Bid for new marine science and technology centre

Encouraging diversity
Widening participation initiatives

Governing body
Meet the governors

Have your say
Help shape the estate
If all goes to plan, this issue of UPfront should hit the desks just after Science Week — one of the highlights of Science Year. It seems fitting, then, to feature a number of science-related news stories and features.

The national decline in the number of students choosing to continue science subjects beyond GCSE-level is well documented. Universities are faced with a huge challenge: how to tune youngsters into science subjects and convince them that science is interesting, dynamic and leads to rewarding career opportunities. Plymouth has grappled with this challenge, with amongst other projects, its extended science year (see page 7) and partnership ventures with the Eden Project and the National Marine Aquarium. The latest partnership bid — to create a National Centre for Marine Science and Technology at Coxside (see opposite) — would bring huge benefits not just for the University, but for the city and for tourism in the South West. The government’s eagerly-awaited decision is due at the end of March.

We’re also asking for your input to a number of projects in this issue.

Would you like to have a say in the review of our undergraduate prospectus? For more information, turn to page 4.

If you have a view about how the University develops its estate, and whether to retain all four campuses, now is the time to make your voice heard. See page 4.

For the artistically minded, there’s an appeal for artwork on postcards to benefit the National Marine Aquarium on page 6.

There’s even a writing competition with the chance to win £1,000 featured on page 19.

And if that’s not enough, all contributions for the next edition of UPfront will be warmly welcomed! The copy deadline is 3 April.

Corinne Farrell
Editor

Cover photo of Professor Les Ebdon with Aquarium Chief Executive, Mike Leece.
The University of Plymouth started out life in the 19th century as a navigation college, and even today in the 21st century, it continues to build on its maritime links.

The University is a partner in one of Plymouth’s most exciting waterfront regeneration projects ever. A £30 million bid has been submitted to the UK government’s Capital Modernisation Fund to develop a National Centre for Marine Science and Technology next to the National Marine Aquarium. The centre would be Europe’s first centre of excellence in marine science and technology, creating a state-of-the-art visitor centre and science park.

The first phase of the bid is to build a futuristic visitor centre, called Marinex. Run on renewable energy from the wind, waves and sun, the interactive visitor centre would showcase the UK’s achievements in marine science and technology through a series of cutting-edge, imaginative and interactive exhibits. Children will be able to play games, either remotely via the internet or at the centre, like ‘underwater discovery’, where they hunt for the last oil reserve on the planet using sonar and underwater vehicles. There are also plans to offer real submarine trips into Plymouth Sound.

If the project is approved, work could start on site as early as this spring, with completion scheduled for summer 2004.

The second phase of the project, which will require an additional £15 million from European and regional resources, will involve the construction of a marine science and technology park. To be built by 2005, this would bring together a rich diversity of marine science and technology related research projects and businesses. The University would be able to locate its own marine specialisms alongside Plymouth Marine Laboratories, the Marine Biological Association and the Sir Alistair Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science. The marine science park would also include an incubator centre for start up companies, and grow-on space, similar to the Tamar Science Park. In all, the new science park could create more than 200 jobs and lead to the regeneration of the Sutton area of the city.

The phase one bid for Marinex is from a consortium led by the National Marine Aquarium, with partners including the University, QinetiQ, and Plymouth City Council. The proposal has the backing of all the other marine organisations in Plymouth, and a number of other partners have pledged support.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Les Ebdon, welcomed the scheme, saying: “This is a really exciting project for Plymouth, and I am delighted that the University is playing a leading part. The bid demonstrates our continuing commitment to the pursuit of world-class marine science and technology, and is a recognition of the importance of the marine environment, for sustainability, employment and recreation.”
news
in brief

what's on?
■ Arranging an event at the University? We want to hear from you! There will soon be a calendar on the news and events section of the University’s website to help publicise conferences, open days, concerts, exhibitions, etc.

To get your event on the calendar, contact your faculty marketing representative or Alice Li, PR Assistant, on ext 3988/email a.li@plymouth.ac.uk. Alice will let you have a pro forma for submitting the relevant information.

criminal records
■ The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is a new body set up by the Home Office to take over responsibility for police checks for both staff and students likely to come into contact with children or vulnerable adults.

The University has applied to become a Registered Body, with the lead counter-signatory being Roland Buckley, Director of Personnel & Development. Roland will identify counter-signatories in University departments most likely to have requests for disclosure, eg teacher education, clinical psychology, social work, etc. The Disclosure Service – paid for by the University for those staff required to comply – is up and running from April.

Review of the estate

■ The University estate is the collective name for the buildings, facilities and grounds which support our core functions of teaching, learning and research. First impressions count - and what people see as they visit our campuses has a significant impact on how they perceive the University.

Like most higher education institutions, the University spends around 12% of income on its estate. After staff costs, this is the biggest single component of expenditure. Currently, around 80% of our buildings are in need of major repair or investment – and less than 7% are suitably designed and located.

Last year, consultants were commissioned to carry out a review of the estate and assist in the development of an estate strategy for the next 10 - 20 years. The intention is to produce a plan which makes best possible use of physical resources, and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the University.

The consultants’ initial report was presented to the governors in July 2001 and an Estates Strategy Steering Group was set up to draft the University’s Estate Strategy by July 2002.

