Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of UpFront

This edition includes details of the inauguration of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Purcell, who joined the university a year ago. In addition, Dr Andy Phippen of the School of Computing, Communications and Electronics, writes about the university’s enterprise agenda and what it means for staff. The magazine also highlights some of the many excellent examples of enterprising activity across the organisation.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

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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

OPEN HOUSE

The autumn Open Day brought even more of a buzz to the campus, with over 3,000 prospective students and their family and friends getting a taste of life at Plymouth and enjoying some belated sunshine.

The visitors were greeted by 160 student ambassadors as well as staff, who were on hand to answer their questions about subject areas, facilities and support services as well as the city and the region.

Staff in the Marketing & Communications Department would like to thank everyone who helped to make the day such a resounding success. As always though, the most important comments are those of the visitors themselves – here’s a selection from the feedback received.

• “Unbeatable. I applied straight away.”
• “I loved everything about the university, and the tour of the city certainly opened my eyes...I am definitely applying to Plymouth as my top choice.”
• “Brilliant open day – by far the best I’ve been to.”
• “Everyone was really helpful and friendly and it was just the kind of place I could see people doing well in.”

If you have any queries or comments, contact Iola Thomas, Schools & Colleges Liaison Officer, at iola.thomas@plymouth.ac.uk

Stepping stones to effective learning

The market-leading ePortfolio product PebblePad will soon be available to staff and students across the university following a decision by the Chief Executive’s Group in November.

The web-based product will be available to all students, staff and alumni, including those from partner colleges, in 2009. It will be available via the student and staff portals, and will be piloted with self-selected groups from February. Full rollout will follow in readiness for the academic year 2009/2010.

e-portfolios are a key element of the university’s enterprise agenda, and will support all learners in their formal and informal learning activities.

The implementation and rollout will be orchestrated by Dr Dave Croot, who will chair a group drawing together representatives from the academic, student, technical and Registry areas.

For details about the role of PebblePad within university, contact Dave at dcroot@plymouth.ac.uk.

For full details of PebblePad, visit www.pebblelearning.co.uk.

Celebrating the inauguration of the Vice-Chancellor

A special ceremony to mark the inauguration of the Vice-Chancellor took place on 27 November with around 250 guests joining the celebration, which took place in the landmark Roland Levinsky Building.

The event was officially opened by Barbara Bond, Chair of the Board of Governors, who welcomed staff and VIP guests and paid tribute to the Vice-Chancellor’s vision.

“The Vice-Chancellor and her team have set a mission to shape the university and establish the enterprise university,” she said. “Together we will ensure our future will continue to be successful and add value to the lives of all our stakeholders.”

Following the formal inauguration Professor Purcell delivered her address, in which she began by reiterating the importance of working together.

“My success, the university’s success, depends upon your trust, your partnership and most importantly your ongoing support,” she said.

After talking about some of the university’s recent highlights, the VC, who has been in post since last December, joked: “So, not quite a year yet. For me it’s simply flown by – for my team? They tell me it seems like I’ve been here for ages!”

The Vice-Chancellor continued to give a passionate speech about the importance of the university to the city and region, and the enterprise vision.

“Enterprise means being brave and seizing new opportunities, focussing on what we are already good at, doing more of it and moving from good to great…to fantastic!” she said. “This is how we will secure our future as the enterprise university.”

Following a musical interlude by the Ten Tors Orchestra, the university coat of arms was officially handed over by Henry Bedingfield, the York Herald, and presented by Eric Dancer, the Lord Lieutenant of Devon.

The crest contains the Latin motto Indagate Fingite Invenite, which means Explore Dream Discover and is a quote from Mark Twain reflecting the university’s ambitions for its students and the history of the city’s great seafarers.

The ceremony was followed by a reception in the Crosspoint of the Roland Levinsky Building.
The word ‘enterprise’ is everywhere, it seems, but I wonder how many of us are clear about what the term means to the university and what the institutional vision of enterprise means for staff and their role.

