Students who give up their free time to volunteer for worthwhile projects across the region have been rewarded for their hard work at a special awards ceremony.

The Annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony, held at Newton Abbot Racecourse, began with a champagne reception and buffet, followed by the presentation of the awards. The volunteers then partied the night away to the sounds of their very own DJ.

Pictured are winners from categories including Campaigner of the Year, Welfare Volunteer of the Year and Student Volunteer of the Year. Back row left to right: Oli Beard, Yasmin Jensen, Emma Speakman. Front row left to right: Veronica Clancy, Tessa Cotrell, Niz Ahmed
Welcome to the May/June edition of UPfront.

If you have any feedback or ideas for future editions, please contact Paola Simoneschi, Public Relations Manager, on ext 3986/paola.simoneschi@plymouth.ac.uk

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In partnership with At-Bristol, the award-winning science and discovery centre, and the University of Bristol, the University has been selected as part of a £51-million initiative by the Department of Education and Skills and the Wellcome Trust to create a national network of Science Learning Centres.

In collaboration with its partners in the project, the University will run the Science Learning Centre South West, which will be responsible for delivering high-quality continuing professional development to science teachers and technicians across the region.

The Centre, which will open in spring 2005, will be one of nine regional centres within the network of Science Learning Centres opening from this October. All the centres will provide educators with access to newly fitted labs, advanced ICT equipment and innovative courses covering education strategies, traditional science and the wider ethical issues of science in society, cutting-edge scientific research and developments across business and industry.

As well as improving knowledge, the scheme aims to reinvigorate teaching skills, boosting science literacy and understanding of its impact on society among pupils.

The University’s involvement is a joint initiative between the Faculties of Science and Education.

“Today’s young people are tomorrow’s scientists,” said Dr Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust. “At-Bristol and its collaborators will be a leading force in providing teachers and other educators with access to the resources and expertise they need to get to grips with the complexities of contemporary science.”

To find out more about the Science Learning Centre, contact Dr David Harwood on 01752 233015/email: dave.harwood@plymouth.ac.uk, or Dr Steve Waters-Adams in the Faculty of Education on 01395 255365/email: steve.waters-adams@plymouth.ac.uk

In the longer term the card will be needed to enter the increasing number of buildings to be protected by access-control systems.

The University card has a number of other purposes, including providing proof of identity to claim discounts.

As highlighted in the previous edition of UPfront, the University is introducing ID cards that, although not compulsory, will be needed for staff and students to gain access to the library and 24/7 IT facilities. It will also be required to borrow books from September onwards.

In the longer term the card will be needed to enter the increasing number of buildings to be protected by access-control systems.

The University card has a number of other purposes, including providing proof of identity to claim discounts.

For further information, see the staff announcements or the University card project community on the Staff Portal.

Security staff at the University are reminding staff and students to keep a close eye on their belongings following recent thefts of items including laptop computers and mobile phones.

“People often take these items into buildings such as the University libraries and turn their back for just a few minutes only to find their belongings gone,” said Phil Harrison, Campus Services Manager.

“Unfortunately, there are a few dishonest people about who never miss an opportunity to steal. I would like to remind everyone to be vigilant, keep their own valuables where they can see them and report anything suspicious to Security, using extension 333 in emergencies. Offices should also be locked whenever they are left unoccupied, even just for a few moments.”

Watch out

Front cover: Simon Ible, Director of Music (left) and Mike Hope, Director of Arts & Exhibitions, are leading Peninsula Arts – see pages 4 and 5.

Welcome

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- Peninsula Arts launch
- Students get the boot
- Splashing out
- Dolphin friendly
- Partner College news
- Cleaning up
- Child health expert joins
- Equality news
- Deaf awareness
- Coming up – dates for your diary
- Open days

Science southwest

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Getting people of all ages and walks of life involved in the arts is the major aim of Plymouth's exciting Peninsula Arts programme, which was launched at the University earlier this month.

Run and administered by the Faculty of Arts, Peninsula Arts will act as an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate cultural events organised and supported by the University.

Mike Hope, Peninsula Arts Director of Arts & Exhibitions, and Simon Ible, Director of Music at the University, have created an extensive public programme of cutting-edge exhibitions and fascinating lectures to highlight the best the South West has to offer and attract top cultural figures to the city.

At the launch – which was held in the new CUBE3 gallery in the atria of the Portland Square building – guests were entertained by Byron Wallen, one of the UK’s hottest young jazz stars, who played a specially commissioned ‘Fanfare’, some of it using shells!

Guests also witnessed ‘From the Exe to the Thames’, the inaugural lecture of John Virtue, a member of staff who is currently Artist in Residence at the National Gallery.

