• GOING GLOBAL
The challenge for change

• TEACHING EXCELLENCE
Plymouth leads the pack

• MONEY MATTERS
Focus on funding

• AHoy THERE!
Cruising to a great career
Welcome to the October edition of UPfront

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If you require any part of this magazine in larger print, please contact: Disability ASSIST Services on ext 2289 email: das@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

Soul sessions
Chaplaincy has announced an inspirational series of autumn lectures to stimulate mind and soul. Admission is free – and all lectures are open to the public as well as staff.

18 October
Sushi, Syllabub and Sacrament, Sustenance, Strength & Staging Posts for the Christian journey
Rt Rev John Ford, Bishop of Plymouth, 7.30 pm, Sherwell Lecture Theatre
Bishop John will look at how a Christian prays and sustains their life in the 21st century, with particular reference to inherited spiritual traditions and some interpretation into the contemporary context.

26 October
Stopping Climate Chaos - Developing Countries & the Environmental Crisis
Andrew Pendleton, Senior Policy Officer, Christian Aid, 7.30 pm, Sherwell United Church
Andrew is Christian Aid’s policy manager for climate change. He has worked for the organisation for six years and is a journalist by profession, based at the BBC.

23 November
Discernment in the Desert Fathers
Dr Antony Rich, 6.30 pm, Sherwell United Church
Discerning right and wrong has never been easy, perhaps now more so than ever. Dr Rich explores insights provided by the Desert Fathers, the first Christian monks and nuns who lived in Egypt in the 4th and 5th centuries.

For more information on these events, email chaplaincy@plymouth.ac.uk
Plymouth has been selected as one of just 17 universities to take part in a ‘Challenge for Change’ programme jointly organised by the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Plymouth’s chosen project is all about bringing a more international focus to the university’s activities through initiatives such as:

- more staff and student exchange programmes
- incorporating international themes, case studies and intercultural communication in study programmes for UK students
- forging better student links with local cultural groups
- joint research, curriculum development and teaching programmes with partners overseas.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Mark Cleary is leading the Plymouth project. “When people talk about the international agenda for higher education, often they simply mean attracting more overseas students,” he said. “While that enhances the multiculturalism of a university, it is very much one-way traffic. Increasingly, UK students want a global perspective to their education, and we believe that means embedding an international perspective in everything we do. It will take time – we see this as at least a five-year programme, but the backing of the Leadership Foundation gives us a great start to year one of the project.”

The 17 universities chosen to take part in the year-long programme started their projects with a four-day residential event in Nottingham in early September.

Nine staff from the university attended this event, which focussed on issues around managing change, creative thinking and helping to understand the increasingly international context of HE.
This year’s winner, Dr Helen King (left), Assistant Director of the Higher Education Academy’s Subject Centre for Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences, was awarded the fellowship in recognition of her outstanding contribution to learning and teaching. Like the university’s previous recipients, Helen is well known for her genuine commitment to student learning and is hugely enthusiastic. Since being at the subject centre, she has brought in over £150,000 to support a wide range of learning and teaching projects, including work looking into school students’ perceptions of geography, earth and environmental sciences and their various needs as they progress to higher education. She has published widely and has given presentations and workshops at national and international conferences.

“I have a keen interest in supporting students and staff in their personal and professional development and will be using the funding from the award to enhance my work in this area,” said Helen.

The Academy of Management, which is based in the USA and has a membership of over 17,000 academics from 99 countries, has recognised the work of Dr Steve Leybourne with a prestigious award.

Dr Leybourne, who is based in the Plymouth Business School, was presented with the Rupert Chisholm* award for ‘best theory to practice paper’ at a special event in Georgia recently. His paper, Culture and Organisational Improvisation: Some Concepts Informed by UK Financial Services, triumphed in one of the largest categories, ‘organisation development and change’.

*The late Dr Rupert Chisholm was a Professor of Management in the School of Public Affairs at Pennsylvania State University.
In the know

Hosted annually by the university, the South West Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) Regional Seminar is taking place on 1 November on the Plymouth campus.