The university is working towards becoming the enterprise university, and as part of that we have commenced the Enterprise Project, which aims to examine what enterprise means to staff while encouraging and facilitating the embedding of an enterprise culture across the institution.

The project is part of the Leadership Foundation’s Change Academy programme and is being led by Professor Julian Beer, Director of Research and Enterprise. While the initial strategy for the Enterprise Project was formed by nine individuals from across the university*, it is deliberately inclusive in its nature. There is no point in someone on high deciding what everyone needs to be doing in order to become ‘enterprising’. Enterprise will mean different things in different contexts – what works in one subject area might not be as effective in another.

We know that there is much enterprising activity going on within the university, but it’s clear that we’re not yet effective at sharing experiences and celebrating our achievements. Therefore, it’s essential that the Enterprise Project works towards our definition of enterprise through an exploration across the university involving as many people as possible. This is not something that can happen in a top-down manner – it can only work through engagement and inclusion.

While we can’t at present provide an absolute statement on what enterprise is at the university, we can present a platform upon which to build Plymouth’s enterprise vision – an enterprising attitude and associated skills to unlock innovation and creativity; being confident in what we do, who we are and the impact we make on the lives of our students and the wider community in the region.

We can also clearly state what it is not – the old, tired higher education view of business engagement, often called ‘third-leg’ funding. Even the term sound off-putting, a last-ditch source of income to engage with once revenue from teaching and research has been exhausted. This view of short-term consultancy and quick-hit continuing professional development is not our enterprise vision. While each may play a part, it has to be within a wider framework of engagement and partnership with external bodies, be these in the public or private sector, including schools, businesses, charities and community groups. Enterprising activity can occur in any of these contexts – being innovative in our work, identifying opportunities, linking activities and taking risks, then reflecting upon our achievements and learning from them. Enterprise is something that bridges teaching and research, not a separate element carried out in spite of them.

From my own perspective, I have been ‘enterprise engaged’ for a number of years, starting with my first Knowledge Transfer Project (KTP) in 2001. Then, four years ago, my colleagues and I embarked on a more comprehensive expansion of business engagement because while we were hearing from many of our students that they wished to find employment in the region, there seemed to be no suitable jobs. At the same time many regional employers were telling us they were desperate for graduates but could not find any. When we examined this issue, we concluded the sticking point in this problem was us! If we were more engaged with local employers, we could broker interaction between them and our students, and work towards ensuring students who chose to study in the South West could remain here.

Through liaison activities such as student projects, employer group meetings, KTPs, schools visits, recruitment events and countless informal interactions, our subject area is now established as a hub of IT knowledge in the region. Not only do we know what employers want from our students, we understand their knowledge and skills needs across the board, and work in partnership to ensure a strong future for the IT sector in the region. The partnership obviously strongly contributes to our own marketing and recruitment –
Plymouth students have won the national final of the Flux business challenge two years in a row, proving they’re among the UK’s best young business brains.

Flux is a team challenge that helps students develop key graduate skills and business awareness within an enterprise framework and, with the reigning champs being from Plymouth, the May final will once again be held at the university. Students Rebecca Wood, Carline James, Lee Fordham, Yueyang Pan and Gus Palmer (right) will be defending the university’s title.

Xing, the game used in Flux, has been proving an invaluable part of the curriculum at Plymouth. Hospitality, Tourism and Events staff have used it to engage 170 first-year students in personal development planning and the development of key graduate and academic skills. Group leader Dr Paul Brunt said that as a result students’ presentations were ‘outstanding, especially for this stage of their course’. Meanwhile the students deemed Xing ‘a brilliant way to get to know people in our teams really quickly’.

Bill Wells, Managing Director of 2.0 Ltd, who has spent time with IT students as part of Xing, said: “It is great to see the university embedding sector-relevant entrepreneurial skills into an early part of students work.”