Then it was time to view the stunning landscape photography of another staff member, Jem Southam, who was recently acclaimed by The Independent as ‘one of the world’s leading landscape photographers’.

“We want people of all ages, who may not usually consider going into an art gallery or attending a lecture or concert, to come along and get involved in what we’re doing,” said Mike Hope. “The Peninsula Arts programme is for everyone and we hope it will help put Plymouth on the international cultural map.”

“Everyone should have the opportunity to access the type of high quality art, music and cultural activity included within the Peninsula Arts programme – it is about encouraging people to come along, experience new things and talk about what they have seen,” said Simon Ible.

“Some of the exhibitions and events will be held at schools and colleges throughout the region, which will give young people the opportunity to take part in a wide range of workshops and masterclasses. It is this shared and dynamic experience we want to cultivate.”

Vice-Chancellor of the University and President of Peninsula Arts, Professor Roland Levinisky, said he is delighted to be introducing Peninsula Arts to the region:

“Having moved from London, with its outstanding arts scene, I was keen for the University to play its part in expanding the local and regional arts offering, both as a provider of events and as a facilitator, working in partnership with other organisations. With the creation of Peninsula Arts, my vision is starting to become a reality.

“Our aim is to provide a prestigious and wide-ranging series of events which will open up the arts and the University to people from across the South West. Our programme is an ambitious one and includes a number of ‘big names’ – people who are already at the top of their field. I am excited by what is on offer and delighted to introduce this exciting cultural initiative.”

For further details about forthcoming Peninsula Arts events, visit: www.plymouth.ac.uk/peninsulaarts or contact Ysanne Wells on 01752 238100/email: ysanne.wells@plymouth.ac.uk.

From left to right are: Professor Steven Parissien, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and a key player in Peninsula Arts; Professor Roland Levinisky, Vice-Chancellor and President of Peninsula Arts; jazz musician Byron Wallen; Simon Ible, Director of Music; and Mike Hope, Peninsula Arts Director of Arts & Exhibitions.
As part of their final-year degree studies, four mechanical engineering students from Plymouth have pooled their talents with four students at Auburn University, Alabama.

The groups recently met face to face for the first time and presented their design for a device that opens a car boot by remote control to staff in the School of Engineering.

Although this was their first meeting, the students already ‘knew’ each other, thanks to the technology they’ve been using to collaborate on the project – videoconferencing, email and project web pages.

“Working in this way has been a real learning curve – challenging and rewarding, too,” said Richard Cullen (pictured above, far right), a mature student at Plymouth. “We found that our groups had quite different outlooks, but this benefited the team as a whole.”

“This project is a logical progression in our design teaching,” said Dr David Grieve, Deputy Head of the School of Engineering. “Increasingly, design teams working in coastal areas are formed from students from different universities..."...while these students gain from being involved at such a young age. This success will be extremely valuable to them when starting out in their careers.”

The Plymouth students have since visited Alabama to see what life is like for their American counterparts.

An innovative machine designed to sense, monitor and track water pollution is being developed by a team of engineers and artificial intelligence experts at Plymouth.

The twin-hulled, electronically powered vehicle Springer – named after the type of spaniels used by police as sniffer dogs – has been designed to overcome the difficulties faced by the more conventional methods of tracing pollutants, such as boat sampling, which are expensive and cannot easily be used in shallow water. The unmanned Springer will be around 3m long and 1.5m high.

“Other methods are expensive because they need an operator to man them,” said Professor Bob Sutton, who is leading the initiative. “The Springer can work in coastal and shallow estuary waters either autonomously or by remote control.”

The project has been funded to the tune of £251,000 by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council as well as receiving finance from a number of industrial partners, bringing the total to around £500,000.

What I want is to be able to develop a unit that can be placed in the water, sniff out or detect a pollutant and then follow its source,” said Professor Sutton, who has been developing marine robotic systems for several years. “Then it will be like a proper sniffer dog.”

Hundreds of budding scientists descended on the Plymouth campus during National Science Week in March.

Once again, the University’s events, which ranged from ‘Science with Bubbles’ and ‘Big Bangs – Why Volcanoes Erupt’ to ‘B/L – Brain, Biology, Behaviour & Learning’, attracted enthusiastic crowds from schools across the region.

The annual Great Egg Race also took place on campus, with Truro High School for Girls scooping first prize.

The University’s robot football team returned triumphant, having ‘thrashed’ Warwick’s team in the final of the UK Robot Football Championships.

The final, broadcast live on several TV stations, including Channel 4 (Richard & Judy) and a national channel in Russia, was a whitewash: Plymouth: 14, Warwick: 0.

