Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of UPfront, which brings you the latest news from across the University.

“Energy, Passion, Commitment”
When our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Purcell, made her recent address to staff, she praised them for having embodied these qualities over the course of the year.

I hope that having read this edition of UPfront, you’ll agree that many of the people featured in these pages do so as well.

The starting point must be graduation, which was a testament to the immense effort and dedication of those people who worked all year to make it happen. You’ll find a report and pictures galore in our centre-page spread.

Then there is our Research and Enterprise team, who are partnering with the private and public sectors to help lead economic growth and transformation in our region. You can read about their latest investment, the LINK, on page 5.

We also pay tribute to some of the unsung heroes, like our Internet, Catering and Recreation teams, who are working behind the scenes to support our growing needs.

Andrew Merrington
Editor

Front cover: Nick Ryan, BAFTA-winning composer, celebrates his doctorate of music during graduation week.

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email: mcdadmin@plymouth.ac.uk

The university is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. Our policies are available on the website: www.plymouth.ac.uk/equalopportunities

newsinbrief

Sell2Plymouth success
Are you being hounded by prospective suppliers looking for business? If so, Sell2Plymouth might be your saviour. The joint initiative between the University, Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust has established a single internet portal to advertise all public sector contracts worth up to £20,000 – and following its launch in July, registrations have been coming in thick and fast.

Sell2Plymouth provides easy access to each organisation’s requirements through direct links to their procurement pages and tendering sites, as well as business support agencies. So if you have a purchasing requirement that cannot be met by one of our approved contracts, you can access all relevant suppliers via Sell2Plymouth. And if you receive sales calls, encourage them to register at www.sell2plymouth.co.uk. For more details, email businessservices@plymouth.ac.uk

SERIO research project
Our Socio-Economic Research and Intelligence Observatory (SERIO) has been commissioned to undertake a programme of research on behalf of national charity Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). This two-year study will evaluate the effectiveness of CPRE’s ‘Mapping Local Food Webs Project’, which is part of the Big Lottery Funded Making Local Food Work programme.

The CPRE project aims to equip local community groups with the know-how to survey and document their local food webs, assess the social, economic and environmental benefits and promote policy change.

SERIO’s research team will work with both volunteers and local businesses who have been engaged in this project to assess its impact on the individuals and communities involved.

Postgraduate Open Evening
Would you like to enhance your knowledge? Do you have a desire to change your career or keep ahead of your competitors? Embarking on a postgraduate degree, or considering continuing professional development, may be an option for you.

If you would like to take the opportunity to have your questions answered, or find out more about your subject of interest, you could attend the Postgraduate and Professional Open Evening. The event is being held in the Roland Levinsky Building on Tuesday 17 November, and if you would like more information, visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/pgopenday.

Confirmation and Clearing
Our Confirmation and Clearing team did a remarkable job in dealing with an unprecedented number of prospective student enquiries in August. They fielded 3,375 calls (a 103% increase on last year), with 1,500 of them occurring on results day alone (with an additional 3,207 hits on the Clearing web page that day as well!). There was not a single technology breakdown, although our internal phone capacity was ‘maxed out’ on several occasions. At the end of it, 5,780 students accepted places at Plymouth, along with 581 students progressing from foundation courses, and a similar number deferring to next year.

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The University joined forces with Plymouth’s private, public and community sectors to demonstrate how it is playing a leading role as an economic, cultural and social driver of enterprise within the city.

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Wendy Purcell said: “Our bid this year aimed to demonstrate how, through partnership, the University is helping to lead the regeneration and transformation of Plymouth – towards becoming an economically, culturally and socially vibrant enterprise city with a shared vision for the future.”

The judges comprised Maurice Helfgott of Amery Capital Ltd and three representatives from Make Your Mark, who have been visiting each regional winner across the country. After a whistle-stop tour of Plymouth and the University’s cutting-edge campus facilities, they received a presentation by bid leaders from the University and Plymouth City Development Company.

Their visit concluded with an exciting showcase exhibition in the Roland Levinsky Building, where the judges were formally welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor, and met enterprising University students, graduates and staff, together with community and business partners, over a locally-sourced buffet lunch.