Colleagues from across the university are invited to come along for the afternoon to see an inspiring demonstration of how our academic experts are supporting talented graduates working with innovative regional companies on projects central to the needs of those businesses.

Professor Neil James, Dean of the Faculty of Technology, will be giving a keynote introduction followed by presentations from KTP graduates who are delivering results through a wide range of exciting projects, ranging from development of a detection and monitoring system to help avoid damaging species during marine survey operations to reducing the environmental impact for a leading manufacturer of remoulded truck tyres.

Anyone wishing to attend this event or find out more about KTP should contact Emma Hewitt, KTP Manager, on ext 3504/email: emma.hewitt@plymouth.ac.uk

MAKING PLYMOUTH GREAT

During National Enterprise Week (13 – 17 November) the university is once again partnering other key organisations in Plymouth to celebrate and promote enterprise and opportunity in the city and the region.

A host of exciting events and activities are planned for those who run or work for an existing business, are thinking of starting up a business or who simply want to help make Plymouth great. Visit www.plymouthenterpriseweek.com for more information or contact Tracy Wilson, Head of Marketing (Commercial), on ext 2390 to discuss how you or your students can get involved.

Staff and student winners of the Business Ideas Challenge 2005 will be profiled during National Enterprise Week as well as participating in the next series of Tuesday evening entrepreneurship workshops, which kick off again on 10 October.

For more information on the workshops or the 2006 Business Ideas Challenge, which launches this autumn, visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/entrepreneur or contact Joe Ellison, Marketing & Entrepreneurship Officer, on ext 3526 or email: joe.ellison@plymouth.ac.uk.
BRIGHT OUTLOOK

Visiting the Plymouth campus this summer was a kind of homecoming for GMTV weather presenter and producer Clare Nasir.

Clare, who studied maths at Plymouth in the 90s, was at the university as a guest speaker at the annual Mathematics & Statistics Subject Conference. She told delegates how her degree helped her beat competition from 800 other applicants to land her first job at the Met Office.

Clare said she found it hard to leave Plymouth behind. “When I first left university I just wanted to stay in Plymouth and surf in the mornings and maybe do a little part-time job in the afternoons,” she said. “I do miss the academic life in Plymouth, which I class as some of the best days of my life.”

Both Clare’s talk and the conference as a whole received an enthusiastic response from delegates. “I thought it was an interesting, upbeat conference which deserves wider attendance from schools,” said David Lister of Estover Community College in Plymouth. “I am right behind any message that says that maths and stats are not only interesting, but also lead to a huge range of significant career opportunities.”

As you would expect from the course title, students of the university’s degree in cruise operations management certainly get out and about!

The degree, which is designed to prepare graduates for management opportunities with major cruise companies, is relatively new. Nevertheless, the university has already established a strong partnership with Princess Cruises, a sister company of P&O Cruises. This means that first-years get to experience life and work at sea in advance of applying for internships or work experience.

Eleven students – accompanied by lecturers Christina Westhead and Mandy Aggett – recently joined the Sea Princess in Palma and sailed via Gibraltar to Southampton. During the trip they undertook a familiarisation programme, viewing all areas and meeting officers and members of staff, and even attended the Captain’s Ball by special invitation.

Philip Gibson, who manages the degree course, is delighted with the support from Princess Cruises and P&O Cruises. “Our partnership with the companies is going from strength to strength,” he said. “Eight of our second-year students have gone to Alaska on work placements as hotel interns and P&O have provided a number of others placements for trainee managers. This support is helping us to attract high quality students from the UK and beyond.”
Traditionally, totem poles have recounted familiar legends, clan lineages and notable events. The university’s pole will tell the story of Plymouth, celebrating the past and looking to the future.

Commissioned by the university’s Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF) and Peninsula Arts, the pole has been expertly crafted on campus by native Canadians Henry Green and Ralph Stocker using local timber.