The next step in that process is to seek the views of staff across the University, as Professor Peter Evans, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources), explains: “The consultants have suggested two scenarios, and our eventual direction probably lies somewhere between the two. The first option is to carry on with the status quo, continuing to maintain four campuses. The alternative is to create what the consultants called an ‘enhanced distributed university’. This would involve strengthening links with partner colleges, creating a new core for the academic community at Plymouth and a number of satellites – for example a marine satellite at Coxsie. We now need to find out what staff think of these proposals, so that their views can be taken into account in our evolving strategy”

A consultation document has already been discussed at the recent Managing the University conference and is being taken to Academic Board and Senior Management Executive. The document will be available to all staff at www.plymouth.ac.uk/estateconsult. All comments should be addressed to Tessa Dunkley, Secretary to the Estates Strategy Steering Group, in the Department of Learning Facilities by Friday 12 April.

a fresh look at the prospectus

■ With the 2003 edition of the undergraduate prospectus hot off the press, the PR team is working with representatives from across the faculties to give the 2004 version a new look.

Some research has already been carried out on how potential students perceive the prospectus and what information they want to see in it. Feedback suggests that we don’t need to give more extensive information, but that it should be more focused.

Research shows that students want honest information, backed up by student testimonials and case studies that give them a feel for university life, and examples of what careers our students follow after they graduate.

According to The Guardian article ‘Those crazy kids’ (11 Feb 2002), students are very familiar with advertising and how it is used, so want a clear message that is ‘straightforward, honest and truthful’. They can locate information quickly, but it has to have an instant impact and they ‘filter out’ anything once they get bored.

We want to ensure that our information is at the right level to attract students and will be undertaking further research with schools to see how they react to our undergraduate prospectus – and find out what we should do to get the right message across.

If you have any views, contact Karen Teague, Publications Manager, ext 3980/email k.a.teague@plymouth.ac.uk.
The Right Honourable Lord David Owen, CH, and Tim Smit launched the Peninsula Medical School’s first public appeal for funds at the Eden Project in February. Lord Owen is patron of the Fountain Foundation, a charitable body set up to support medical research and student bursaries. The Fountain Foundation aims to raise £5 million for the Peninsula Medical School from its first appeal.

“Like Eden, the Peninsula Medical School is a ground-breaking project and an exciting development for the region,” said Lord Owen. The fundraising campaign will directly support the cutting edge research carried out by the School into areas such as diabetes, vascular research, cancer, multiple sclerosis and variant CJD. Other projects will look at how to improve the quality of healthcare and the education of tomorrow’s healthcare professionals. Money raised will also be used to support a limited number of bursaries at the Peninsula Medical School. These will be specifically designed to attract financially disadvantaged students with the skill, aptitude and motivation to train as doctors.

“The School already has an excellent research reputation,” said Professor John Tooke, its first Dean. “This appeal will raise money for cutting-edge research which will impact on future medical healthcare in a major way. All money raised will be used in the South West region and will positively impact upon our local communities.”

“Lord Owen’s support is important to the School. As a qualified medical professional he understands the need for a research–rich environment for a medical school capable of delivering students who can meet the needs of the health service of tomorrow.”

To find out more about the Peninsula Medical School fundraising campaign, or to make a donation, contact 01752 764273.

Look out for Peninsula Medical School open days:
- Wednesday 19 June - University of Plymouth
- Thursday 27 June - University of Exeter
- Friday 28 June - University of Plymouth
- Thursday 26 September - University of Exeter
- Saturday 19 October - University of Plymouth

The South West in the 21st century is where some of the most innovative thinking regarding medical education is being put into practice.”
The immediate tasks are to:

- prepare the business case for the Board of Governors so that we have the necessary approvals for the University’s bank to issue purchasing cards
- agree VAT requirements with the local customs and excise office
- develop procedures to ensure that the system works within agreed financial regulations
- run pilots to test the procedures and measure the benefits of using cards.

It is proposed that the cards are used for small value purchases from occasional suppliers, payments for subscriptions and conference fees, low value orders for components and other sundry items and car hire bookings.

The first pilots will be carried out by the Human Sciences Accounting Point, Business School Accounting Point, Learning Facilities Maintenance Department (Plymouth) and the Exmouth Bookshop.

If all proceeds well with the pilots, the project board is planning a phased introduction of cards across the University, to be completed by July 2003. Progress of this scheme will be posted in due course on the Procurement Unit pages on the staff section of the University’s website.
Plymouth’s extended science programme is one of the most successful courses in the country. It is also one of the few generic science foundation courses and one of the largest. This year students have also been using the course to progress to the Peninsula Medical School, with six of this year’s students being offered places to study medicine. One of these, Robert Lee, was the first student to sign up for a place at the new school, and found himself something of a media star in the South West.

The extended science year was the brainchild of Dr Dave Harwood, now Director of the Institute of Science Education in the Faculty of Science. The pilot course ran back in 1990 with just 38 students. Now the annual intake is 150, and unlike some of its competitor programmes, Plymouth boasts an average pass rate of around 90%.

Dave Harwood maintains that there is no magic formula for success, it is simply that a good deal of time and effort has been invested in getting the admissions process right: This programme is not an access course, where students can study part time over a number of years, and necessarily have minimal contact time in the science subjects. Neither is it solely a widening participation initiative — although we do have students from non-traditional educational backgrounds. The extended science year offers a very intensive grounding in scientific disciplines and provides a sound academic base from which to progress to a degree course. Students spend ten hours a week in science lectures, six of these in a laboratory, and a further five studying maths and statistics. It’s not an easy option, and we’re open about that right from the start. But in return for hard work and commitment, our students are guaranteed a place on a science degree course at Plymouth.

Most students attend an interview and find out for themselves what they are taking on. Around two-thirds are mature students returning to study after time doing other things. The remainder are generally between the ages of 18 and 20, with some post-GCSE qualifications, who have decided to pursue a career in science. All of them have to be able and prepared to study at undergraduate level and the course includes a study in higher education module in their first semester, which helps them to make the transition to higher education and to gain in confidence at this level.

