the local community.”

Around 170 players are registered with the University’s football teams – and last season the second string were promoted from their league.

The University also has partnership links with Plymouth Argyle, whose coaches work with its teams.

The Focus status will also help the University develop its new futsal programme – a five-a-side version of the game played on a small pitch – both here and in the local community.