“While the university is commissioning public art that tells a local story – the Portland Square memorial sculpture – the totem pole will represent Plymouth’s international links,” said Alan Dyer, Associate Director of the CSF.

Next April will see the raising of the pole, which will be located outside the Portland Square building on North Hill.

Following the success of the Faculty of Arts’ public lecture series on art history last year, a new series – The Taste-Makers: Patrons and Collectors in the South West and Beyond – runs from October to December.

Professor Sam Smiles opens the series with his lecture, Collecting the Picturesque: Artist Travellers in Devon c. 1750–1850, followed on 9 October by Jeremy Gould, who will be talking about Plymouth and the cities of the post-war era in terms of planning and architecture.

All the lectures take place at 6 pm in Lecture Theatre 5 in the Babbage Building on the Plymouth campus. Tickets cost £3.50 each for university and partner college staff and OAPs, and £5 each for other members of the public.

For more information, contact Sandra Barkhof, Head of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning for the Faculty of Arts, on ext 8124 or email: sandra.barkhof@plymouth.ac.uk
The Modern Languages Group is committed to providing students with the opportunity to develop their language skills within the European community and through allied courses on a truly international scale,” said Dr Marie-Marthe Gervais-le Garff, Deputy Director of PBS and Head of Modern Languages.

At undergraduate level, students can study two languages (and in some instances three) from French, German or Spanish as part of their BA (Hons) Modern Languages degree, or take a language ‘minor’ or elective. Modern Languages has recently welcomed three new members of staff – Marie-Cecile Gilbert, Doris Dippold and Dr Thomas Phillips - but the group’s remit is broader than teaching. It provides a number of crucial services for the business and educational communities in the South West. The Regional Language Network (RLN) sub-regional hub for Devon & Cornwall is one of these, providing language support and training advice to small to medium enterprises and blue chip companies.

Funded principally by the South West Regional Development Agency, the hub is managed by Professor David Head, Director of PBS, and Dr Jacquie Hope from the Languages Group. Valentina De Micheli, who joined the project when she moved to the UK from Verona, undertakes most of the company outreach work.

“The RLN was set up after surveys showed that an alarming proportion of companies are losing trade opportunities because of language and cross-cultural barriers,” said Valentina. “The South West is at the bottom of the UK export league, but the companies we are working with demonstrate that with the right language and cross-cultural strategy, even small companies can achieve...
inspiring results.”

The team also a crucial role to play in supporting the university’s many international students. The English Language Centre helps them manage their academic studies by giving them the opportunity to develop the necessary study, thinking and communication skills to fulfil their potential in their course of study.

“We help students from differing educational cultures to have a better understanding of the values and requirements of the British higher education system,” said Senior Lecturer Diana Masterson.

“Through weekly classes, one-to-one tutorials, workshops and email writing support, we assist them in developing the required academic English skills and the necessary confidence in order to learn more effectively.”

**TRAILBLAZING**

This year’s Clearing campaign hit the headlines for all the right reasons, with the university’s summer roadshow catching the attention of the Times Higher Education Supplement, The Guardian and BBC News online as well as regional and local media.

The first of its kind in the UK, the roadshow saw a university-branded beach buggy with two Plymouth students, Philippa Chancellor-Weale and Niki Downs, take to Cornwall’s beaches. The aim was to raise awareness of the university, encourage late applications and gather data for future marketing campaigns.

“The roadshow generated over 2,500 leads for further customer relationship management,” said Andrea Walters, Marketing Manager. “We anticipate that the true value of this work will be realised over the next 18 months as prospective students begin the application process and attend open days and so on.”

The roadshow was just one part of the campaign – the Marketing & Communications Department also used direct mail, including posters, ‘good luck’ postcards, reminder cards and e-newsletters, as well as advertisements in the national and regional press, Clearing pages on the university website and a portal for applicants.
David, who is studying geography, discovered that Plymouth is one of hundreds of universities around the world that participates in the International Student Exchange Programme (ISEP), a scheme that gives students the opportunity to experience life at a university in North America. David spent a year at Weston Washington University in Bellingham, which is close to the border with Canada. “From the moment I arrived I was well looked after,” he said. “It was very different from studying in a city like Plymouth – I could see woodland animals from my window and...
as there was a ski resort nearby, I was able to take to the slopes regularly.”