At the time of going to press, the national title of Enterprising Britain 2009 had not yet been announced.

“*Our bid this year aimed to demonstrate how, through partnership, the University is helping to lead the regeneration and transformation of Plymouth.*”

Professor Wendy Purcell.
The Faculty of Arts’ latest graduates recently showcased their talents and forged links with the region’s creative businesses at a new exhibition for emerging artists.

The ‘First Steps’ exhibition, held at the Duchy Square Centre for Creativity in Princetown, was facilitated by the Innovation for the Creative and Cultural Industries (ICCI).

Dave Hotchkiss, ICCI Centre Manager, said: “It’s great to see so much talent coming out of Plymouth. The creative and cultural industries are important sectors to the city and region’s economic growth and development strategies.

“The Duchy Square exhibition is a prime example of how creative practice can have real commercial potential, provide an excellent opportunity for emerging artists to link to an external audience and the University’s enterprise mission.”

The Duchy Square Centre for Creativity opened earlier this year and is supported by a number of organisations, including the South West Regional Development Agency and Devon County Council. It is managed and operated by Integria Ltd, a creative consultancy which helps nurture artistic talent through supporting a diverse range of practitioners in promoting and selling their work. The facility includes incubation and managed workshop space, offices, gallery and a teaching studio. For more information, visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/icci.

The untold stories of Higher Education in Further Education professionals have been captured in a new book written by University of Plymouth College lecturers. *Putting the I into Identity and other Stories* is a series of individual accounts which reveal the rich and varied nature of their work.

The publication reflects on the diverse range of experiences influencing HE in FE professionals, including previous educational involvement, vocational expertise, the challenges of negotiating the dual demands of HE and FE and the joy of sharing in student successes.

Dr Rebecca Turner from the Higher Education Learning Partnerships Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HELP CETL), who led the project, said: “The stories told by these practitioners will resonate with those working to deliver HE in FE and provide a valuable insight to others of the realities of working in this challenging sector.”

The book came about through the University’s HELP CETL Award Holders’ Scheme, which recognises and rewards the teaching and learning contributions of partner college staff by offering them opportunities to engage with scholarly activity.

With the support of the Higher Education Academy’s Education Subject Centre (ESCalate), a writing group was set up and the staff were given the time, space and support to reflect on the expansion of HE in FE provision and their development as lecturers within this context.

This publication can be downloaded from http://escalate.ac.uk/6105.
The opening of our new LINK facility was both a significant landmark for the University’s enterprise mission and a statement of intent for our Research and Enterprise team.

Located on the third floor of the Link Building, LINK is the latest project to come to fruition using the Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) and demonstrates that the University is very much open to helping individuals, businesses and community organisations.

With its public reception, business networking area and meeting rooms, LINK enables easy access to the full range of services and facilities on offer at the University, with a dedicated team able to diagnose needs face-to-face, on the telephone or via email.

LINK also houses Formation2.0 pre-incubation space for start-up businesses in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors, the Graduate School, and a study area for postgraduate research students.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Purcell, opened the LINK facility and welcomed guests from the business community and partner organisations, as well as some of our successful clients from Formation Zone.

One of them, Martin King of Fuel Communications (pictured top left), told the gathering that his business had won several contracts purely as a result of its location in the Roland Levinsky Building, and praised the community spirit of Formation Zone.

Graham Morris, of the Plymouth Employment and Skills Board (pictured above right), said the University was making a ‘terrific investment’ in the economy with LINK and held it up as a ‘classic example of partnership’.

Sally Sharpe, ECIF Project Manager, paid tribute to the work of her team, saying: ‘It has been incredibly busy setting up the new facility and establishing Formation2.0, launching the University’s Enterprise Vouchers and working closely with partners across the city. Under Enterprise Solutions we’ve put together a compelling portfolio of support for our business community in a time of need, enhancing accessibility to the enterprise University.’

“Under Enterprise Solutions we’ve put together a compelling portfolio of support for our business community.”
Sally Sharpe.

