Governor leads Devon’s public inquiry

Bringing education to prisoners

The kettle’s on at Portland Square

Science Year launched with a leap
Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey in the last issue of UPfront. I know the timing was not ideal, as publication coincided with academics taking their summer breaks – this was reflected in the fact that 76% of respondents worked in admin or managerial roles. However, we received 83 responses in total – and will continue to take on board any comments or ideas you pass on.

In general your feedback was positive: only 8% of respondents said UPfront was not of interest and two-thirds of you said that you read all or most of it. However, nine out of ten people do not want to contribute in any way – although those of you who would like to get involved can expect to hear from us! Most of you want to see more photos, graphics and competitions.

We clearly have more work to do too, judging by some of your comments:

‘bland design’
‘more news style – but not MTV’
‘whole different approach – real issues and personal stories’

We have tried to reflect these comments, by taking more of a ‘magazine’ approach to UPfront – and incorporating some of your suggestions for features, such as a regular employee/department profile – this time it’s Pam Woodland from the Plymouth campus main reception – and more news from around the different campuses. Some of you asked to see letters pages and jokes – but you’ll have to send some in first!

We are happy to follow up your suggestions for news and feature stories – keep them coming. (See contact details on back cover.) Although the survey only really offered a ‘snapshot’ of readers’ views, it’s given us a clear steer for the future. We have also decided to produce UPfront bi-monthly instead of the current nine or ten issues a year. This is partly due to financial and production constraints, but also to allow us more time to produce a better magazine. I hope you’ll agree that this issue looks and reads a lot better than the last few – and that you’ll support us in going for quality rather than quantity!
Professor Ian Mercer, CBE, has just taken on one of the highest profile roles in the county: he is the independent chairman of Devon County Council’s public inquiry into the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the county and its aftermath.

Professor Mercer has had a life-long interest in education and the environment, particularly the countryside, and has held a variety of high-profile and challenging roles in public life. He was appointed the first chief officer of the Dartmoor National Park Authority in 1973 and the first chief executive of the Countryside Council for Wales in 1990. Amongst his current roles, he is president of the Devon Wildlife Trust and a member of the BBC Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. He received his CBE in January 1996 for ‘services to the environment in Wales’.

Professor Mercer was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Plymouth in 1995, and has been on the board of governors since 1996. In fact, his association with Seale-Hayne goes back much further than that. He was involved in designing the curriculum for its first non-agricultural course in 1971. The course was an HND in natural resources and rural economy, and Professor Mercer was ideally placed to take on a role as its first external industrial assessor, having spent the past ten years establishing and managing the Field Centre and Nature Reserve at Slapton Ley. He had also, in 1971, just been appointed by Devon County Council as the first county conservation officer in England and Wales.

Education and the rural environment continue to be an abiding interest in Professor Mercer’s retirement. As a member of the University’s board of governors, his role is to contribute to the management and development of the institution. He sits on various committees and interview panels, but his area of particular responsibility is Seale-Hayne, where he is a familiar face.

Speaking of his role as chairman of the Devon Foot and Mouth Outbreak and Rural Recovery Inquiry, he says: ‘Some people have said to me that they think it is strange to hold a local investigation when three national inquiries have already been announced.

“My own view is that Devon has a particularly valuable contribution to make.”

Professor Mercer was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Plymouth in 1995, and has been on the board of governors since 1996. In fact, his association with Seale-Hayne goes back much further than that: he was involved in designing the curriculum for its first non-agricultural course in 1971. The course was an HND in natural resources and rural economy, and Professor Mercer was ideally placed to take on a role as its first external industrial assessor, having spent the past ten years establishing and managing the Field Centre and Nature Reserve at Slapton Ley. He had also, in 1971, just been appointed by Devon County Council as the first county conservation officer in England and Wales.

Education and the rural environment continue to be an abiding interest in Professor Mercer’s retirement. As a member of the University’s board of governors, his role is to contribute to the management and development of the institution. He sits on various committees and interview panels, but his area of particular responsibility is Seale-Hayne, where he is a familiar face.

Speaking of his role as chairman of the Devon Foot and Mouth Outbreak and Rural Recovery Inquiry, he says: ‘Some people have said to me that they think it is strange to hold a local investigation when three national inquiries have already been announced.

“My own view is that Devon, like the other foot and mouth ‘hotspots’, has a particularly valuable contribution to make. There are lessons to be learned locally which should be fed into the national inquiries, and we may have new and different ideas for the future regeneration of the countryside – our countryside. Shropshire has also announced its own local inquiry, and I should be surprised if Cumbria does not follow suit.

“People must remember that farming was already in recession when foot and mouth struck. It has had a profound impact on the countryside – not just on the economy of individual farming families, but on whole communities and on the management of the rural landscape. I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that the countryside will never be quite the same again. Certainly it’s going to have to change. The real challenge for us is how we keep farmers – the managers of the countryside – in place when their own economy and motivation has been so sorely eroded. In National Parks, for example, what would happen if there were no hill farmers? There is simply no other land management system currently available to us.