The highly adaptable nature of Xing gives it broad appeal, with Surf Science and Technology students using it as a framework for planning the organisation of a major surf competition, an existing part of their curriculum.

If you would like to discuss using Xing with students, contact Tamsin Pyne, Employer Liaison Manager, on ext 87720.

ENHANCING employability

being able to show that we know what employers want and the impact of our alumni on the region and beyond has an extremely positive impact upon our student numbers.

A few years ago, I was told by the Head of IT at a local authority in the region, “All you need to do is take kids and turn them into what we want. I don’t care about the rest.” While I disagree with this somewhat blinkered view of HE, it does highlight an important point - we are part of a process. Education does not exist in isolation, it is the means to an end. It is about raising aspirations, improving lives and helping people achieve their full potential. If we exist in isolation, we restrict the contribution we can make to this transformation. By embracing the enterprise agenda we are placing ourselves at the very heart of the process, developing the attitude and skills to maximise the potential of both those within the university and also the communities with which we (both staff and students) engage. I should stress that I am not ‘enterprise engaged’ because someone from senior management has told me to be. I do this because I believe it is the right thing for the university. Ultimately, the enterprise agenda is about the student experience. How can we make our students the best they can be? What does it mean to have a degree from the University of Plymouth? If our distinguishing feature is that a Plymouth graduate is aware of the sector they are entering into, with skills and knowledge to make them highly employable, isn’t that something to embrace?

With the Enterprise Project underway a range of focus groups meetings have taken place across the university to start to build our understanding on enterprise activity. This will inform a staff survey, which will give everyone the chance to contribute, to share their experiences, and also to talk about the barriers they have encountered in becoming more enterprising.

There should be no-one in the organisation who feels they have nothing to contribute the enterprise agenda – it does not exclude subjects or approaches to practice. We already know that there is much enterprise activity going on, through the Enterprise Project we can understand it with more clarity, recognise our strengths and decide how we build on this to achieve the vision of becoming the enterprise university.

*Professor Julian Beer; Caroline Chipperfield, Policy Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor; David Coslett, Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Corinne Farrell, Acting Director of Marketing and Communications; Professor Steven Furnell, Head of the School of Computing, Communications and Electronics; Professor Jim Griffiths, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Science; Professor Susan Lea, Director of the Centre for Excellence in Professional Placement Learning; Marc Lintern, Head of Student Development and Employability, and Helen Teague, Staff and Organisational Development Manager.

From innovative partnerships with business to community projects, the following articles give a flavour of the enterprising endeavours of staff and students across the university.
RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

The university has launched its fourth Business Ideas Challenge and is now calling for staff, students and alumni to come forward with their bright ideas by 31 December.

Organisers are holding a series of workshops aimed at helping entrants to develop their ideas, with events taking place between now and February. The competition has a total prize fund worth thousands of pounds, as well as access to professional services and advice to help ideas grow into a real business.

The competition is open to staff, students and alumni of the university as well as Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) and University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC) staff and HE students, Tamar Science Park tenants, Formation Zone clients and Formation Zone Connect members.

The winner of Business Ideas Challenge 2007, Professor Steve Rowland, has seen his winning idea of using the chemicals found in petroleum waste as a carrier or base for pharmaceutical drugs move forward this year.

Steve has now been awarded a contract from a group of oil companies to work on a two-year project to investigate and measure the waste material so that oil companies are better able to predict when large build-ups of the material could occur.

Steve is working with another company to produce larger quantities of the by-product which can be used as a carrier – something that is key to its commercial exploitation.

And, following a chance meeting with the academics from Edinburgh University who cloned Dolly the Sheep, Steve is also working to see if there is an application for the by-product in the work they are doing on stem cell research.

Steve said: “I’m even more optimistic now than I was because we’ve got funding for two years. We’re moving forward as I hoped and it’s something that, because we are doing this in the university and not setting up our own lab, is benefiting undergraduates and postgraduates because they can get involved in the research.”