Working directly with Sally are Emma Wright, Marketing Officer; Steve Rice, Enquiries Coordinator; Denise Kellham, ECIF Administrator (Research and Enterprise); and Annette Millar (Careers).
The marquees looked magnificent, the sun shone (mostly), and Smeaton’s Tower provided a striking backdrop for a thousand photos capturing the moment.

For the second year running Plymouth Hoe and the panoramic splendour of the Sound proved a perfect venue for the graduation ceremonies. Over the course of seven days and 18 ceremonies, some 5,000 students collected their degrees and accepted congratulations from 15,000 family members and friends, not to mention proud University staff.

For some it was a chance to catch a glimpse of one of our 2009 crop of honorary graduates, who included renowned polar explorer Pen Hadow and folk music superstar Seth Lakeman.

Many of their speeches proved very poignant, among them Charles Howeson, the new Chairman of the NHS in the South West, who praised the city for its resilience and encouraged all of the new graduates to take a little piece of Plymouth magic with them wherever they went.

Charles, who received an honorary doctorate of management, said: “In terms of learning, with 30,000 students and 3,000 members of staff, our University is big, thinks big, acts big, leads from the front, and is now the central powerhouse of our city’s economy. I for one am downright proud of it, as indeed we all should be.”

Seth, who accepted an honorary doctorate of music, told graduates: “It is a real pleasure to be here with you today. The people and the places here in the South West have been a huge inspiration to me in my songwriting – thank you to everyone who has helped me in my career.”

Families celebrated, toasts were made in the hospitality marquee, mortar boards held aloft and our new graduates reflected on their adventures past, present and future.
CELEBRATING MARINE EXCELLENCE

Held as part of Graduation Week 2009, the event showcased and celebrated the marine expertise that exists within the University, city and region.

Over 150 esteemed guests from the marine sector attended and enjoyed the opportunity to meet old colleagues and forge new contacts. Inspiring keynote presentations were delivered by Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Purcell, the Director of the University of Plymouth Marine Institute, Professor Martin Attrill, and guests of honour, Plymouth marine biology graduate-turned BBC Oceans series presenter Tooni Mahto and Plymouth Sutton MP Linda Gilroy.

The historic Hoe also provided a very fitting setting for the University of Plymouth Marine Institute’s recent Marine Excellence Celebration evening.

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Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Purcell paid tribute to the week by saying: “This is the second year we have hosted our degree celebrations at this magnificent location, and it demonstrates just how far we have come in the last few years, both in terms of our partnership approach and our prestige as a first-class, first-choice University.

“For me, graduation sums up the voyage of discovery that our graduates are about to make and symbolises both challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It is a journey, however, that they don’t take alone – we will always be here to provide advice, guidance and further learning opportunities.”

From left: Tooni Mahto, Professor Martin Attrill, Professor Wendy Purcell, Linda Gilroy and Professor Mary Watkins.

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Pictured above are the winners of the inaugural Vice-Chancellor’s Enterprise Awards. The gala event, staged on the Hoe, proved a perfect curtain-raiser for graduation, and saw 300 people from across the community attend to honour the entrepreneurial talents of staff, students, alumni, businesses and organisations from the region.
WEB TEAM OFFERS SUPPORT ONLINE

Do you have some constructive feedback on the University of Plymouth's external website? Have you got a wish list of things you would like to see introduced or improved? Or are you one of the 100 or so contributors and in need of some guidance and support?

If that sounds like you then you’ll want to meet the Web Team, because it is their mission to ensure that www.plymouth.ac.uk develops into a first-class website. Based in the Babbage Building, the team is a one-stop shop for all things ‘extranet’. In addition to providing the day-to-day expertise required for running the site, they carry out all of the development work, engaging with internal ‘customers’ through quarterly development forums.

Rebecca Lee, Web Editor, said: “Our website is where our core content needs to be, and we really want to get the message out there – if you have an issue or a need, we’re here to help. Whether it’s an image gallery or departmental profile pages we can help to create resources that meet both your needs and our brand standards.”

With so many people now creating content for the site, the team also plays an important mentoring role, providing training and drop in sessions for writers and editors.