“The inquiry is already taking written submissions, and the public hearing will start on the 8th of October. I and my colleagues will use both as the basis for our report. We aim to complete our work by the end of October, so that it can be submitted to the relevant national inquiries.”
Trainee teachers are being sent to jail as part of an innovative partnership between the University’s Post-16 Education and Training Department and Channings Wood Prison. Dr Phil Bayliss of the School of Graduate Studies in Art & Education explains all.

“That’s it, you’re cleverer than you thought you were!” exclaimed the trainee teacher. Her shaven-headed learner gently beamed a toothy grin. But this was no ordinary classroom. I was in Channings Wood prison observing a PGCE student teaching maths to some inmates.

Thirty PGCE/CertEd students have chosen to study a module in prison education and are placed with HMP Channings Wood throughout their one-year course. They also study a specific prison education module. Otherwise, all academic work is common to the PGCE/CertEd programme and taught at Seale-Hayne.

The innovative partnership between the University’s Post-16 Education and Training Department and the prison is proving to be an enormous success for all involved. It has also attracted the attention of the former Minister for Higher Education, Baroness Blackstone, and the BBC Crime Watch presenter, Professor David Wilson.

“I believe that this is a challenging role for any good teacher,” says one student. “Considering the broad range of ages, abilities, motivation, behaviour and turnover of inmates within prison education, I feel that teaching within a prison environment gives teachers a very broad experience of adult education within a short time.”

More than 60 percent of the prison population are estimated to be functionally illiterate and innumerate. Much of the teaching, therefore, is centred on the acquisition of basic skills – but not necessarily in the classroom. One of our students has devised a wordpower exercise to do together. Even IT training has an extra dimension. For example, inmates can now practise the written part of their driving test on CD, thanks to our students!

Maintaining a connection with home life is crucial for any good teacher, says one student. “Inmates are allowed extra visits from their families while a teacher suggests constructive games and learning exercises to do together. Even IT training has an extra dimension. For example, inmates can now practise the written part of their driving test on CD, thanks to our students!”

The progress of this teacher training course is being carefully monitored, and I am being sponsored by the University to investigate prison education policy and evaluate our pilot teacher training programme. Although the connection isn’t proved, it is believed that by teaching inmates sufficient skills to find themselves a job, their chances of re-offending are lower. National attention is being focused on the rehabilitative nature of education, so Plymouth is really at the forefront of the ‘Storybook Dads’ project, and the tapes are sent home to their families.

Over 400 pupils at Ivybridge Community College joined in the nationwide ‘giant jump’ to launch Science Year in early September.

Thousands of people up and down the country jumped simultaneously for one minute with the aim of breaking the Guinness world records for the largest simultaneous jump and the biggest mass participation experiment. The Ivybridge pupils were joined by Dr Tony Morris from the Department of Geological Sciences, who followed the event with a talk on seismology and earthquakes.
In the first of a series of articles focusing on individual staff, Upfront talks to Pam Woodland (below), receptionist extraordinaire and first point of contact for visitors to the Plymouth campus.

Pam, who was runner-up in the 1998 Receptionist of the Year Awards, has worked at the University for over a decade and, prior to working in the Security Lodge where she is based, worked in conference administration in the Administrative Services Department (now the Department for Learning Facilities). She tells us what life is like behind the scenes of what must be one of the busiest reception desks in the South West.

“When I started at the University ten years ago, I felt I had been launched into the deep end as things started from scratch and I had to set up my own processes. Luckily for me, things fell into place very quickly.

It’s difficult to describe a typical day as no two days are the same. Invariably visitors come in requiring help, many arrive late and some are totally disorientated when they get here! The majority of people drive to the campus and organising visitors’ parking is a major part of the job. The way we do it requires a system whereby it is necessary to literally count them in and count them out in order to maintain some form of control. Parking is difficult as space is so tight on this campus, but we do try and help when we can, if enough warning is given and the campus is not so busy.

I am fortunate to be in a position to meet and greet visitors from all over the world, to share with them their experiences and to enlighten them about our wonderful city and University. The most rewarding time is with the arrival of new and prospective students full of nervous anticipation and all requiring help and assistance. It is amazing how many people contact me hoping I might know the answer to their query, but without the help of numerous members of staff my job would be much harder and more challenging when it comes to giving good advice.

We have had some odd incidents here. Once, a postman was bitten by an unusual insect while delivering his mail. Luckily our resident entomologist, Peter Smithers from Biological Sciences, was on hand to help out and things were okay. Another time a young lady turned up for an interview absolutely soaked and she went off to it wearing several items of my clothing. She did get the job though! Also, we had someone who realised he should have been in Portsmouth, and commented that he ‘knew it was a naval town’! Just some incidents out of many but it keeps me on my toes.

Before relocating to Plymouth with my husband, I lived near Bath, where I worked as a PA to a senior manager at Clarkes. I love gardening and growing roses, and you will often see a rose in a vase in Reception. I also enjoy reading and spending time with my two lovely granddaughters, who do their best to keep me young at heart.”