Entries must be received by 31 December for the first stage of the competition – which only needs to be an outline business idea.

Subsequent rounds will then see shortlisted entrants given mentoring and support to produce an idea development plan, which will be assessed as the second part of the competition, before facing a Dragon’s Den-style grilling from judges to decide category winners and the overall winner of the competition.

A series of events will be taking place over the next few months to help entrants prepare for the rigours of the competition.

On 20 January a workshop about market research will give entrants tips on how to understand their market place and identify customers. On 27 January there will be a session on intellectual property, followed by idea development on 3 February, finance on 10 February and business planning on 17 February.

To find out more, log onto www.plymouth.ac.uk/bpchallenge

INNOCENCE INITIATIVE

Law students will soon start to examine possible miscarriages of justice after signing up to take part in the Innocence Project.

Ten third-year students and five second-year students are running the project, which gives them the chance to experience real case work while they are still at university.

The Innocence Project is part of the Innocence Network UK (INUK), a university-based initiative which draws support from academics, criminal appeal lawyers, victim support groups, investigative journalists, campaign groups and forensic scientists.

The Innocence Project at Plymouth will be allocated cases from prisoners who are maintaining their innocence.

Students will obtain all of the documents connected to the cases and sift through them to look for corroboration of the prisoners’ claims and new evidence that might have been missed at the original trial.

Some of the students have attended an intensive training weekend at Cardiff University. The group has now started to meet on a regular basis, assigned roles and drawn up a code of conduct.

They are also working with Plymouth law firm Foot Anstey, who are providing legal advice on a pro bono basis, and are hoping to link with a local barrister so that possible miscarriages of justice can be pursued. Then, depending on the students’ findings, the Criminal Cases Review Commission could decide to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal.

“Students will be able to develop their skills, which will make them more employable when they leave the university,” said Law Lecturer Sarah Butcher. “It gives them the opportunity to run a case as they would do in the real world and to put into practice the skills they have been learning on their course.”

INUk is not a campaign or victim support group but instead works through education to overturn and prevent wrongful convictions.
IN THE ZONE

The Formation Zone, the university’s hub for nurturing and developing creative businesses, has celebrated its first anniversary.

Based in the Roland Levinsky Building, the Formation Zone offers workspace, support and events for creative businesses. The business hub has now set up its own bulletin board and Facebook page to help members keep in touch throughout the day.

And it has a series of events planned into the New Year aimed at giving new businesses support and advice.

In January, its Connect networking group will have a workshop with Tamar Science Park-based Scream IT, focusing on how IT solutions can be flexible and affordable for small businesses. The February meeting will look at how businesses can be environmentally sustainable.

The Formation Zone’s regular One Stop Ideas Shop meetings will continue, with meetings taking place on the second Monday of every month, including 12 January, 9 February and 9 March.

These will see experts from organisations including the Tamar Science Park, Business Link, the university, a patent attorney and the Patent Library giving one-to-one advice to people with a business idea.

Formation Zone Programme Manager Eleanor Butland said: “One of the key successes is the support we are able to offer to individuals at the first stage of developing a business idea. People don’t have to wait until they are ready to hire a desk to contact us. As soon as they are thinking about moving in that direction, they can get in touch because we can give help and advice in a number of areas.”

For more information, visit www.formationzone.co.uk

From bench to bedside

An MSc launched by the Faculty of Health and Social Work as part of its new Integrated Masters Programme is bringing neuroscience to the clinical workplace.

The MSc started in September with students from a variety of professional backgrounds across the UK.

“It’s so exciting how popular this new programme has been,” said Programme Leader Amanda Austin. “We have recruited a variety of professionals representing the fields of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nursing and psychology.”

MSc Neurological Rehabilitation uses a variety of delivery methods and has been developed to facilitate inter-professional learning focusing on evidence-based contemporary health care in this specialist area.