The Faculty of Science hopes to build on the success of this programme by launching an Institute of Science Education later this year. Dave Harwood has already been appointed as the Institute’s first director and will soon be recruiting six academic colleagues to join him. All six posts will be half-time, so that the staff, like Dave himself, can continue with some of their teaching commitments.

The Institute’s work will include exciting young people’s interest in science subjects through a programme of outreach with schools, providing support for students in making the transition to University, and providing a framework for staff support in their teaching and other activities, disseminating good practice from across the higher education sector. The Faculty is planning a formal launch of its new institute at the start of the new academic year — so watch this space!
news in brief

Local company Delta Ground Anchors triumphed at the recent awards ceremony for the University of Plymouth Enterprise’s Quest for the Best competition, a contest launched last summer to find the best new business ideas in the region. The ceremony followed an exhibition displaying the innovative products of all the finalists.

It was Delta Ground Anchors’ technically superior tent peg – designed to withstand even the most gruelling weather conditions – that clinched the company £10,000 worth of professional and technical support from the University.

Quest for the Best was deemed a great success, with many of the participating entrepreneurs finding new investors.

tribute

The tragic death of Helen Leal, who used to work in Academic Partnerships and Liaison, was received with great sadness by friends and former colleagues at the University.

“Helen will be remembered with much fondness, and our sympathy and prayers go out to all her family, particularly Andy, her husband, and her children, Andrea and Justin,” said former colleague Marian Stringer. “She was always active and full of energy – often putting us to shame! Her portrayal of Sporty Spice will be remembered with smiles and much laughter. Helen never had to be asked to help anyone; she offered help before we knew we needed it.”

With fond memories of happy times.

In the September/October 2001 edition of UPfront, Dr Phil Bayliss of the School of Graduate Studies in Art and Education explained the innovative partnership between the University’s Post-16 Education and Training Department and Channings Wood Prison. Here, he gives an update on recent developments.

“The scheme – which is the first of its kind in the country - involves our PGCE/Cert Ed students undertaking a specialist prison education module at Channings Wood during their one-year teacher training placement. It is already reaping benefits for the students and the prisoners, thanks to the strong partnership between the University and the prison. Of the students who completed the course in December, most have found teaching jobs in Devon jails and since then, two more groups of students have begun placements at Channings Wood.

‘At a recent meeting of the partners, we were joined by Judith Williams, the Chief Education Officer for the Prisoners’ Learning and Skills Unit, which is a newly formed partnership between the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills promoting education and training in prisons. The creation of the Unit signifies renewed interest from the government, which believes that education for prisoners, particularly in basic skills, can assist them in gaining employment following their release. Statistics suggest that ex-inmates who find steady employment are less likely to re-offend. Describing prison education as ‘an oasis in a pretty grim environment’, Judith said that the scheme was well timed as it could help to address the chronic shortage of qualified prison teachers.

‘As well as initiatives such as the ‘Storybook Dads’ project, which involves prisoners writing and recording stories to send home to their children, trainee teachers at Channings Wood have helped instigate other successful schemes. ‘Wing Walking’ has taken projects to the prison wings where, for example, inmates undertaking cleaning duties can gain an NVQ in industrial cleaning. Bespoke basic skills packages have also been developed by our students, and the more academically able inmates can now embark on an Access to HE programme initiated by the University and staffed by some of our graduates from the scheme.

“The next step is to build on the success of the scheme at Channings Wood and extend it to another county, perhaps even nationally. Watch this space!”

Student teacher, Graham Perry (centre), with inmates at Channings Wood.
This led to my involvement with the start-up interests in common with industry. I was keen to meet this company that I first came into contact with the University. I was told that the time commitment would be about a day a week; it is inevitable that there are peaks and troughs of activity. On average, I’ve spent up to two days a week on University business. My wife tells me that I spent about four months non-stop on the recruitment process for the new Vice-Chancellor.

“That was certainly the biggest challenge I’ve had to face. We had to involve as many governors and staff as possible in the process, without making it unmanageable – either for the University or the candidates. I think we got the balance right, and I am very pleased with the appointment of Roland Levinsky.

“John Bull has taken us from a polytechnic to one of the most successful universities in the country. He has established links with a wide range of educational establishments in the region and has been responsible for the start of the Peninsula Medical School. All this whilst keeping the University on a sound financial basis! Now that we are well-established and successful in our own right, the time is right to hand over to Roland. He has world-wide recognition for his research and academic ability, and can spearhead the University’s agreed mission to become world-class.

“We are very fortunate in our governors – they are all very senior in their own fields, represent a wide range of backgrounds and have a huge wealth of expertise on which the University can draw, absolutely free of charge! I don’t think many people realise that being a governor is a voluntary role – there is no pay or stipendiary of any sort. Although there are only three governors’ meetings a year, most governors also sit on other committees, such as finance and employment or remuneration, and may be asked to sit on appeal panels for staff going through disciplinary proceedings. The University also calls on its governors for advice and input between meetings. One of our governors, for example, is an architect and has had a significant involvement in the process of developing an estate strategy.

“I have immensely enjoyed my time as a governor. For me, one of the most difficult parts of the role has been chairing award ceremonies, and speaking to an audience of thousands. But this has also helped me to keep in touch with what the University is all about. As governors, we spend much of our time debating finances, buildings, business and strategy. What we are actually about, though, is students. They come to us for a period of years and acquire new skills and abilities during their time with us. The award ceremonies are a culmination, for them, of their journey through University, and the start of the next stage of their life.

“I find myself in a similar position now, as I’m retiring - for real this time! I shall miss the people and the opportunity for academic discussion and debate. But I am excited about what lies ahead. I have spent much of my career travelling. When you’re overseas on business, you don’t really see very much of the country. So my wife and I intend to do some travelling for ourselves now, and spend time seeing the places we’re staying in. My last governors’ meeting is on 19 April – and soon after that I shall start a three-week holiday.