Asked to sum up the qualities required for her job, Pam commented: “An ability to remain calm, to ask the right questions and overall to listen to the speaker. I do enjoy my job and it gives me a great sense of satisfaction to know the information I give a prospective student may help them pursue their course of study here. I do admire their bravery in walking through the door of a university as it can be a daunting place at first, and they deserve all the help we can give.”
It’s ‘tea up!’ at Portland Square, following the announcement that the University’s catering team had won the contract to keep Bovis construction workers fed and watered during their breaks.

Bovis has provided a 24-seat Portacabin in which our catering staff are providing a works canteen covering the duration of the building contract, which is likely to continue until Christmas 2002. “The operation is going very well,” says Annette Dodd, Catering Manager at Plymouth. “We expect business to build up as the number of contractors increases and the project develops.”

There were no surprises when Annette was deluged with female staff volunteering to work in the new canteen!
The Postal Services Assistants at Plymouth worked flat out on A level results day to ensure that all the post went out on time.

The mail consisted largely of University offers of places and accommodation. With reduced staffing levels due to annual holiday they still managed to get franked 4,366 items of mail compared to 1,700 items the day before. The Royal Mail van on the first collection was filled to capacity and the driver had to call for another, which was also filled to capacity! The volume of mail was swelled by another 30 bags delivered to Plymouth by the inter-campus courier. This was the other sites’ external mail brought to Plymouth because of industrial action at an Exeter sorting office.

“This is a good example of the key role played by support staff in helping the University achieve its recruitment targets,” commented Wini Coles, Assistant Director of Learning Facilities. “It is a commendable performance by all those involved.”

As a result of the development of the human resources strategy the Personnel Department has been renamed Personnel & Development.

In the next edition of UPfront there will be further news about the restructuring and how the department intends to change its ways of operating to deliver a more customer-focused service.

The Postal Services Assistants working feverishly to meet the deadline.

The crew from CCTV, the only service broadcaster to the whole of China, arrived this summer. The crew was making a programme about the University that will form part of a series featuring six other UK universities. It is anticipated that viewing figures could be in the region of a billion!

The crew’s visit was co-ordinated by the International Office. “Their stay concluded with a trip up the Tamar, courtesy of the Diving & Sailing Centre,” said Jessica Randall of the International Office. “This left them with a lasting impression of the beauty of the area.”

An English professor wrote the words ‘a woman without her man is nothing’ on the blackboard and directed the students to punctuate it correctly.

The men wrote: “A woman, without her man, is nothing.”

The women wrote: “A woman: without her, man is nothing.”

It was lights, camera, action when the crew from CCTV, the only service broadcaster to the whole of China, arrived this summer.
It’s 7.30 am on Thursday 16 August. In several locations throughout the University small teams are gathering. There is a sense of tense anticipation for the awaited blizzard of telephone calls. Sure enough, the first call hits the Actionline team, then a second and a third. Within an hour the operators cannot put the phone down without an immediate ringing.

‘Clearing’ has started for another year.

There are calls to confirm places, calls to declare a ‘change of mind’ or to enquire about accommodation and calls requiring counselling as results dictate a change of direction.

Anticipating a more competitive clearing environment (with rumours of some universities having to enter clearing for the first time), some changes were introduced this year. For example, the Actionline team was increased by 50%, a new website was launched (complete with electronic application form) and special enquiry transfer arrangements were set up to ensure callers were not lost when all faculty lines were busy.

The number of clearing enquiries exceeded last year by over 100. On day one Actionline took more than 1300 calls (including various queries), yet day two was much quieter. The first open day was busy, but not the second – and enquiries and conversion were still taking place in the second half of September. Predicting the final result is difficult at the time of writing, but it does looks as if ‘UF’s’ will be pretty much on a par with last year - in a more competitive environment.

We know a little more about our customers’ attitudes and behaviour this year, having undertaken some market research. As might be expected, few of them understand the clearing process and so turn to teachers and parents at this stressful time. They use the Independent and Times clearing guides as well as the UCAS website – but they concentrate on looking for the course first and a ‘quality’ institution second. They claim not to be influenced by clearing advertising in the press; they prefer to use the vacancy listings as a directory. They are looking for information about careers/employment, the cost of living, social life and accommodation when making their choices. They expect a rapid response – they were pleased to receive a prospectus the day after their call.

Our success is not just about places filled, but also about how we handle distressed customers (who sometimes are not even capable of reciting their phone number accurately). A couple of anecdotal examples: one student expressed his delight at securing a place with the words, “At 8.58 am I was a disaster and now, at 9.02 am, I am on top of the world!” On another occasion, there were paper hankies in use at both ends of the phone as a somewhat confused student rang seeking advice and guidance having opened her A level results envelope only to find it empty!

In conclusion, I believe the University continued to handle clearing in a friendly, helpful and organised manner. Thanks and congratulations to all involved in the faculties, Registry and Actionline for a most professional job.

The autumn sees school and college students starting to think about which university they want to attend.

The University has produced a ‘handy hints’ guide to help them fill in their UCAS forms. This new guide has been sent to 11,000 students who are on our database, having requested a prospectus and asked for further details.