The programme capitalises on the multi-professional expertise within the faculty and is leading to exciting collaborations across the university. For example, a module developed by Professor Chris Harris from Computational Neuroscience and Professor Jon Marsden from Health and Social Work focuses on functional neuroanatomy in health and neurological disease. This approach enables neuroscientists and clinicians to work closer together.

“We intended to attract health care professionals looking to develop their evaluation and leadership in this specialist field, and it is extremely encouraging to see that we have achieved this so well in our first year,” said Professor Marsden.

“Our aim is to ensure we create health care leaders for the future.”

Opportunities to widen the programme to other professions and to international students are now being explored, and research opportunities are being developed involving the Human Movement and Function Laboratory and some of its state-of-the-art equipment (pictured below).
Hollywood calling

It’s not every day that a Hollywood film crew asks for a favour – but when they did, university computing staff were ready to help.

The university's IT staff were contacted by the film company behind Tim Burton's version of *Alice in Wonderland*, which was filmed at Antony House, near Torpoint, over the summer.

The film makers needed to send footage from each day's shoot back to Hollywood so that producers could track its progress.

But because they needed to send a huge amount (20 to 30 gigabytes) of material at a time, a normal broadband connection would have taken too long.

The film makers asked if they could use the university's high-spec internet connection so that material could be sent via the high-speed network to America.

At the end of each day's filming, for about ten days, a member of the film crew came onto campus to send the footage to producers.

“We were pleased to be able to help the film company,” said Senior Computing Officer Phil Stevens. “If we can get the name of the university known to as many people as possible, then so much the better.”

The film, which is due to be released in 2010, stars Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter, Matt Lucas as Tweedledum and Tweedledee and newcomer Mia Wasikowska as Alice.

Enterprise week

The university has again been a key partner in Plymouth’s celebrations of National Enterprise Week.

During a packed week of enterprise-themed activities, the university hosted events such as the Plymouth Media Partnership’s Breaking Into Media workshop and the FLUX enterprise challenge and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Purcell, took part in an Institute of Directors event, Nature or Nurture - Women in Business.

In addition, the university was represented at the Inspire skills event at Plymouth Albion, in an event aimed at raising the aspirations of Plymouth’s young people and making them aware of the different career choices open to them.

And the university sponsored The Herald's Youth Awards 2008, which recognised Plymouth’s most enterprising young people.

Co-hosted by Olympic diver Tom Daley and The Herald Editor, Bill Martin, the event saw a total of 11 awards handed out. These included The University of Plymouth Student Volunteer of the Year, which was awarded to James Redfearn, Vice President of the Students' Union. James has been a key figure in helping more than 1,000 students take part in voluntary projects.

Jonathan Gillham won the university's Business Ideas Challenge Progress Prize for his vision of a company supplying hi-tech timing devices to amateur sports people. He has now set up a company, called QED4, which seeking funding.

Tracy Wilson, Head of Commercial Marketing, said: “This year's Enterprise Week events were fantastic. They really showed how far Plymouth has come and how well organisations work together to promote the city. Enterprise is a fundamental part of life at the University of Plymouth so it is fitting that we played such an important role in the week.”
Marine renewable energy is a hot topic and researchers at the university are playing a key role in research that will help enhance the way this energy can be harnessed.

Experts Deborah Greaves, Qingping Zou and Yali Zhang of the Coastal Engineering Research Group (CERG) in the School of Engineering are developing new computational fluid dynamics models for analysis of wave energy converters (WECs).

The team’s work is part of PRIMaRE, the Peninsula Research Institute for Marine Renewable Energy, which was formed by the university’s Marine Institute in partnership with the University of Exeter, bringing together world-class researchers to provide unparalleled expertise to address the wider considerations of all aspects of marine renewable energy.

A major design consideration for WECs is survivability in storm conditions, but traditional design methods for offshore structures can’t predict extreme wave breaking, and the dynamic response of WECs is significantly different from traditional offshore structures. New computational fluid dynamics techniques are being developed to model the response of a WEC in freak waves and situations where the wave breaks and overtops the WEC.