“I will also be looking on with interest, as the University moves on to the next phase in its own development. I’ve no doubt that there are exciting times ahead, with a new Chair of Governors, a new Vice-Chancellor and a new focus to the University’s mission. I wish you all well.”
The University’s Board of Governors is responsible for the educational character and mission of the institution and for the general overview of all its activities. The Board also has specific responsibility for approving the annual budget, determining management structure, and setting a framework for staff pay and conditions of service. With the exception of the Vice-Chancellor, the governors are effectively non-executive directors of the University.

**BARBARA BOND** was appointed to the Board in 1999, and is a member of the Audit Committee. She owns and runs the Oxenways Estate, a country house retreat and activity centre. She is also Chair of American Round-Up, the leading European tour operator offering ranch holidays in North America. She recently retired from serving as a partner with Andersen Consulting, having formerly been a partner with Touche Ross Management Consultants. Ken has had a varied career including spending time as an international shipping executive, and running his own businesses. He has served on the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment and chaired the Environment Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He is a member of South West Investment Group and is an investor and advisor with two internet start-up companies.

**NEVILLE CUSWORTH** was appointed to the Board in 2000, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He has been engaged in law publishing since 1967, when he joined Butterworth & Co (Publishers) Ltd. From 1990 to 1999, he was Chairman and CEO of the company. He was also Chief Executive of the Legal Publishing Division of Reed Elsevier plc, and on the boards of many of its subsidiary companies. He is currently a non-executive director of Jordan Publishing Ltd. Neville was Chairman of the Book House Training Centre from 1989 to 1993, and a Council Member of the Publishers Association from 1988 to 1991. He was also a Director of the International Electronic Publishing Research Centre from 1985 to 1988. He is a Court Assistant of the Stationers’ Company and a Freeman of the City of London, and is Chairman of the Caradon District of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

**NICK CUTTS** was appointed to the Board in 1994, and is also a member of the Remuneration Committee, and the Finance and Employment Committee. She is Chief Executive of Barton International Ltd, a company she established in 1988 specialising in senior level recruitment regionally, nationally and internationally. After graduating from Oxford in 1972, her early career was in market research and advertising before moving abroad and setting up the Dutch and Belgian offices of John Stork & Partners, another firm of international headhunters. She is a former member of the Governing Board of Bryanton School and a former member of the Selection Panel for independent members of the Police Authority in Devon and Cornwall.

**BILL DANIEL** was appointed to the Board in 2001, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. Until recently he was Director of the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) which became Britain’s leading independent social and economic research institute. At PSI he established a number of the country’s principal social survey series including the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey series; the PEP/PSI surveys on the comparative position of ethnic minorities in Britain; and the PEP/PSI surveys on the redundant and the unemployed. Bill served a full term on the Council of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and its Programmes Board; on the Social Science Committee of the European Science Foundation; and on the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. In 1996 he was awarded the CBE for services to industrial relations.

**JOHN HANSON** was appointed to the Board in 1996, and is Chair of the Audit Committee. Until January 1997, he was the Secretary of the Association of Accounting Technicians - the worldwide professional body responsible for the training, regulation and updating of accounting support staff. In addition to eight years in three local authority Treasurers Departments, he spent 22 years in the education sector,
cultivating in the position of Principal of Southampton College of Higher Education. He was, for a time, Chief Examiner in Accounting at the former Polytechnics of Bristol and the City of Birmingham. He has also chaired Committees involved in Education & Training, Examinations and College Course Approvals, and for four years he served as a Governor of Cornwall College.

ROGER HARRIS was appointed to the Board in 2001, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He is a Chartered Accountant and was a Regional Senior Partner of KPMG until retirement in 1996. He now holds a variety of consultancies and directorships. He was Chairman of the South West Industrial Development Board and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and served for earlier periods as a Governor of the University of Plymouth and the College of St Mark and St John. Current appointments include being Chair of the Tamar Science Park, Director of Mount Batten Water Sports Centre and Plymouth Naval Base Visitor Centre, and President of Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club.

ALISON HUXTABLE was appointed to the Board in 2001, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. She was called to the Bar in 1983 and then joined the North Sea energy industry. A former member of the US energy company Amerada Hess senior management team for North West Europe, Alison had strategic and operational responsibilities for a number of key activities supporting the company’s growth and organisational capability. Alison is a non-executive director on the management board of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and was appointed to support their internal change management programme. Alison is a Justice of the Peace in the Devon Commission Area.

JO KAN was appointed to the Board as a staff governor in 1996 and is now coming to the end of her second term. She is Training Manager in the Staff Development Unit and has worked at the University for eight years.

MELODY MASON was appointed to the Board in 2001, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. She returned to the UK three years ago from Washington DC, where she was a senior economist at the World Bank. She has worked in Russia and 24 other countries. She began her career as a social worker in London after gaining a degree in sociology. She has a masters in development economics and served in El Salvador as a UN volunteer. She also gained an MBA from the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania, and ran her own consulting business in Canada.

LAURA McMAHON is the sole Students’ Union representative on the Board of Governors. She has a degree in theatre and performance studies and media arts. After completing her degree, Laura was elected as Global Union Education Officer — a sabbatical position within the new structure of the Students’ Union. She now represents students on all campuses, in an academic, educational and supportive capacity.