“The handy hints guide provides applicants with the help and advice they need. It also raises the profile of the University at a key decision-making time. Hopefully, they will see us as helpful, friendly and organised – as well as offering some fine courses,” says John Griffiths, Director of Marketing & PR.
In recent years the University has conferred honorary degrees on individuals including Tim Smit of the Eden Project, local yachtsman and businessman Pete Goss, astronaut Helen Sharman and broadcaster Trevor McDonald. Now your nominations are needed to help decide who should receive this honour in 2002.

The University may confer honorary degrees on individuals who have either earned distinction for activities associated with education, business, culture, the professions, creative work or public service, or who have given particularly outstanding service to the University or its partner colleges.

Nominees should normally have a tangible connection with the University, or the potential for developing such a connection should be clearly demonstrated in the nomination. Nominees who are not, and will not be, connected with the University can be considered but the nomination should include a strong case that demonstrates unequivocally that the University of Plymouth is the appropriate institution to be conferring an honorary degree. The University does not confer honorary awards on individuals who are current staff members or serving governors of the University or its partner colleges.

There are two categories of honorary degree:

- an honorary doctorate (eg DSc, DTech, DArts, DEd, DMus, DM, DLitt or LLD) awarded to those who have made a significant contribution at national and/or international level or made a major contribution to the corporate life of the University.

- an honorary masters (eg MA, MSc, MEd, MEng, MTech, MS, LLM, MMus) awarded to those who have made a major contribution to the region or within a specific area of the University.

The Honorary Awards Committee will be meeting in November to consider nominations for honorary degrees for 2002, and you are invited to submit any nominations as soon as possible to Jane Hopkinson, University Secretary and Academic Registrar. Nomination forms and notes for guidance may be obtained from Margaret Metcalfe, Office of the Vice-Chancellor, 18 Portland Villas (ext 2017/email: m.metcalfe@plymouth.ac.uk).

Since not all nominations are approved by the Committee, nominees must not be contacted about nominations, which must be made in confidence.

Previous honorary graduates include Helen Sharman (above) and Pete Goss (left).
The achievement of excellence in learning, teaching and research is at the heart of the University’s mission and provides a focus for a whole range of activities and developments. The current teaching and learning development agenda embraces issues such as work-based learning, personal development planning, assessment, (including computer assisted assessment) and e-learning.

Two major issues dominated the agenda last year and will be key for the coming year: the structure of the academic year and transition to higher education.

Academic Board has now approved the proposal to change the structure of the academic year with effect from September 2003. Three principles inform the changes:

- the academic year will be 33 weeks long, with a 24-week teaching period from September through to Easter
- the normal unit of study should be a 20-credit module taught across the academic year, with an option to continue to use 10-credit half-modules where necessary
- there will be no University level examinations at Christmas, though formative and summative assessment can still take place within modules.

The arguments for change are many, but the discussion has centred on the lack, in the current semester structure, of continuity of the students’ learning experience, and the difficulty of providing appropriate assessment and feedback. Academic Board has now asked a Working Group, representative of all faculties, to prepare an implementation plan for the change. During the coming weeks it will be consulting widely, in particular with programme leaders, to assess the extent of the changes needed and their impact.

The increasing diversity of the student body, changes in the school curriculum, and the growing evidence of difficulties facing students during their first year in university, now place the issue of transition to higher education higher on our agenda. As is so often the case in this University, there is already a wealth of experience of dealing with this issue, so it is planned to hold a ‘Transition to HE Swapshop’ on Wednesday, 31 October, from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm in the Robbins Conference Centre. The aim of this event is to facilitate the sharing of good practice in student transition, through pre-entry and induction, and into Stage One. (Contact Liz Garland at e.garland@plymouth.ac.uk for more information)

Two faculties, Science and the Business School are already examining issues of transition. The Faculty of Science proposes to create an ‘Institute for Science Education’ to focus on the Year One experience, whilst the Business School wants to make its student support systems more effective during this period of adjustment and change. Hopefully, other parts of the institution will be able to learn from their experience. If you would like to contribute to the ongoing discussion on transition, please let me know.

Other important initiatives in learning and teaching include:

- computer assisted assessment, led by Chris Ricketts (c.ricketts@plymouth.ac.uk)
- the use of Outlook/Exchange as an on-line learning environment, co-ordinated by Sally Wilks (s.j.wilks@plymouth.ac.uk)
- piloting of personal development planning – information from Sue Burkill (s.burkill@plymouth.ac.uk)
- development of a University assessment strategy – QSC Working Party chaired by me (i.sidgreaves@plymouth.ac.uk).

Finally, the Student Centred Learning Initiative continues to provide a focus for innovative practice to meet the strategic aim of developing our students as independent learners. £60,000 was allocated in 2000/01 to individual and small group projects. For more detail on this initiative, visit the ‘Teaching and Learning’ section of the University’s website.

If you have any ideas on how we can further improve the exchange of good practice and new information on learning and teaching, please let me know.
The new building in Exmouth has taken shape over the summer and the completion date is mid-November. For some students and staff this means that, temporarily, lectures will be taking place in the Banqueting Suite at the Royal Beacon Hotel! Due to the re-allocation of rooms and the building work, the Library is also undergoing a refurbishment.