Living with other overseas students meant that David made friends with people from all over the world, from Finland to China. “In a nutshell, it was the best year I’ve ever had,” he said.

To find out more about how your students could benefit from the ISEP, visit www.isep.org or contact Laura Gill, International Admissions Assistant, on ext 3364/email: laura.gill@plymouth.ac.uk

GOING MOBILE

Staff can now access the university’s Microsoft Exchange® Service using one of four supported Orange mobile handsets: the c600, m600, m3100 and m5000.

“We have recently signed up with Orange as our preferred supplier for the provision of mobile telephone services,” says Geoff Bouch, Assistant Head of Information & Communication Technology.

“Where faculty or divisional policy supports the use of business mobile telephones, staff can easily get access to their university email, calendar, tasks and contacts and can also browse the internet from a ‘smart’ mobile handset wherever they happen to be (signal coverage permitting of course!). These can also be sent directly to your handset in real time. This means that we now provide the equivalent service to that only previously available via the likes of Blackberry®.”

For full details of these devices, and services from Orange, visit http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/ict/telephone/intranet.htm

Two of this year’s fellowship awardees, Dr Margaret Elzubeir (left) and Sally Wilks.

This year’s awardees include Dr Margaret Elzubeir and Sally Wilks, whose project looks at whether staff attitudes affect student use of e-learning in the Peninsula Medical School, and Glen Crust, whose project focuses on developing evidence-based career management.

Educational Development and Learning Technologies (EDaLT) supports the award scheme and the fellowship holders. The next opportunity to apply for an award will be announced in January 2007.

Further details, including a list of all this year’s fellowship holders, can be found on the EDaLT community on the staff portal.

Two of this year’s fellowship awardees, Dr Margaret Elzubeir (left) and Sally Wilks.

Two of this year’s fellowship awardees, Dr Margaret Elzubeir (left) and Sally Wilks.
“Our aim is to be a one-stop shop for all aspects of student funding and finance, and the changes to the student support system will mean many more students will be coming through our doors,” said Glynis Morgan, who heads up the unit.

“We are the first point of enquiry about the new bursaries and scholarships, and will be administering some of these internally, with others being paid on our behalf by the Student Loans Company. The unit has already experienced a sharp increase in funding enquiries, with many potential students concerned about the introduction of top-up fees. We are able to explain the system in detail and, hopefully, put their minds at rest.”

In preparation for the new academic year, the Funding Unit, which is in Hepworth House, has been refurbished. To complement the freshly painted walls and new carpet, the team has added personal touches so that students find a bright, welcoming space.

On arrival students are greeted by frontline staff Cherry Wood and Ilona Roberts, who work tirelessly answering a huge range of queries. Cherry also administers short-term loans for when a student’s funding is delayed, and Ilona coordinates the administration of the Access to Learning Fund.

THE BACK OFFICE

In the ‘back office’ are administrators Kay Stanford, Sally Rushton and new team member Ann Welsh. While Kay assesses applications to the Access to Learning Fund and deals with financial emergencies, Sally looks after the Student Loans Company BACS First system, and the new Scholarships and Bursaries portal. Ann’s key areas are management information, monitoring returns and giving presentations to prospective students.

As Glynis says though, “This is just an outline of what we do between us. All the team members are versatile and cross over into each other’s areas.”

Almost every new student will need to visit the Student Funding Unit. “At the start of term, undergraduates must all have their loan and grant payments activated by having their student support number scanned,” said Glynis. “About 2,000 will apply to the Access to Learning Fund, and another 1,000 may need short-term loans. Many more – both current and prospective students – will seek general advice.