PROFESSOR IAN MERCER was appointed to the Board in 1996, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He was appointed first County Conservation Officer in England and Wales in 1971 by Devon County Council and became Chief Officer for Dartmoor National Park Authority in 1973. In 1990 he became first Chief Executive of the Countryside Council for Wales and is currently Secretary General of the Association of National Park Authorities. Ian is President of both the Devon Wildlife Trust and the Field Studies Council, member of the Devon and Cornwall Committee of the National Trust, and the SW Committee of OFWAT. In 1991 he was made honorary Professor of Rural Conservation Practice in the University of Wales and holds honorary degrees from the University of Exeter and the University of Plymouth. Ian Mercer’s services to the environment in Wales were recognised by the award of a CBE in 1996.

VICTOR PARSONS See interview on page 9.

SIR BRIAN PEARSE, Chair—elect was appointed to the Board in 1997, serving as Vice-Chairman from 1998, and is a member of the University’s Finance and Employment Committee, Honorary Awards Committee, Nominations Committee and Remuneration Committee. Most of his career has been spent in banking, the main appointments being Chief Executive of Midland Bank (1991-94) and Finance Director of Barclays (1987-91). Sir Brian is currently Deputy Chairman of Britannic Assurance. He is also involved with the Charities Aid Foundation, and South Hams Housing (Director). Previous appointments have included Chairman of LucasVanity plc, The Housing Corporation, British Invisibles and the DTI sponsored Committee on South Africa Trade. Sir Brian is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers and of King’s College London, and was knighted in 1994.

GEOFF REES was appointed to the Board in 1998, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He is Principal of Ivybridge Community College, Devon. Geoff has worked in seven schools across the country and Ivybridge is his second headship. Over recent years he has chaired Devon Science and Technology Regional Organisation and the Devon Association of Secondary Heads and has been Education Officer for the Institute of Directors. He is a current member of the Further Education Funding Council.
PETER SIMS was appointed to the Board in December 2001 as one of two nominees from Academic Board. He has been a member of academic staff since 1969. He lectures in physical geography, specialising in coastal systems and coastal zone management. Peter has served on numerous committees within the University and is currently in his second term as a Faculty of Science academic staff representative on Academic Board. He is Associate Head of the Department of Geographical Sciences and Vice-Chairman of the South West Region of the Royal Geographical Society (with Institute of British Geographers).

RON SPENCER was appointed to the Board in 1999, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He was Chief Executive of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health Authority from 1989 until his retirement in 2000. For seven years prior to this he held a similar post in North Worcestershire. A substantial part of his earlier career was spent working in the teaching hospitals in Birmingham. He has served on the National Council of the Institute of Healthcare Management and Department of Health and Audit Commission advisory groups. He was for six years a director of Devon and Cornwall TEC (lately PROSPER). He is a Vice-President of Cornwall Rugby Football Union and Chairman of the Executive Committee of Redruth Rugby Football Club.

DAVE STEPHENSON was appointed to the Board in 1996 and is now coming to the end of his second term as an academic nominee. He is an Associate Dean in the Faculty of Human Sciences.

ALAN STROWGER was appointed to the Board in 1999, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He came to Plymouth from the BBC to set up the city’s pioneering Educational Television Service based in the then College of Technology. After later re-qualifying as a solicitor, he became the Senior Partner of a South Devon firm, specialising in Planning. A past president of the Law Society, he has been responsible for the Continuing Professional Development courses run by the Society in conjunction with the University’s Business School. He holds judicial appointments, as a President of Mental Health Tribunals, Chairman of Leasehold Valuation Tribunals and is an Immigration Adjudicator. He has served on the local boards of Business Link and Prosper and for many years Chaired an Enterprise Agency.

JOHN WARREN was appointed to the Board in 1997, and is a member of the Finance and Employment Committee. He qualified as an architect in 1953 and co-founded Marshman and Warren, which became the Company of Designers plc. He has lived in Devon for 30 years, being responsible for many local buildings during that time, and became a governor of Polytechnic South West in 1988. He has been active in the promotion of the region and the profession through local and national bodies and has acted as a Reporting Assessor for the Higher Education Funding Council. He was the author of the Environment 2000 Report for the University and a contributor to the Review of the Estate Strategy.

Call for new governors

The Board of Governors includes one member nominated by the general staff and one nominated by the teaching staff. The current nominees, Jo Kan and Dr Dave Stephenson, are reaching the end of their second term of office and are not eligible for a further term. Elections for their successors will be held during April/May 2002.

Copies of the formal notice of election together with the call for nominations and nomination form will be circulated to all staff, and information will be posted on notice boards across the University. Additional copies can be obtained from Margaret Metcalfe, Office of the Vice-Chancellor, 18 Portland Villas, (ext 2017).

Ballot papers and the list of nominations, together with any election addresses, will be distributed to all staff eligible to vote.

Committee. He served 31 years in the Royal Navy, leaving as a Rear Admiral. His appointments included Captain of HMS Drake, Superintendent Ships Devonport and President of the Ordnance Board. In 1996 he became Director of the Electrical Contractors Association and is now the Managing Director of an engineering company and the ship repair yard at Penzance. He is a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the Institute of Management. Local appointments include the Presidency or Vice Presidency of Plymouth West Scouts, the Sea Cadets, the Devonport Field Gun Association and the Royal Fleet Club Devonport. In the past he has been a primary school governor and Chairman of Devonport Services Rugby Club.

MICHAEL THOMAS was appointed to the Board in 2000, and is a member of the Audit Committee and Remuneration Committee. He served 31 years in the Royal Navy, leaving as a Rear Admiral. His appointments included Captain of HMS Drake, Superintendent Ships Devonport and President of the Ordnance Board. In 1996 he became Director of the Electrical Contractors Association and is now the Managing Director of an engineering company and the ship repair yard at Penzance. He is a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the Institute of Management. Local appointments include the Presidency or Vice Presidency of Plymouth West Scouts, the Sea Cadets, the Devonport Field Gun Association and the Royal Fleet Club Devonport. In the past he has been a primary school governor and Chairman of Devonport Services Rugby Club.
There can be little doubt that diversity will be the hallmark of the university of the 21st century – in terms of student profile, provision and research. In its strategic view of higher education, the government appears to have placed widening participation (WP) at the top of the agenda. In the first of a series highlighting the University’s activities in this area, Widening Participation Co-ordinator, Beth Scott, explains what’s going on.