PE and Recreation has undergone a transformation under the inspirational leadership of Shaun Parkin (ext 5469). This year staff and students are offered the following activities at lunchtimes and evenings: the running club; circuit training; aerobics; t’ai chi and yoga. In addition, the Fitness Room is open 7.30 am to 9.30 pm, seven days a week.

In Exeter, Andy Wright (ext 5658) has also done sterling work to bring recreational activities to the campus. Andy has negotiated a deal with Exeter City Council that includes access for staff and students to any of five sports halls, Pyramids swimming pool and Northbrook golf course. This initiative is being subsidised by the University.

Out with the old…The awards ceremonies in Exeter Cathedral were a great success again this year, as was the Degree Show on the Exeter campus - with more visitors than ever!…Dean of Faculty, Professor Mike Newby, has just finished his role as Chair of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers after three years in post.

In with the new…Admissions staff report that ‘clearing’ was successful and we are on target to meet all our numbers…New staff include Hazel Lawson in the School of Graduate Studies; Suanne Gibson, Christine Wilday and Claire Dowdall in Rolle School of Education; Ashley Potter and Wendy Smith in Exeter School of Arts & Design; and Caroline Burke and Raimi Gbadamosi in the School of Humanities & Cultural Interpretation.

28 August saw another successful open day at Seale-Hayne. A record number of visitors enjoyed meeting staff and current students and the blazing sunshine helped, of course! The next Seale-Hayne open day will be held on Wednesday 10 October.

Overall unconditional first offers are up from last year (in excess of 60%), an amazing difference and a trend which we hope to continue in future years.

The Students’ Union has been splurging some of their hard-earned cash on redecoration. New to the Union is a round billiard table acquired from Plymouth SU and a massive cinema screen with seven surround sound speakers, which – apart from showing all the latest blockbusters – can also be used to practise presentation skills for seminars. Which will prove the more popular, we wonder!

Staff news…Dean of the Faculty, Clare Broom, has left to take up the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning & Information), based at Plymouth. We wish her every success in her new role…We congratulate Professor Rod Blackshaw on his appointment as Dean; his replacement as Head of Agriculture & Food Studies is Dr Mick Fuller…Richard Shepherd has been appointed as Manager of the Agri-Food Centre for Expertise.
The first national study into the effectiveness of cannabis in treating multiple sclerosis (MS) is now well underway. MS is one of the commonest causes of disability in young people. It is also associated with a number of distressing symptoms such as muscle stiffness and spasms (spasticity), pain, difficulty passing urine and tremor. The £1.2 million project is under the aegis of the University’s Postgraduate Medical School, and led by Dr John Zajicek, a consultant neurologist at Derriford Hospital. The first phase of the research programme started in January when 44 Plymouth patients were signed up to the year-long treatment programme.

In June, recruitment was extended to 38 centres nationwide and already more than 200 patients are taking part. In all, researchers hope to recruit 660 people onto the programme. They will be treated in hospitals as far afield as Dundee, London, Manchester, Swansea, Cambridge and Belfast, with all the data and results being co-ordinated and evaluated in Plymouth.

The research aims to establish whether cannabis is effective in reducing muscle stiffness and improving mobility in patients with MS. It is the largest single study of symptom treatment in MS ever performed. Patients, who are accepted onto the study for a year, are randomly allocated to one of three treatments: cannabis oil, tetrahydrocannabinol (a constituent of cannabis) or placebo capsules. Neither the patients nor their doctors will know which form of treatment is being taken until after the study. Assessments of muscle stiffness and mobility are made every few weeks, and patients are asked to take part in a postal survey about their disability and quality of life.

The Plymouth patients who began their assessments in January are coming to the end of their programme of treatment. However, hospitals across the country are likely to accept patients onto the trial until next summer. Researchers hope to publish the results of the study by summer 2003.

For further details, see www.cannabis-trial.plymouth.ac.uk

---

Dr Richard Thompson (Department of Biological Sciences) and Dr Andrea Russell (Department of Chemistry, University of Southampton), have been awarded £15,000 from the Leverhulme Trust. They will undertake a pilot project to quantify the abundance of microscopic plastics in selected marine habitats and to identify the organisms that may be at risk from this new form of pollution.

---

Every year thousands of tonnes of plastic debris is discarded in the marine environment, yet the environmental consequences of these have been largely overlooked. Evidence shows that microscopic plastics are accumulating in beaches around the UK and that fragments of this size can be ingested by marine invertebrates and other organisms, posing a considerable, but as yet, unquantified, environmental hazard.
Two new species of South American ground beetles have been named after the University staff involved in the research that led to their discovery. Dyclosus smithersi and Dyclosus ramsayi (named after Pete Smithers and Paul Ramsay respectively) were named after the Department of Biological Sciences staff by a French taxonomist. Another of the species, Dyclosus atkinsi, was named after the student who carried out the project. This project was just a small part of research led by Paul and Pete on Volcan Chilés, a volcano on the border between Ecuador and Colombia. The results from these field investigations have been published in a new book, *The Ecology of Volcan Chilés: High Altitude Ecosystems on the Ecuador-Colombia Border*, which has themes ranging from plants to animals and taxonomy to ecology.