Both the water and air pockets that may form when a wave breaks or overtops a structure are modelled, and the interface between them is sharply defined. The computer simulations incorporate recent advances in numerical methods to save computational space, to maximise accuracy for a given size of computation and to speed up the calculation, making use of the Faculty of Technology HPC (High Performance Computing) facilities.

From beach cleans and cake bakes to mentoring projects, many staff give their time and energy to participating in projects that enhance the lives of our local community, but did you know that the Active in Communities (AiC) project offers staff university-supported volunteering events to get involved in?

“It’s widely recognised that volunteering can contribute greatly to building confidence in new areas and skills development, while it’s also a great way to give something back to the local community,” said Sarah O’Leary, AiC Co-ordinator. “Most volunteers are individual staff giving time from lunch breaks, after work or at weekends to take part. Sometimes though it’s whole teams that get involved in working together, which often helps with ‘away day’ structures and team-building activities.”

The volunteering efforts of staff are also good news for charities, whether it’s dying their hair pink or giving lectures in fancy dress to raise funds.

“The community really values the work that our staff and students do for the city,” said Sarah. “The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated makes a huge difference, while the work forms a crucial part of the longer-term sustainability for the university, engaging directly with those that need support and helping to preserve our environment.”

AiC want to hear from you so get in touch to tell them about your event, get fundraising tips or hear about volunteering opportunities. Contact Sarah at activeincommunities@plymouth.ac.uk.

**Nominations required!**

Nominations are sought for the university’s Staff Volunteer of the Year Award 2009. For a nomination form, please send an email to the address above.
With over 3,000 staff at the university, we come across new names and faces every day. But if there’s one member of staff you should know, it’s Steve Monk (right) - general staff governor who was recently re-elected to serve on the Board of Governors until 2010.

Steve has worked at the university for 28 years, and in his current post of Learning Environment and Information Services IT Manager has responsibility for open access computing facilities for students, the library media workshop, internet connection for students in halls of residence and the student wireless service. He is also the Chair of the University of Plymouth Branch of UNISON, the professional staff union.

Steve first became a staff governor in 2002, his interest stemming from his union experience: "The politics got me interested in running for the position of staff governor and I wanted to find out more about the governance of the university - I also happen to care a lot about where I work."

When asked about the accountability of being a staff governor, Steve is keen to set the record straight, "My role is to be aware of what is going on in the university and communicate feelings, opinions and issues to the board. I am not there to represent staff on the board of governors in a trade union sense."

"A lot of information on staff matters arises from my union activity, so it helps me to do my job better, as I might not know about them otherwise – in fact I get upset when I hear about things and don’t already know about them!"

Speaking about balancing union and Board of Governors agendas and remaining impartial, Steve said: "It is really important to have union awareness at board level as it means there is someone who is well placed to know about issues affecting staff who can communicate these to the governors."

"A lot of information on staff matters arises from my union activity, so it helps me to do my job better, as I might not know about them otherwise – in fact I get upset when I hear about things and don’t already know about them!"

Steve speaks animatedly about his role of staff governor and it is clear that he takes pride in holding this worthwhile position, saying that ‘you get out of it what you put in’ and that he ‘puts a lot in’. According to Steve the highlights are the privilege of being among the first to hear about new projects, engaging with the independent governors and finding out firsthand about the university’s direction - although he admits there are also challenges with the latter:

"The closure of campuses and how affected staff have responded has been difficult, especially when you have two groups of staff who disagree. All I can do is report both sides to the governors, who then take an informed vote on the issue. This means that there is no pleasing everyone, unfortunately, although I like to think that I give an honest opinion for the benefit of staff and the institution as a whole."