“We are always on hand to provide guidance or more formal support,” added Rebecca. “Transparency is also important to us, so we make sure that our development meetings provide updates on all the work we are doing and the decisions that have been made on any development requests.

“We want to make sure we are working as partners in building and maintaining our website.”

If you would like to contact the Web Team, in Information and Learning Services, then email webeditor@plymouth.ac.uk or visit http://intranet.plymouth.ac.uk/extranet.

FISHING FOR HELP WITH WrAssE

A new pilot teaching and learning resource produced by the Learning Development team is now available for staff and students.

The Writing for Assignments E-Library (WrAssE) offers authentic examples of various kinds of students’ written work across a range of disciplines, accompanied by lecturers’ comments explaining how and why the writing ‘works’.

Julia Dawson, from the Learn Higher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, explained: “Students frequently comment that they could learn to write in their discipline more effectively if they had access to examples of the kind of writing expected from them. WrAssE has been developed to respond to such views.”

As it continues to expand, WrAssE will give access to an increasingly wide range of sample student texts, and will incorporate links to learning activities to enable students to practise their skills for writing, improve their ability to develop arguments and communicate with others in their discipline.

The Learning Development team is currently working with students and staff in the University and elsewhere to evaluate this pilot resource and feedback so far has been very positive. To find out more or express an interest in participating in the next phase, contact Julia Dawson at julia.dawson@plymouth.ac.uk or visit www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk.
The latest addition to our campus’s healthy café society has been unveiled - and it’s refreshingly retro!

The restaurant facilities in the Babbage Building have been revamped to create The Zone – a chrome-clad coffee bar with WiFi internet facilities and open access space for informal meetings.

Annette Silsbury, Head of Catering Services, said the refit was designed to reflect the changing needs of the University. “We’ve gone from a 240-seater restaurant to an 85-seat café with ample space for meetings even when the facilities are closed,” she said.

“It has got a retro feel with bold reds, blacks and whites, chrome stools and mirrors. The design has been very well received and we think it complements our other outlets well.”

The launch of The Zone brings the total number of cafés and restaurants on campus and at Derriford to a round dozen – quite a change from when Annette joined the team 30 years ago.

She told UPfront: “We had just three outlets then, but as the University estate has grown we have developed with it. Our ethos has been a proactive one, taking our facilities into new venues so that our people do not have to walk to find good quality produce.

“We’ve grown as a team and we now have 75 people – and I’m proud of the way they focus on delivering a first-class service.”

Part of that service delivery is paying heed to issues of sustainability and the need to support local businesses and suppliers.

“When you are spending around £1m a year on provisions, it is important that you support your local economy. We source around half of that produce from within the region so we’re very much focussed on issues of enterprise and sustainability in the South West.”
We have already hosted our first Welcome Week, the new Freshers’ Week, in which we held a Mature and Postgraduate Student evening, a Sports and Societies Fair, a Welcome Ball and a More Than Just a Bar-B-Q! The sabbatical officers have also been busy attending numerous induction talks and graduation ceremonies.

Looking ahead, the newly-elected sabbatical team will be leading UPSU through its registration as an ‘educational charity’ with the Charity Commission, and through the Students’ Union Evaluation Initiative process, accrediting engagement, democracy and management to ensure UPSU is the best it can be.

This year is also the first year for the UPSU Training Academy, a new initiative that coordinates the formal and informal learning of our students to help them present these valuable transferable skills in an attractive way to future employers.

We have some big campaigns planned, such as the annual One World week to celebrate cultures and anti-racism, and Green Week to focus on sustainability and the environment.

This year we will also be running a higher education funding campaign to tie in with the National Union of Students’ campaign for a fairer funding system.

Finally for now, we have announced a new Trustee Board, including the sabbatical officers, two student trustees and three independent trustees, to ensure we are the most professional and accountable organisation we can be.

It’s going to be a good year.

Aleshia Sampson
UPSU President

The University is regularly in the headlines for its ground-breaking research, new initiatives and staff and student successes...