“The whole exercise is a clear example of the fusion of research with teaching and learning,” said Paul Ramsay. Further information about the trip is available from Pete at p.smithers@plymouth.ac.uk
Plymouth is ‘home to a university that is ‘riding the crest of a very big wave’, according to the recently published Sunday Times University Guide. The University was identified as ‘one of the leading 1992 universities’ and the guide stated that, unlike other regional universities, Plymouth ‘showed no signs of retrenchment’.

In a feature on newly qualified teachers the Times Educational Supplement profiled David Kussel, who studied for his PGCE at Rolle School of Education in Exmouth and now teaches at Coombehead College in Newton Abbot.

During clearing – and the run up to it – the University’s profile in the national and local press was noticeably higher than in previous years...

The Independent devoted column inches to the Peninsula Medical School and Student-centred Learning in Construction Engineering (SLICE), a national initiative in which the University is taking a lead.

In an article on the wide range of science courses offered nationally, the Independent also covered the Universities' new degree in aroma and formulation science. The course also gained coverage the Times, in Plymouth’s Evening Herald and several industry journals, including Espirit and Beauty magazines.

In a feature on the increasing popularity of vocational degrees, the Observer mentioned that the University has one of the biggest business schools in the country and included a quote from its marketing officer, Charles Jackson.

The University’s clearing service, Actionline, gained considerable coverage over several days in both the Western Morning News and the Evening Herald. Schools and Colleges Liaison staff were also interviewed on local radio.

Readers of Hello! will have noticed several pages devoted to Plymouth graduate Clare Nasir. Clare, a meteorologist who presents the weather on GMTV, was a maths student at Plymouth in the 90s. Clare also gained a masters in applied marine sciences at the University. She appeared in the magazine with her fiancé, fellow meteorologist Ross Adams.

The unique surf science and technology degree continued to hit the headlines with Plymouth’s Evening Herald devoting its entire front page to the news that the course may be franchised to universities in Hawaii and Western Australia. The Times Higher’s diary column also included a piece on the staggering popularity of the course.
“I first became involved with basketball at school when I was about 14. I saw it as a great way of staying fit and having a lot of fun and, as it is played during the winter, you don’t get as cold and wet as you do playing football! It didn’t take long to realise I was really keen on the game. By the time I was 17, I was in the Plymouth Raiders squad and loving every minute.

I played regularly for the Raiders while I was studying here, but this often meant devoting the whole weekend to basketball. For example, we’d leave on the Saturday morning, travel to Manchester, play a game there and then travel to Newcastle on the Sunday for another game. We didn’t get back from these away games until 6 or 7 in the morning - just enough time to grab a shower and head out to my 9 o’clock international business lecture!

In my final year of University I suffered an injury which resulted in me quitting as a player. I ruptured my achilles tendon and did an awful lot more damage inside my ankle. This was a blow, but before long I was coaching the Raiders under-19 team. From there I went on to coach the raiders ‘B’ team, and we won the National League Division 3 in my first year. I am now in the process of setting up the Raiders development teams – the under-14s, under-16s and under-18s, while coaching the under-16s in the National Cadet League.

It provides me with such a great challenge, but it’s also incredibly rewarding as you get to make a real impact on some of the children’s lives. It’s important to help the children develop not only as players but as well-rounded people. One of the things we try to get across as early as possible is that if you want something in life you have to work hard for it. I guess this approach has worked as two children I coached now play basketball at university in America, and another six play for the Raiders.

I also help with the marketing of the team, designing all their stationery and promotional material, including the website at www.plymouthbasketball.co.uk. Having recently been appointed Alumni Development Officer here at the University, this gives me a great stress release! Work is incredibly busy so it’s good to have something I can really involve myself with away from the office.”

How do you spend your free time? UFort would like to hear from staff with particularly interesting or unusual pastimes. Please contact Tammy Baines on ext 3981/email: t1baines@plymouth.ac.uk.

In the first of a regular look at staff interests outside the University, Alumni Development Officer David Briggs tells us about his passion for basketball…

In my final year of University I suffered an injury which resulted in me quitting as a player. I ruptured my achilles tendon and did an awful lot more damage inside my ankle. This was a blow, but before long I was coaching the Raiders under-19 team. From there I went on to coach the raiders ‘B’ team, and we won the National League Division 3 in my first year. I am now in the process of setting up the Raiders development teams – the under-14s, under-16s and under-18s, while coaching the under-16s in the National Cadet League.

It provides me with such a great challenge, but it’s also incredibly rewarding as you get to make a real impact on some of the children’s lives. It’s important to help the children develop not only as players but as well-rounded people. One of the things we try to get across as early as possible is that if you want something in life you have to work hard for it. I guess this approach has worked as two children I coached now play basketball at university in America, and another six play for the Raiders.

I also help with the marketing of the team, designing all their stationery and promotional material, including the website at www.plymouthbasketball.co.uk. Having recently been appointed Alumni Development Officer here at the University, this gives me a great stress release! Work is incredibly busy so it’s good to have something I can really involve myself with away from the office.”

How do you spend your free time? UFort would like to hear from staff with particularly interesting or unusual pastimes. Please contact Tammy Baines on ext 3981/email: t1baines@plymouth.ac.uk.