Giving people the opportunity to access higher education regardless of their background underpins the government’s agenda on inclusivity and Plymouth has been at the forefront of WP policy development and practice for some years. WP staff — both at the centre and in the faculties — currently contribute to this area of work at local, regional, national and international levels, but there is much that still needs to be done to encourage those from socio-economic and cultural groups who do not view a university education as a natural progression.

Across the University a wide range of WP projects are already in operation to address this need. A few examples include:

- The Student Mentoring Project, a three-year national pilot which involves current HE students working with local Year 10 and 11 pupils to raise their aspirations and encourage achievement.
- The Peninsula Project, a sub-regional initiative involving the University and four other HE institutions, all our partner FE colleges, plus community groups and schools. Activities include taster sessions and summer schools, Saturday clubs and events for families.
- The AspHigher scheme, a pilot project in Cornwall which aims to identify able students in danger of under-achieving due to adverse circumstances and work with them as a discrete group away from their school.
- STOP (the Science and Technology Opportunities Project), where faculties are working with schools in the South West to raise awareness of — and inspire interest in — science and technology.
- The Transition Project, a compact arrangement that links three Plymouth schools with the University and focuses on the transition from school to HE.

Within the University, structures are in place to provide clear lines of communication between Academic Board and all levels of policy development and practical application of WP activity (see below).

Faculties and partner colleges have all appointed WP development officers to organise and develop actions to widen participation, explains Beth. It’s important to appreciate, however, that all staff play a role in helping the University to achieve its aims in this area. After all, encouraging participation amongst those who would not normally consider higher education is as much about attitudes as it is about specific actions.

For further information about the University’s WP activities, contact Academic Partnerships and Liaison on ext 2382.
Chemical pollutants in sewage discharge have been found to affect animal hormone systems, giving world-wide cause for concern. Fish in British waters have changed sex; and abnormalities have been found in a wide variety of species and locations – from whelks in Plymouth to polar bears in Spitzbergen and alligators in Florida.

Professor Michael DePledge, Director of PERC (Plymouth Environmental Research Centre), is keeping the University of Plymouth at the cutting-edge of research into the effects of pollutants on marine invertebrates and fish.

With Professor Jim Readman of Plymouth Marine Laboratory, he has developed a suite of inexpensive and easy-to-use techniques for the Rapid Assessment of Marine Pollution (RAMP). This has brought environmental management within the reach of developing countries, which do not have the financial or human resources to employ more sophisticated monitoring techniques.

RAMP involves identifying exposure to chemical pollutants by measuring biochemical, physiological, cellular or behavioural variations in tissue or body fluid samples. For example, the heart rate of molluscs can be tested quickly and easily, with no harm to the animal, by passing infra-red light through their shells and measuring the light reflected back. The heart rate for animals living in clean water is different from that of animals living in polluted water.

The latest tool within the RAMP suite detects oil pollution in crab urine. This involves inserting a needle into the holes between a crab's eyes and drawing urine out. Fluorescence indicates exposure to polyaromatic hydrocarbons — otherwise known as oil pollutants.

RAMP was initially piloted in Brazil, and is now in widespread use throughout SE Asia, as well as being extended into the Caribbean. Professor DePledge is also working with colleagues at Harvard University, where he holds an honorary chair in the School of Public Health, to test RAMP techniques in the controlled environment of New Bedford Harbour.

Professor Depledge has won funding totalling around £500,000 from DEFRA, the Environment Agency and the Leverhulme Trust for his work on endocrine disruption in the marine environment. His contribution to this field has been recognised in his appointment as a special adviser to the World Health Organisation. He has presented his work at a numerous international conferences and symposia, and has even had a letter of recognition and thanks from Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott!
Five University departments – Politics, Social Policy and Social Work, Sociology, Psychology and Geographical Sciences – are celebrating success in the Economic and Social Research Council’s 2001 Research Recognition Exercise, which marked the start of a new recognition cycle.

These departments will be able to support ESRC studentship applications for the 2002/03 academic year until the end of the current cycle, in approximately 2006. The ESRC is the first research council to adopt a 1+3 allocation model for studentship funding. This means that, in a single application, students can commence a masters course with a research training programme meeting the Council’s new postgraduate training guidelines and proceed to a PhD.

Professor Steve Newstead, Dean of the Faculty of Human Sciences, was appointed by the ESRC to chair the psychology and cognitive science subject area panel for this exercise. Commenting on the outcome, he said: “Over the past few years the University has put considerable effort into the training given to its research students. The ESRC Recognition Exercise is extremely rigorous, and the results for Plymouth confirm that the training we provide is of the highest possible standard.”

The Departments of Politics, Social Policy and Social Work, Sociology and Psychology were also successful in their applications for CASE (Co-operative Awards in Science and Engineering) recognition. CASE or collaborative research studentships are held jointly by academic departments and employers with both parties providing student supervision.

Learning Lab will be delivering more modules during the year as the development team is heavily involved in the TAMAR training project, a European Commission-funded scheme aimed at delivering postgraduate training to the marine transport sector.

These latest initiatives have taken the number of Learning Lab users to over 2,000 and since its creation in 1996 it has delivered more than 40 different modules and courses. For more information, contact Neil Witt at n.witt@plymouth.ac.uk, or visit the websites at www.learninglab.co.uk, www.tamartraining.org or www.cpdresearch.org.uk.