Besides medals and a cup, the team scooped £10,000-worth of the latest intelligent digital cameras.

“This represents the culmination of over seven years’ work by many researchers, undergraduate students, technical and academic staff,” said Paul Robinson, Principal Lecturer in Robotics and Automation.

“Plymouth is now recognised worldwide as the UK’s leading FIRA (Federation of International Robot Soccer Association) robot football team. Perhaps, more importantly, this success will stimulate further research into the multidisciplinary technologies underpinning autonomous robotic group behaviour, namely artificial intelligence, micro-robotics and intelligent sensing. We must work hard to ensure Plymouth maintains its pre- eminent position.”

The University will be England’s official FIRA robot football representative at this year’s European Championships in Munich (in June) and the World Championships in Busan, Korea (in October). Watch this space!

People of all ages and abilities enjoyed free taster sessions at the recent open day at Plymouth’s Mount Batten Centre, the South West’s premier sailing and watersports facility.

The open day kicked off the Centre’s new season of activities, which range from canoeing, wakeboarding, gig rowing and sailing to angling, climbing and orienteering and more.

The University’s Recreation Service and Students’ Union had stands at the open day, as did the many groups and clubs affiliated to MBC.

Earlier this year, the University, Plymouth City Council and Mount Batten signed a memorandum of understanding to cement a partnership which will encourage young people to participate in outdoor activities.

Right: People of all ages enjoyed the Mount Batten open day.
A University expert on dolphins and whales (cetaceans) is helping to recruit a network of volunteers to rescue the marine mammals found washed up on Devon and Cornwall’s beaches.

Lissa Goodwin, a marine biologist based at the University’s Plymouth campus, teaches regular courses – run by national charity the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) – for marine mammal ‘medics.’ The BDMLR trains around 400 volunteers a year.

So far this year, 155 dolphins and porpoises have been washed up in Cornwall and 55 in Devon, with the figures even higher last year (411 in Cornwall and 80 in Devon).

Following the BDMLR training, many of the volunteers will go on to provide a 24-hour call-out service, responding to requests to help stranded dolphins or whales or rescue porpoises or seals in their area.

Lissa says many people are coming forward to volunteer their time and she stresses that no specialist knowledge or diving skills are required to join the volunteer network.

“There is a lot more interest in cetacean research at the moment,” she said. “Real-life rescue missions can take several hours and need many helping hands. Volunteers are needed to rock the stranded animal backwards and forwards so that it does not lose its sense of balance.”

To book a place on a marine mammal medic course, contact the BDMLR on 01825 765546. Anyone seeing a live stranded whale, dolphin or porpoise on the beach should call the same number.

Further details are available at: www.bdmlr.org.uk/pages/main.html

Below: Rescue volunteers practise with an imitation dolphin.

The outcome was extremely encouraging,” said Head of Careers, Marc Lintern. “We took the process very seriously and used it to review every aspect of our service. It was a real team effort.”

In a very positive report the Careers Service was commended for several aspects, including the way in which it is embedding careers support within programmes and through the Skills Plus Policy, the development of on-line support through its website, and its work within the region on developing gradsouthwest.com.

“As well as being an indicator of high quality provision, this success means the Careers Service can apply for funding restricted to accredited services,” explained Marc.

Over a hundred prospective students from across the country received a warm welcome at Truro College’s recent higher education (HE) open day.

Visitors were invited to participate in a day-long taster session on the course of their choice and get a feel for the University of Plymouth courses taught at the College.

The first-class facilities on both the main site and the nearby Tregye campus impressed the prospective students, and specialist staff were on hand to guide them through a range of issues, such as finance and the support services available.

To find out more about courses at Truro College, contact the HE office on 01872 365829, or visit the website at www.truro.ac.uk

**The first-class facilities on both the main site and the nearby Tregye campus impressed the prospective students**

The University has provided £10,000 of sponsorship for Somerset College of Arts & Technology’s fashion show.

This sponsorship – along with the £5,000 pledged by Rok Property Solutions Group – will allow SCAT to once again host the show, which features the work of final-year fashion and textile degree students.

“The gala fashion show is a prestigious event that demonstrates the continued excellence of work of the College at a national level,” said John Griffiths, the University’s Director of Marketing & Communications. “We are proud to be the University that awards degrees at SCAT.”

Fashion editor Hilary Alexander will compere the gala charity show, which takes place on 24 June at 7.30 pm.

Further details of the show and ticket sales are available from the College on 01823 366331.
Hardy student and staff volunteers braved the wind and rain to take part in a 'beach clean' as part of the University's Active in Communities project.