The tenth anniversary of our Surf Science and Technology degree caught the media’s eye and sparked a flood of ‘Crest of a Wave’ headlines. Course graduate turned course leader Ross Pomeroy provided a swell of good reasons why it has proved so popular and some of our entrepreneurial alumni waxed lyrical about their experiences to ensure the tide was turned against those who ridiculed it at launch. Among those on board with the celebrations were the Sunday Times, BBC Online and surf magazine Wavelength.

A Peninsula Medical School study that examined possible links between child obesity and obesity in the parent of the same sex attracted media coverage around the world, from The Australian to the New York Daily News. The research stated that an obese woman was ten times more likely to have an obese daughter and fathers six times more likely to have an obese son than parents of a normal weight. The report concluded that by following gender lines, the causes of obesity are more likely to be behavioural rather than genetic.

The recent Law, Literature and Film Symposium generated some media attention, but also an interesting opportunity for both the Plymouth Business School and the Press Office. Interested in the conference’s focus on the relationship between law and the arts, legal publication Law and More has asked the University to compile a list of the top ten legal thrillers. And so the debate begins: A Time to Kill vs A Few Good Men; Michael Clayton vs Twelve Angry Men. Discuss.

Channel 5’s The Gadget Show is the latest to be charmed by our iCub robot. The film crew spent an afternoon shooting on location in Portland Square and learned all about the ITALK (Integration and Transfer of Action and Language Knowledge in Robots) project in which iCub plays a starring role. The piece was broadcast at the end of September, but rumours that the University’s project leader Professor Angelo Cangelosi is to become iCub’s agent have been denied by the School of Computing and Mathematics.
Peninsula Arts brings cutting-edge performances and exhibitions to the South West that otherwise would not be seen outside of London.

This season, in conjunction with University of Plymouth Press, they’ve achieved a first for the UK by securing the rights to translate into English and publish for the first time some of the greatest literary works from Romania.

The partnership beat competition from 30 other institutions for the opportunity to print four works per year for the next five years, along with selected art from some of the country’s finest painters.

The 20 works, which include novels, poems and plays, were chosen in a national vote run by the Romanian Cultural Institute, and mark a significant landmark in the cultural development of the post-Ceausescu country.

Peninsula Arts Director Simon Ible said: “This is one of the most exciting projects that we have ever been involved with. These works will open a fascinating door into Romania’s past while at the same time providing them with an opportunity to tell their story to the world.”

The book launch will be part of the University’s Romanian Festival in November and December, which will also include an exhibition of contemporary art, pictures from British photographer Tessa Bunney and a film series entitled The Shadow of Ceausescu.

Simon added: “With the Romanian Festival, some topical lectures and music which continue our celebration of the Darwin anniversary, and all of the festive concerts in December, the new programme from Peninsula Arts really does open up a broad range of art to people in the region and beyond.”

For more details, go to www.peninsula-arts.co.uk.
The studio boasts a purpose-built sprung wooden floor and is already proving popular with staff and students. The former fitness suite underwent a conversion earlier this year and now complements the Nancy Astor Sports Centre with a range of morning, lunchtime or evening classes including pilates, body conditioning, aerobics and circuit training.

Dave Furniss, Recreation Development Manager, told UPfront: “It is a fantastic facility and enables us to provide even more activities for our staff and students. It’s a great place to exercise, have fun and meet up with your work colleagues.”

The Recreation Service has limbered up for winter by unveiling its new Exercise Studio based within the Squash & Fitness Complex on Endsleigh Place.

The nights are beginning to draw in, there is a chill in the air, and already people are thinking about Christmas shopping. So what better way of keeping winter at bay than with a seasonal session of sport?!

You can shoot, slam dunk, smash and spike yourself fit and happy with a wide range of activities offered by the University. Dave Furniss said: “We’ve got something for everyone and we’re running a number of competitions if people want to take things a little more seriously.”

- Indoor Football – Wednesday lunchtime and Friday afternoon
- Basketball – Friday morning 7.45 – 8.30am
- Volleyball – Monday 5pm – 7pm
- Badminton – Monday and Thursday 12pm
- Personal Fitness Programmes and Personal Fitness Testing
- Weight Management Course

For further information on any of these activities, contact the Recreation Service on T: 588510 or via www.plymouth.ac.uk/recreation.