Photo credit: The photograph that appeared on page 9 of the Jan/Feb edition of UPfront should have been credited to Les Ternan, Geographical Sciences.
a round-up of where the university has appeared prominently in recent weeks...

- Election expert Professor Colin Rallings helped to keep *Sun* readers on the edge of their seats in the days running up to the *Pop Idol* final showdown. Despite finalist Gareth Gates being the bookies’ clear favourite, Professor Rallings warned of a close finish, accurately predicting that Will Young might ‘sneak an advantage’ on the night.

- The March issue of *Child Education* carried an article by Ros Fisher, from Rolle School of Education, on her new book, *Inside the Literacy Hour*.

- MBA programmes offered by the Business School were featured in *The Guardian* and in *The Times*, with comments from the faculty’s Dean, Professor Chris Greensted, and David Head. Experts from the school also contributed human resources advice in *Personnel Today*.

- The *Times Higher* and several local newspapers reported on the signing of a constitution detailing the Combined Universities in Cornwall management structure and objectives.

- A scheme to train teachers at Channings Wood Prison in Newton Abbot was featured in the *Western Morning News* and *Torquay Herald Express*. Both newspapers reported on Baynton Smith, a former inmate who has returned to the prison as part of his own teacher training. *Nursing Standard* highlighted that nursing staff at the prison can access diploma and degree courses through the University.

- The *Evening Herald* and the *Western Morning News* reported on the transfer of the BSc Podiatry course from Plymouth College of Further Education to the University. Plymouth is one of only 13 podiatry centres in the country.

- At the time of going to press, the University’s Science Week activities were well under way with budding scientists and engineers from schools across the region enjoying a range of specially organised events, including:
  - the ‘Science Can’t Hurt You…Can It?’ competition
  - performances of the ‘Real Bugs Show’ by Jacolly Puppet Theatre
  - the ever-popular Great Egg Race
  - the Engineering Trail, demonstrating the work of engineers at the University
  - ‘Exposing the Electron’ - a hands-on display at the City Museum and Art Gallery
  - ‘From the Bunsen to the Sun’ multimedia presentations.
Sam Younger (right), Chair of the Electoral Commission, was a recent visitor to the University, where he gave a talk on reforming Britain’s electoral practices and procedures.

Established by Parliament, the Commission is an independent body whose remit is to oversee new controls on donations to, and campaign spending by, political parties and others. It is also responsible for keeping electoral law and practice under review and for raising public awareness of the electoral process.

Staff and students have been taking advantage of the brand new fitness complex at Endsleigh Place. The new complex boasts a 40-station fitness suite, three squash courts and a TV and music system. Also on offer are tailor-made personal fitness programmes, programmed circuit sessions, and squash and racket ball coaching.

Since opening, the complex has seen around 280 users a day. The joining fee is £26 and this includes access to all fitness programmes at Pitts Gym. Anyone interested in becoming a member should contact Dave Furniss on ext 2251.

A recent lunch hosted by Educational Development saw the Vice-Chancellor present certificates to staff who had successfully completed the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education course. Guests included heads of department, mentors and Dr Gordon Taylor and Dr Chris Lee from the School of Graduate Studies.

A collection of photographs by renowned graphic artist Dave McKean was on show at the Exeter campus in February. David, who is probably best known for his illustrations for comics and graphic novels, also gave a guest lecture to graphic design students at the University.

The newly opened Owen Building at the Exmouth campus was the venue for a recent health education conference for staff and PGCE students from the Universities of Plymouth and Exeter and the College of St Mark and St John. The conference gave students the opportunity to meet health education experts and explore approaches to issues such as drug and alcohol education for primary schools.

The visit day in February saw an encouraging increase in the number of prospective students on campus. An action-packed day was enjoyed by all who attended and was enhanced by the fact that the sun came out – for a while at least!

The recent science day at the campus was also well attended. The event, targeted specifically at sixth-form students in the South West, included four imaginatively titled interactive workshops: Clone a Cauli, Say Cheese, Pigs on Acid and Nature’s Little Helpers. Another science day is planned for 4 July.
19 march
■ Snow and ice in a warmer world , a lecture by Dr Roger Braithwaite, School of Geography, University of Manchester, starting at 6.15 pm, Lecture Theatre 5, Babbage Building. For further information, contact Len Wood, IMS. n.wood@plymouth.ac.uk

■ 12 — 14 april
■ Discourse power resistance in post-compulsory education and training, a conference hosted by the Graduate School in Arts and Education. Details of the conference programme, the call for papers and booking form can be found at www.fae.plym.ac.uk/postgradpost.html. Contact: Jerome Satterthwaite, conference organiser, on ext 2332/email: j.satterthwaite@plymouth.ac.uk

■ 25 april
■ From climate to biology: the North Atlantic Oscillation and the Gulf Stream — a lecture by Professor Arnold Taylor, Visiting Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics. Starts at 5.30 pm in Lecture Theatre 6, Babbage Building. Contact: Phil Dyke on ext 2727.

■ The University of Plymouth is collaborating with the University of Ulster and its partner college network on SPAT, a HEFCE-funded project to promote effective student transfer and progression through and across a range of HE boundaries. In particular, the project is focusing on progression from HND to top-up degree, and the overlap with new foundation degrees.

SPAT has identified examples of good practice which have been matched with the needs of staff and students involved in progression and transfer. The information gathered has been used to produce resource packs including:

■ clear and precise information for FE students considering transfer to university
■ pre-entry information for FE students accepted onto top-up degrees
■ specifically designed material for HE staff involved with the induction of top-up/transfer students
■ material for top-up/transfer students.