Among the rubbish collected at the foreshore of Imperial Beach in Exmouth were some unusual finds, including a car wheel, a duvet, a 5ft garden trellis and a set of false teeth!

“The volunteers worked really well together – with loads of enthusiasm – and everyone had an enjoyable day,” said beach clean co-ordinator, Tess Nixon (below, right). “We’re trying to get together a regular team to help clean the beach and would urge everyone to come along and get involved in this very worthwhile project.”

For more information, contact Tess on 01752 233223/email: tess.nixon@plymouth.ac.uk

Sage, the most prestigious publisher of social research books in the UK – arguably the world – has published a book by Dr Matthew David and Carole Sutton from the University’s School of Social Science & Business.

Social Research: the Basics is a comprehensive and accessible introduction to social research that succeeds in bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

"With the rising emphasis on research, we are increasingly being asked to teach methods courses across the University, so the launch of the book – which is designed to take people from first principles to post-graduation – is part of letting people know what’s available,” said Matthew.
The potential for a tourism-based enterprise to run in conjunction with one of the regional corporate Landrover Experience centres. “We have nothing but praise for the group that helped us evaluate an additional enterprise linked to the Landrover Experience,” said Andy Summers, Managing Director. “They were professional, thorough and accurate with their analysis. We hope to offer another challenge to a group next year.” Richard Soffe can be contacted on 01626 326669/email: richard.soffe@plymouth.ac.uk

Visitors can now access 360 degree panoramas of Plymouth and its surrounding areas. Views of Plymouth Hoe, the Barbican and Dartmoor are available on the Plymouth information pages and are the first stage in a plan to add more interactive content to the site. The Web Team continues to receive enquiries from staff asking why their details are not found via internet search engines, such as Google, or the University website’s search facility. In the majority of cases it is because they have not updated their Personal & Professional Page information and made it available externally. Staff can update their information by accessing the Staff Portal at http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk

The University’s Languages Group recently joined forces with local schools for two AS level French revision days on the Plymouth campus. The students, who came from 27 schools in Devon and Cornwall, took part in a variety of workshops – run by University lecturers – which focused on improving spoken and written French and comprehension skills. Barbara Bland, an experienced teacher and examiner for Edexcel*, gave the students tips on revision strategies and how to improve their French grade. Students and staff were particularly impressed by the facilities available, such as the language laboratory and the Business and Language Information Service (BLIS) in the Plymouth Business School, where the Languages Group is based. They also appreciated the chance to visit a local University. “It was fun and informative and has definitely helped me with my forthcoming exams,” was one typical student comment. One of the aims of the revision days is to establish contact with local schools and encourage students to continue their study of a foreign language. In this spirit, the Languages Group plans to run similar days for German and Spanish in future, as well as further revision days for French.

For more information, contact Dr Marie-Marthe Gervais-Le Garff, Head of Languages, on 01752 232876/marie.gervaislegarff@plymouth.ac.uk

*Edexcel provides qualifications that help shape and change people’s lives.

Over 100 final-year students have been presenting their ten-week consultancy findings to national and regional businesses, thanks to links between businesses and the Marketing, Tourism & Hospitality Group in the Plymouth Business School. The exercise allows students to get involved with businesses in action,” said Richard Soffe, Senior Lecturer in Business Management and Marketing. “The students look at a range of management issues, from strategy to marketing.” The group pictured was asked to evaluate the potential for a tourism-based enterprise to run in conjunction with one of the regional corporate Landrover Experience centres.

“Visitors can now access 360 degree panoramas of Plymouth and its surrounding areas. Views of Plymouth Hoe, the Barbican and Dartmoor are available on the Plymouth information pages and are the first stage in a plan to add more interactive content to the site.”

The week of events, held at the Exmouth campus, offered people the chance to participate in a programme of events that included film screenings and training sessions, and gave them the opportunity to learn ‘finger spelling’ and British Sign Language. Two ‘signing’ participants are pictured below.

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The International Peace Academy invited two of the University’s international relations experts to New York to launch their book on the economies of war-torn countries. Drs Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper, both based within the School of Sociology, Politics and Law, travelled to New York to launch War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation, which focuses on the role played by illegal trade in precipitating and fuelling conflict.

Their analysis highlights the ‘darker side’ of the commitment to deregulation, open markets and the expansion of trade routes that are the key features of globalisation. Three case studies – Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Bosnia – are used to examine the nature of the war economy, the regional networks developed to support it, its legacies and the impact of initiatives to transform it.