“In advising prospective students on their funding, we aim to be positive but factual. Starting a higher education course is a big decision to make, especially for mature students, who may be anxious as to how they will survive financially. We give them a clear picture of their options and try to be reassuring.”

WORTHWHILE

So what do the students think? “Each year we get a stack of thank you cards and letters from students who say they would have dropped out without our help. This really makes our hard work worthwhile.

“Students also like our décor, especially around Christmas, when we have a stunning array of fairy lights and have been known to give out chocolate money!”
Students’ Union Finance & Communications Officer Katie Shaw brings us the latest news from UPSU...

The Students’ Union has a bigger, better home – and we’re delighted with it!

The £3-million extension – which has given us 784 m² of new space – includes a shop, sandwich bar, advice and welfare centre and office space as well as being the meeting place for all our sports clubs and societies.

University-funded, the extension is part of the development of the campus, which is helping to ensure that Plymouth maintains its status as one of the UK’s top modern universities.

“The new building is a real focal point for students and demonstrates our commitment to investing in non-commercial services such as free, confidential and professional advice and support for them,” said UPSU President Kat Rayson. “Areas like this are vital and help students attain the best possible results. It is a credit to the university that it has put money into this as well as into teaching and learning facilities.”

Equality update

The Athena Project, which aims to advance and promote the careers of women in science, engineering and technology (SET) in higher education and research and to achieve a significant increase in the number of women recruited to top posts, is conducting its third Survey of Science Engineering and Technology (ASSET) from now until 20 October.

Plymouth has particularly strong links with the project, being a founder member of its SWAN Charter initiative and achieving prestigious bronze award status. This denotes our commitment and good practice relating to women’s participation and progression in SET.

See http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/equality/intranet.htm for more details.

The purpose of the survey is to help better understand and address the barriers to women’s progression in scientific careers. The results will be used at national policy level to identify and disseminate good practice to employers, contribute to the development of action agendas and raise awareness of career progression issues.

All academic and research members of staff, both men and women, working in science, engineering, medicine and technology are urged to complete the online survey www.surveys.athenaproject.org.uk/asset2006. The higher the response rate the better the data to inform science policy, debate and action.
The university’s growing number of media stars continues to keep the Press Office phones ringing. Here’s a round-up of recent news that has hit the headlines…

Class act – The Sunday Times University Guide, which was published in September, praised Plymouth for having ‘one of the best records for teaching and research in the modern university sector’.

Slow down was the message from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website after it picked up the story about Plymouth arts student who has designed a range of ‘slow living’ products. Laurence Dawes’ inventions include the ‘sloffee’ cup, which makes you sip your coffee, and the ‘heartbeat pillow for lovers’, which slows your heartbeat down to match your partner’s.

Animal Magic – In an article focussing on myths about animals, The Independent online referred to Dr Phil Gee’s research that showed fish can be trained to ‘tell the time’.

Flower power is taking over Plymouth as psychology academics have appealed for volunteers to take part in flower essence trials at the university. The story was broadcast on Radio Devon and appeared in the local press as well as on the BBC website.

CAREERS FAIR
The Careers & Postgraduate Study Fair takes place at the Plymouth campus on 18 October.

The event is open to all University of Plymouth students, and the Careers Service is encouraging staff to help spread the word to students in their area. Whether they want to progress to postgraduate education or get out into the world of work, the fair will show them the enormous range of opportunities available.

This year’s event is sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers, EDF Energy and the RAF. Other organisations attending are GCHQ, the NHS, Bluecare Socialcare and the Training and Development Agency for Schools.

To see a list of all those involved, visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/careers/employerfair

“Whatever their degree subject, students will be able to meet employers who will discuss with them the skills and attributes that could help land them their perfect career,” said Alice Matcham, Careers Administrator.

On the move
Moving house consistently ranks as one of the top three most stressful experiences in life, so imagine organising a mass move of university departments and several hundred people...

The Logistics Group manages the operation of Plymouth campus developments and is responsible for ensuring it is ‘business as usual’. There’s certainly more to it than packing boxes!