In my final year of University I suffered an injury which resulted in me quitting as a player. I ruptured my achilles tendon and did an awful lot more damage inside my ankle. This was a blow, but before long I was coaching the Raiders under-19 team. From there I went on to coach the raiders ‘B’ team, and we won the National League Division 3 in my first year. I am now in the process of setting up the Raiders development teams – the under-14s, under-16s and under-18s, while coaching the under-16s in the National Cadet League.

It provides me with such a great challenge, but it’s also incredibly rewarding as you get to make a real impact on some of the children’s lives. It’s important to help the children develop not only as players but as well-rounded people. One of the things we try to get across as early as possible is that if you want something in life you have to work hard for it. I guess this approach has worked as two children I coached now play basketball at university in America, and another six play for the Raiders.

I also help with the marketing of the team, designing all their stationery and promotional material, including the website at www.plymouthbasketball.co.uk. Having recently been appointed Alumni Development Officer here at the University, this gives me a great stress release! Work is incredibly busy so it’s good to have something I can really involve myself with away from the office.”

How do you spend your free time? UFort would like to hear from staff with particularly interesting or unusual pastimes. Please contact Tammy Baines on ext 3981/email: t1baines@plymouth.ac.uk.
Some of the work that goes on 'behind the scenes' of one of the biggest success stories in the South West is explained in a book recently published by Plymouth graduate Louise Frost.

_The Plants of Eden_ describes a selection of the many species grown at the Eden Project in Cornwall, discusses their uses and importance to man and is available from world-wide internet bookseller, Amazon, the Natural History Museum in London and from the Eden Project shop.

Louise graduated with a BSc in plant sciences in 1998 and is now plant records officer at Eden. She initially gained employment at Eden on a government-funded 'technology transfer' scheme to ensure that the best academic research, ideas and developments can find commercial success in business and industry. Louise’s role at Eden was to develop a computer-based plant-tracking system, in collaboration with staff from the University. As a result of this project, Louise went on to accept a permanent position with the Eden.

“I am delighted that Louise is enjoying such success,” said Dr Stuart Lane from Biological Sciences. “She is one of three Plymouth graduates who have found work at the Eden Project and has already been published many times, having a weekly article in the _Western Morning News_ about the plants of the Eden project. As well as marking her own personal success, Louise’s work with the Eden project signifies a growing partnership between our two organisations. The University of Plymouth is drawing up a memorandum of understanding to be signed with Eden, which states our intention to work collaboratively on education and research projects.”

Initial recruitment to the University’s new foundation degrees has been healthy, with additional places provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) filled.

Plymouth is one of just 21 universities and further education colleges selected by HEFCE and the Department for Education & Skills (DfES) to run pilots of the new foundation degrees, which have been designed in close consultation with employers. Successful completion guarantees progression to a ‘top-up’ honours degree.

University of Plymouth-validated foundation degrees in tourism are offered at Cornwall College, South Devon College and Somerset College of Arts and Technology (SCAT), and a foundation degree in creative arts is on offer at Plymouth College of Art and Design and SCAT.

The foundation degrees, which are two-year programmes, were validated by the University following a joint planning exercise with the University of Bournemouth and some of its partner colleges.

In addition to the national pilot, Exeter College – another of the University’s partner institutions – will run a Plymouth-validated foundation degree in vocational management. The majority of the University’s FE partners are now seeking to develop foundation degrees, either in new subjects or by converting their HND provision to foundation degrees.
The Science and Technology Opportunities Project (STOP) was back in action this summer (above). A team of staff and students drawn from the Faculties of Science and Technology built on last year’s success by entertaining students from seven Plymouth schools and colleges.

Most of the action took place in the schools, with almost 500 students undertaking a hands-on activities ranging from experiencing virtual reality to studying the marine life in a rock pool. Students also observed luminescence and static electricity, tried on a professional diving kit, monitored blood pressure and built a tower – out of spaghetti! Once again, the favourite activity was firing a rocket made from a fizzy drink bottle and, as usual, lots of prizes were given away.

STOP is designed to widen participation in higher education by making science and technology both exciting and relevant. After the visit by the STOP team, some 56% of the participants said that it was now more than likely they would go to university.

The Procurement Unit continues to negotiate discounts with local suppliers and retail outlets on behalf of all University staff.

Details of staff discounts negotiated to date are available on the Procurement Unit’s web pages accessible by selecting ‘Staff’, then ‘Procurement Unit’.

These discounts are updated regularly and cover categories such as vehicles/transport, retail outlets, sport/fitness, accommodation and restaurants, legal and security, personal computers and travel.

We are always willing to hear of discounts which you may know of or have obtained in the past, so please feel free to give us a ring on ext 2485 or email: procurement@plymouth.ac.uk with details.

The library building at Plymouth is set to reduce its energy costs by 50% (almost £30,000 per year) and dramatically reduce its environmental emissions, thanks to the installation of a combined heat and power (CHP) system on the roof of the building.

The generation of electricity by burning oil, gas or coal in conventional power stations is usually very inefficient in terms of electricity output – as well as releasing large quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The majority of the energy released by burning the fuel is discharged into the atmosphere as waste heat. Some of the larger, remote power stations, for example, have a conversion efficiency of only about 30%.