The resource packs will soon be distributed to FE and HE staff and students in a range of appropriate formats. If you want to know more, contact Chris Smart on 01626 325645/c.j.smart@plymouth.ac.uk. The SPAT website is at www.spat.ac.uk

■ 29 march
■ 7.30 pm: Wihan String Quartet, a Plymouth Chamber Music concert at the Sherwell Centre. The programme includes Smetana’s Quartet No 2 in D minor; Martinu’s Quartet No 2; and Dvorak’s Quartet in C major, Op 61. Tickets £9.00 (£5.00 concessions). Contact: Alice Li on ext 3988.

■ 7.30 pm: Passion and Palms, a Renaissance choral music concert by Voces, at Buckfast Abbey. The programme concentrates on 16th and 17th century music and the centrepiece will be part of the Passion according to St Matthew by Orlandus Lassus. Entry is free.

Note: there is no admission to the Abbey before the end of Vespers, at 7.00 pm. Contact: Martyn Warren on (01626) 369622/email: voices.mail@virgin.net

■ Tickets for concerts in the Sherwell Centre are available from reception in the Security Lodge, Plymouth campus/Alice Li, Marketing & Public Relations Department, on ext 3968.

Alternatively, tickets are available at the door on the night.

■ 19 march
■ 10.00 am: Institutional Practices - Olia Lialina, Russia/Germany; violetta Kulturbasiskrajewska and Piotr Krajewski, Poland; Sarah Cook, Canada/UK. Chair: Joasia Krysa, i-DAT, and Lina Dzuverovic-Russell, MUTE.

■ 13 april
■ 10.00 am: Curatorial Practices - elisa Guidaccioni, Italy; Clive Gillman, UK; Anne Nigten, the Netherlands. Chair: Bronac Ferran, Arts Council of England.

■ 12 april
■ 2.00 pm — 4.00pm: Curatorial Practices - Olia Lialina, Russia/Germany; Violetta Kutubasiskrajewska and Piotr Krajewski, Poland; Sarah Cook, Canada/UK. Chair: Joasia Krysa, i-DAT, and Lina Dzuverovic-Russell, MUTE.

■ 13 april
■ 10.00 am: Institutional Practices: Models - Elisa Guidaccioni, Italy; Clive Gillman, UK; Anne Nigten, the Netherlands. Chair: Bronac Ferran, Arts Council of England.

■ 7.00 pm. Contact: Martyn Warren on (01626) 369622/email: voices.mail@virgin.net

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Wanted to rent, house/flat in June-July for visiting academic and family. Contact John Dixon (ext 3274 or email j.dixon@plymouth.ac.uk).

Room to rent in pleasant shared house in Turnchapel, Mount Batten. Most mod-cons, ensuite and own parking space. From April onwards. Tel 07941 154563/481255 eves.

Unfurnished flat to let in Peverell. Prime location close to park and shops. Double bedroom. Fitted kitchen. Economy 7 heating. Deposit and references required. £75 pw. Contact Alison on 01752 500472

Grade II Listed farmhouse in centre of Denbury village and large stone barn with planning permission for a four-bedroomed dwelling. Please see details on the website: www.rowan-house.net

The University has nominated Professor Brian Chalkley, Director of the LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) for a National Teaching Fellowship. The fellowship scheme was launched in 2000 to reward excellence in teaching and learning in the higher education sector.

Professor Chalkley has been at the University for 31 years. His work is mostly concerned with undergraduate teaching in human geography and leading the promotional and dissemination work of the LTSN GEES subject centre. Brian is one of 82 entries for the 2002 National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. Twenty winners will be selected by a national advisory panel on 21 May and the awards — of £50,000 each - will be presented at a high profile event in London on 9 July.

Vanessa Fitzgerald, Head of Access and Widening Participation at the University, has been named as the winner of the education and training category in the Plymouth Women of Achievement Awards 2002.

Vanessa picked up a prize of £500 in recognition of her work in encouraging adults and young people to realise their potential to enter higher education.

If you have an interesting story to tell, a £1,000 prize is up for grabs in a non-fiction writing competition organised by Northcliffe Electronic Publishing (NEP) (Midlands).

The ‘Toowrite’ competition is run three times a year and attracts entries from all over the world. Each entry is included on the competition website and a selection of the best are published in regional newspapers in Britain.

Entry to the competition is free and the organisers will accept up to five entries (of no more than 1,500 words each) per person.

You can write on any subject but entries must be based on a true incident, written in the first person and not previously published. If you are thinking of putting pen to paper, the closing date for submissions is 10 May.

Full details can be found on the competition website at www.toowrite.com.

Sharpen your pencils and fill those paint palettes! Budding artists are welcome to submit up to two pieces of work for consideration and possible display at an open art exhibition for staff. The exhibition will be in the gallery of the Sherwell Centre, Plymouth campus, from 28 October to 22 November.

There are many creative people working at the University, and this offers everyone the opportunity to exhibit their work in an attractive gallery that is open to the public. Any type of artwork that can be wall mounted will be considered - prints, photography, paintings and textiles - but unfortunately, three-dimensional work cannot be displayed.

For further details, contact Nicola Griffin on ext 2027.

write on

“free entry... £1,000 prize”
Meet Ted, probably the best travelled bear since Paddington arrived from Peru. This little fellow, who belongs to Marian Stringer of Academic Partnerships and Liaison, was recently ‘bearknapped’ by a mystery colleague, giving his mistress much paws for concern.

Over the ensuing weeks, Marian received a series of photographs of her beloved Ted in France, proving that – far from suffering at the hands of his captor – he was in fact bearing up well and enjoying considerably more than marmalade sandwiches!

The story has a happy ending, however, and colleagues are relieved that Marian has now stopped grizzling. On a recent trip to Bruges, she was reunited with her cuddly chum, who had been smuggled into a nunnery in the city!