Part of the group’s remit is to find solutions to issues such as vehicle and pedestrian routes while capital works are underway, taking into consideration accessibility and health and safety, not to mention communicating access to staff, students and outside companies.

Organising the moves of departments, teaching spaces, and groups of staff between buildings, plus the transfer of telephone and data links, is also part of its work, ensuring the smoothest possible transition for staff and students.

Inevitably, there are also issues of storage to consider while relocations take place. And, of course, the group also has to carefully consider the bigger picture of how the major projects impact on one another.

Deputy Director of Learning Facilities Robert Stannage said: “The group was initially set up to deal with the logistics of moving most science departments, and parts of the Peninsula Medical School and the Faculty of Health & Social Work, into Portland Square. This was swiftly followed by the Seale-Hayne relocation and the Marjons build, so the need for a group to oversee the day-to-day ramifications of the restructuring was quickly established.”

You can keep abreast of the latest campus developments by visiting the Capital Works community on the staff portal.
Earlier this year, The Times Good University Guide ranked Plymouth’s degree in the top ten of the UK’s art history undergraduate courses, putting it ahead of many other respected degrees, including those at the Universities of Bristol and Edinburgh.

The course also performed well in the results of a recent Daily Telegraph survey on tuition hours – art history at Plymouth came out top alongside Oxford Brookes. The survey looked at whether there was a marked difference across universities in the amount of teaching hours staff spend with students, not only between subjects like art history and chemistry – perceived in the past as a course with more structure and contact hours – but between same-subject courses in different universities. The BBC website also picked up on this story.

“Plymouth’s impressive result reflects the ethos Art History shares with the rest of the university - that the traditional student experience can be dramatically improved by varied teaching formats and greater staff-student contact,” said Dr Jenny Graham, Senior Lecturer in the subject.

As the department looks forward to its relocation to the Plymouth campus in 2007, the recent publicity brought record numbers to the Cracking the Code recruitment event in Plymouth in the summer. Designed to coincide with the release of The Da Vinci Code film, it gave local sixth-formers (pictured above) a taste of what ‘real-life’ art historians do.

The Art History team is keen to hear from colleagues across the university who are interested in collaborating on similar ventures or who have ideas for new, inter-disciplinary modules. To get involved, contact Dr Jenny Graham (ext 5197) or Subject Leader Dr Gemma Blackshaw (ext 5069).

The Art History web pages can be seen at www.plymouth.ac.uk/arts

The new postgraduate prospectus is out now, packed with the latest information on programmes and research opportunities across the university.

For copies, contact Suzy Dixon on ext 3345 or email: suzanne.dixon@plymouth.ac.uk

PROMINENT PROFILE

The profile of the university’s art history provision has received a boost from the very positive national media coverage it has notched up in recent months.

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TO LET: Double room in three-bed house. Sharing house with owner. Off-road parking, close proximity to bus-stop and amenities. Suit professional, non-smoker. No children or pets. £80 pw, inc bills. Tel: 07974 856674.

TO LET: Quiet, comfortable, one-bed house 10 mins’ walk from Plymouth campus, shops, etc, available to rent (some/all weekdays only) from Jan ’07. Might suit frequent commuter. Rent negotiable. Tel: 07876 546329.

FOR SALE: 2-bed town house in North Hill area, close to university. Integral garage, kitchen, bathroom, utility room, gch & new double-glazing. OIRO £151,950. Tel: 01752 251614.
It was smiles all round at the recent College of Occupational Therapists national conference, Occupation Matters, at Cardiff International Arena.

Seven new practitioners, each of whom qualified in 2005 from the university’s occupational therapy degree course, presented material based on their final-year research project. The project requires students to conduct a piece of research and report on it in the form of an academic article.

This year’s successful presenters (pictured above) were Heather Manketelow, Dawn Kelly, Faye Newton, Diane Ronan, Nancy Donaldson Squire, Katherine Woolnough and Breifini Murphy.