CHP generates electricity and uses much of what would otherwise be waste heat from the process for useful purposes, such as heating water. This raises the electricity conversion efficiency to around 80%.

Innovative design and cutting edge technology will allow the new installation to run throughout the year, providing cost-effective electricity and hot water. The hot water will be used for heating the main campus buildings, including the Davy, Brunel and Smeaton buildings, during the winter months and to provide air-conditioning to the library throughout the year. The on-site generation of electricity and the effective use of hot water from that process means the University’s greenhouse gas emissions will reduce by nearly 1400 tonnes per annum.

“This project has involved a great deal of hard work and the staff are to be congratulated,” said Paul Lumley, the University’s Energy and Environmental Manager. “Those involved with the project would like to thank the Library staff, who have shown great patience during the work on this important project.”
20 October
- 7.30 pm: Plymouth Chamber Music – Sherwell Centre, Plymouth campus
Endellion String Quartet
Haydn: Quartet in G major, op77 no 1; Berg: Quartet op3 (1910); Beethoven: Quartet in E flat, op127
Tickets: £13 (£8 students/registered unemployed)

17 November
- 7.30 pm: Sherwell Centre, Plymouth campus
Zephyr Ensemble
Malcolm Arnold: Three Shanties; Barber: Summer Music, op31; Farkas: Antique Hungarian Dances; Ligeti: Six Bagatelles; Rossini: Quartet no1 in F major; Elliot Carter: Wind Quintet; Nielsen: Wind Quintet, op43
Tickets: £9 (£5 students/registered unemployed)

For tickets, please contact Reception in the Security Lodge, Plymouth campus/Alice Li, Marketing & Public Relations Department, ext 3988. Alternatively, tickets are available at the door on the night.

(don’t just) read all about it!

UPfront is for all members of staff – so why not get more involved? While we always welcome your comments and ideas, being a member of the editorial panel will enable you to have greater input to its content through meetings with other members (which will not be too time consuming, we promise!).

We are looking for panel members from across the University – the only requirement is a willingness to contribute to the discussion! If you are interested, please contact Tammy Baines on ext 3961/tlbaines@plymouth.ac.uk.
Details of the criteria for the appointment of Professors, Readers and Teaching Fellows of the University of Plymouth for 2001/2 are now available. Copies have been sent to Deans for circulation; the details are also available from Pat Wilde in Registry (ext 2189/p.wilde@plymouth.ac.uk).

The documents will be available on the University website shortly, under ‘Information for staff’ on the internal pages.

The deadline for applications to be submitted to Deans and to the Professorial and Readership Committee/Teaching Fellowships Committee is 31 January 2002.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact Pat should they wish to discuss any aspect of the operation of these schemes.

Two bedroom fully furnished flat on the Hoe available for medium and long term rent. Please contact Zoe on zb@MBA.ac.uk or 01752 226249.

Rooms in cottage to rent Sept 2001 onwards, £60 per week: no bills (telephone extra). Furnished large double bedroom plus own lounge/study - shared bathroom and kitchen with one other person. All mod cons, plus beautiful garden and off road parking. Village just outside Saltash. For details contact: Pam Jacobs, ext 3139 or p.jacobs@plymouth.ac.uk.

To let: unfurnished 1 bedroom flat. Within walking distance from the University. Cat allowed. £350 a month. Tel: 250420.

Marco Island, Florida – Attractive 2 bedroom apartment, well equipped kitchen, large lounge/diner, balcony with harbour views in lovely harbourside complex with pools, jacuzzis and sports facilities. Beautiful sub-tropical island with stunning beaches and 330 days sunshine. Good access to Miami, Key West and Orlando.

Rental £350 week, sleeps 6. Contact Gerri Clay, Senior Lecturer, IHS on 01823 366900 or 01823 277801. Email: johngerriclay@hotmail.com or visit website at www.florida-apartment.co.uk

To let: Delightful recently completed 2-bedroom cottage in Yealmpton. Centre of village, close to all amenities, in quiet lane. Tastefully decorated throughout. Fitted kitchen, cloakroom, large lounge, shower room, ensuite bathroom. Gas c.h. Small south facing rear garden; car parking space. Suit non-smoking professional person/couple. Sorry, no pets. £475 pcm. Tel: 01752 881542.

What did the badger say to the frog? Well, it’s up to you to decide! This photo came to Upfront’s attention during a recent plundering of our files. It shows Paul Linnen of the International Office being ‘kidnapped’ for charity. Obviously, someone paid the ransom…Send your witticisms to Tammy Baines, Marketing & Public Relations Department, Plymouth campus/t1baines@plymouth.ac.uk by 22 October. There’s a £20 music voucher up for grabs for the winner and the best captions will be published in the next edition.
Copy deadline for the next issue is 22 October.
Please send all items to Tammy Baines, Marketing & Public Relations Department, Plymouth campus/email: t1baines@plymouth.ac.uk.

UPfront is produced by the Marketing & Public Relations Department.
Designed by Design Office, Information & Learning Services.
Printed by Deltor on 115gsm Blacklabel silk, supplied by Antalis.