Steve would like to see better engagement with staff, as a lot of what he currently relies on comes from union activity and the ‘rumour mill’. Staff can contact him with any issues they need raised, although people need to be aware of the difference between management and governance issues: "The Chief Executive’s Group and the Senior Management Team manage the university, while the governors govern. If staff come to me with a problem about car parking, for example, that is a management issue and will be directed to the relevant person outside the Board of Governors."

Steve’s parting message to colleagues relates to the latest challenge that he faces both as a governor and union chair – the university’s strategic review. He urges staff to look at the bigger picture: "I know some staff are anxious, but we need to look further than the end of our noses to focus on where we are going to be in ten years time as opposed to where we are now."

Steve can be contacted at steve.monk@plymouth.ac.uk
The highlight of the calendar – the Beryl Cook 1926 – 2008 exhibition – is open until 20 December, celebrating the life and work of the much loved late artist who drew much of her inspiration from the people and places of Plymouth. The major exhibition, which is accompanied by a special book bearing the same title and published by the University of Plymouth Press, includes Beryl's best-known works as well as rarely seen creations such as the 'Dancing Girls' dolls pictured here.

The exhibition is in the Peninsula Arts Gallery in the Roland Levinsky Building and entry is free of charge. See www.berylcookatplymouth.com for more details about the show and the book.

The Peninsula Arts Contemporary Piano Series, which runs until 17 June, is a collection of performances showcasing the astonishing flexibility of the piano. Those taking part include composers and performers of international repute, such as Ian Pace and Michael Finnissy, and the innovative programme will see Beethoven pastorals share the platform with pianists using sine wave generators.

Tuesday 23 December is the Gala Christmas Concert by the Ten Tors Orchestra and Choir at St Eustachius Church, Tavistock. Soprano Alwyn Mellor will be a particular highlight of the evening, which will also include traditional carols.

Darren Jones (below), who was elected University of Plymouth Students’ Union President for this academic year, explains his role.

Being SU President is certainly an interesting role with lots of different hats to wear. Primarily, I’m elected to champion the student voice and to ensure that students are adequately represented where ever they need to be heard. This result is a very full diary of meetings with the university, internally at the union, with the national union, the community (council, MPs, groups, etc) and many more people besides.

My responsibilities are wide ranging and make for an interesting balance of leadership and management. I’m the lead executive officer of the SU with a ‘global’ portfolio and therefore act as one of the trustees for its charity status, specifically acting as Chair of the Board of Trustees. At the same time I’m an employee of the SU (I get paid!) but I’m recognised externally as a student. And on top of all of that I am also the student representative on the Board of Governors for the university, but I’m strictly there as a student not as President of UPSU (where some role conflict might play a part).

It’s an unusual situation - as a trustee you wouldn’t normally be in your organisation every day taking operational decisions, but as President you are. I line manage our Chief Executive Officer, who in turn manages the staff team through the senior managers who work to keep the organisation afloat and to meet the manifesto pledges of the elected officers.

There are five of us all together, including a Deputy President and three Vice Presidents. The Deputy President specifically looks after elections, Student Parliament and partner colleges while the three Vice Presidents have responsibilities for sports, education, welfare, societies, volunteering and communications.

The union exists to represent students and to transform their lives through experience. We do this by not only having elected representatives – from executive officers like myself to student parliamentarians and course and faculty representatives – but by providing services such as sports, societies, volunteering, campaigns, an advice centre, plus the social spaces within our building. Staff are welcome to come and see us - we look forward to meeting you.

For more information about the SU, visit www.upsu.com
The Illustration students enjoyed bringing their work to the public at this high-profile location, and the money raised from the sale of the items is helping them to fund their end-of-year exhibition.

“I’d like to thank the students and my colleagues who helped to make this a success,” said Dave Hotchkiss, Centre Manager of the university’s Institute for the Creative and Cultural Industries.

Original illustrations and limited-edition prints and t-shirts proved a big hit with many Christmas shoppers when enterprising students showcased some of their work in Plymouth’s Drake’s Circus Shopping Centre in late November.