“This subject is particularly topical as more of our troops are being sent to Kosovo in light of renewed violence in this area – and also in light of the concern now being expressed over the resurrection of the drug economy in Afghanistan,” said Dr Pugh.

The book launch was also attended by representatives of the United Nations.
concerts

23 May
7pm Guildhall, Royal Parade, Plymouth
University of Plymouth Choral Society concert – A Night at the Opera
Tickets £12.50 (adults and students) from In Other Words, Mutley Plain, Plymouth, tel: 01752 663889, and Plymouth Music Shop, Mayflower Street, Plymouth, tel: 01752 670403.

30 May
10.30 am Buckfast Abbey
VOCES concert and Mass for Pentecost. Director Martyn Warren (School of Geography). Admission is free but there will be a retiring collection.

19 June
7.30 pm Buckfast Abbey
VOCES concert: Gloria – contrasting medieval and renaissance settings of Gloria in excelsis Deo, from the Mass. Conducted by Martyn Warren (School of Geography) with Jonathan Watts (organ). Admission free but there will be a retiring collection. For details of this and other VOCES events, email: Voces.mail@virgin.net

exhibitions

Until 28 May
Group exhibition
by Jo Joyce, Robert Joyce, Sue Lethbridge and Pamela Langford

28 June – 8 August
Moira Humphreys exhibition

For further details of these and other University events, visit the ‘news and events’ section at www.plymouth.ac.uk. Staff wanting to promote an event on campus via the web events calendar can email alice.li@plymouth.ac.uk with details, giving at least one week’s notice. Diary items for the next UFront should be submitted by 2 June.

in the news

a round-up of where the university has appeared prominently in recent weeks…

■ A Plymouth academic’s study of sea life in Jersey has been featured on the BBC news website. Emma Jackson, a post-doctoral Research Fellow in marine landscape ecology, has spent three years studying sea grass - the grassy meadows beneath the sea. The underwater grass, which is bright green in colour and grows to about the height of a tall human being, is home to baby fish and shellfish. Emma has researched its role in nurturing these inhabitants.

■ Dr Suanne Gibson, a lecturer based at the Exmouth campus, was recently featured in women’s magazine Real. In an article focussing on women who’ve celebrated birthdays in style, Suanne explained that she threw her 30th birthday bash at chic Hotel Barcelona in Exeter and invited friends from across the country.

■ A successful University project to keep graduates in Devon has prompted a similar scheme in Cornwall. As featured on the BBC news website, the five-year University programme offered graduates a placement with local companies to undertake business development projects, with around 75% of the companies going on to offer the graduates permanent jobs. The Combined Universities in Cornwall is now running a £2.6 million project, managed by Cornwall College, which aims to provide 100 graduate jobs. Any business which decides to take on a graduate will receive 30% of the cost from Objective One funds.

■ The Evening Herald featured an article on a powerboat racing team for whom University of Plymouth students are working on designs. The students have been challenged with the task of coming up with logos and colour schemes for the sides of the boat and the racing team’s overalls and livery.

opening up

Summer 2004 open days
• Wednesday 16 June
Plymouth, Exmouth & Taunton
• Wednesday 23 June – Exeter & Pool

Autumn 2004 open day
• Saturday 16 October

Clearing 2004
Actionline, the University’s course vacancy hotline, will be running on:
• Wednesday 18 August – 9 am to 5 pm
• Thursday 19 August
(A level results day) – 8 am to 8 pm
• Friday 20 August – 8 am to 8 pm
• Saturday 21 to Sunday 22 August
9 am to 5 pm
• Monday 23 to Friday 27 August
8 am to 6 pm
• Saturday 28 August – 9 am to 4 pm

Clearing open days on the Plymouth campus will be from 12 noon to 3 pm on:
• Sunday 22 August
• Wednesday 25 August
• Saturday 28 August

The spring edition of In Touch magazine, which is aimed at University of Plymouth graduates, is now available.

Packed with news, graduate profiles and details of benefits and services for graduates, copies of the full-colour magazine can be obtained by contacting Sioned Evans, Marketing Officer (Alumni), on 01752 233983/stioned.evans@plymouth.ac.uk

get in touch

The Retired Academics Database (RAD), launched by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, has begun helping universities in the developing world tackle their staff recruitment difficulties. The database holds details of retired academics and administrators from around the world that these universities can use to fill vacancies on a short-term basis.

Universities in Botswana and the West Indies have already used RAD for recruitment and the search is on to find more academics and administrators who would be interested in undertaking a contract in the developing world.

You can register by completing the form on the website at www.acu.ac.uk/adverts/rad, and can contact RAD on +44 (0) 20 7380 6707/email: rad@acu.ac.uk

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