• Is your drink safe? Spike comes to town
• Rock on! Geologist on screen near you
• Into the future Campus vision
• Head start Helping brain-injured children
Welcome

Welcome to the January/February edition of UFront.
If you have any feedback or ideas for future editions, please contact Paola Simoneschi, Public Relations Manager, on ext 3986 or email paola.simoneschi@plymouth.ac.uk

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Front cover: Launching the Spike campaign (l to r): Steve Richards, Manager of Varsity, Linda Gilroy MP, University Police Liaison Officer Maxine Reid, SU Welfare Officer Tom Grigor, and Scott Hempel, Manager of Walkabout.

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MY TOP TEN

In the first of a nosy new series, Emma Williams (left), PA to the Deputy Director of Learning Facilities, Robert Stannage, lets us into her Top Ten...

Film: Woody Allen’s Manhattan – the opening sequence is stunning.

Song: John Lennon’s Jealous Guy, simple but heartfelt.

Read: Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K Jerome - very amusing.

Food: roast beef with all the trimmings and a glass of red wine.

Destination: Paris, or Wengen in the Swiss Alps.

Person: Jacqueline Kennedy - I find her life fascinating.

Memory: my wedding day.

Crush: Toby, my husband, naturally!

Whinge: dark days – I love the sun.

Tip: trust your instincts.
I have now been at the university for more than two years, and during that time I have worked hard to lead Plymouth towards its mission of becoming a university of excellence, delivering world-class teaching and research, whilst serving the region.

Part of that vision must be to upgrade the quality of the campus environment so that it both supports and delivers excellence. I want our staff and students to benefit from working in a high-quality environment – the Portland Square building, the new library extension, plans for the Students’ Union and the Rowe Street building and the connections between them show how we could develop a superb city-centre campus in Plymouth.

Working in partnership with the city council, last year we outlined our strategic development principles for the campus area. We aim to:

- establish the campus as a vibrant and diverse area of central Plymouth
- break down barriers between the university and the city centre
- create better streets and public spaces
- develop an environment where pedestrians and cyclists have priority
- form a distinctive ‘cultural quarter’ on North Hill
- introduce new high quality architecture
- establish better gateways between the university and neighbouring areas
- create a distinctive skyline for central Plymouth.

In recent months, I have moved that strategic vision one step further, by commissioning architects to produce a strategic development plan for the Plymouth campus. They have now come back with some ideas of how we could improve our environment – and I would like to share these with staff and students.

Information will be available to all on the intranet by the end of January, but I would like to share my vision in person with any staff who are interested in contributing their thoughts. I have arranged two open meetings (see right), when I and Martin Berkien, Director of Learning Facilities, will present some of the ideas. This is a vision which will run well beyond my tenure here. It is a 15- or 20-year strategy, and the framework offers concepts rather than projects. But I do want to share it at this stage, because any capital development projects that we launch from now on will be linked to this vision.

I am excited at the outline proposals: they show how we can achieve a city-centre campus to be proud of. There would be some radical re-working of the campus, we would bring student accommodation on to site, earmark more public open spaces and green areas, create underground car-parking – and various other initiatives. I hope that you will want to join me to find out more.

1 February 1 – 2 pm, Devonport Lecture Theatre, Portland Square
3 February 4 – 5 pm, Devonport Lecture Theatre, Portland Square
IN December sixth-form students from 20 South West schools gathered at the university to create redevelopment plans for Plymouth’s Millbay area – one of the region’s top-priority regeneration sites.

The east part of the site has been purchased by the South West’s Regional Development Agency (SW RDA), with a view to delivering a major regeneration programme.

A hundred sixth-form pupils took up the challenge of the unique Schools Competition on Sustainable Development, organised by the university and the South West region of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Unique to the South West, the competition aims to expose sixth-formers to the challenges of urban regeneration, and to promote the importance of sustainable development.

The victors (above) were Torquay Girls’ School, who have now won the competition for three years running!

THE PRESS OFFICE NEEDS YOU!

The Press Office team within the Marketing & Communications Department is working with a PR agency, Grayling, on a national media campaign over the coming six months. We are looking for both feature ideas and news pieces that could make it on to Radio Four, the pages of Cosmo or Sky News – or a whole host of other titles.

Our purpose is to raise the university’s profile as an important UK centre for excellence in teaching and research. With the introduction of top-up fees looming, we believe it is important to start putting Plymouth on the map right now.

We desperately need your help in identifying stories which will be of interest to the whole of the UK – stories about research outcomes for example, or the achievements of staff and students. We also want to make more of our ‘experts’ available to journalists as the source of authoritative comment in their field.

Grayling will help us to identify forthcoming opportunities in the media’s news and features agenda and to ‘sell’ to journalists the stories that we put forward. But first we have to identify the stories...

What makes a news or feature story?

• ‘Breakthroughs’ or ‘firsts’ – including, but not just about, research (eg Plymouth has the UK’s first professor of dietetics; fish learning to tell the time)
• Research findings on ‘topical’ themes/issues eg weather and environment (global warming, weather change etc)
• Health (eg diet and obesity)
• Education (eg too much testing; too little time for exercise; bullying; texting)
• Computers/technology (eg young people spending too much time gaming etc)
• Anything that picks up the political agenda eg gambling, foxhunting, introduction of top-up fees
• Personal triumph/success against the odds – human interest stories that members of the public could relate to their own lives
• The ‘whacky/offbeat/fun’ story – eg research on whether monkeys could produce a work of literature left alone long enough with a keyboard
• Anything that can be ‘piggy-backed’ onto something else that is already happening eg diet features after Christmas, psychology of broken New Year’s resolutions, etc, themed days/weeks eg bring your daughter to work day
• Expert comment on news situation – eg Boscastle flooding; tanker going aground, etc – needs a rapid response
• Strong opinions if you feel you have something you wish to say on a topical issue which relates to your field of expertise
• Involvement of a big name/celebrity (eg Chelsea Clinton studying at Oxford)
• Statistics – surprising or very significant statistics
• Launch of new projects/partnerships eg student placements with Conrad Humphreys’ team.

For Press Office contact details please see inside front cover.
A n academic member of staff will soon be a familiar face to thousands of TV viewers thanks to his BBC2 series and the publication of his book.

In Journeys from the Centre of the Earth Dr Iain Stewart (right), a Senior Lecturer at the School of Earth, Ocean & Environmental Sciences and a presenter for the BBC’s Science Department, explores the Mediterranean – the cradle of Western civilisation – and discovers alongside its tranquil, sun-lapped shores one of the most volatile places on an ever-changing earth.

Iain shows how the rocks beneath our feet have shaped the history of the Mediterranean, demonstrating that geology is behind everything from the rise and fall of civilisations to religion, architecture and food.

“In this series I’m a kind of geological tour guide, travelling the Mediterranean to reveal the hidden side of some of the most familiar holiday destinations,” said Iain.”It was a great opportunity to get geology over to a mass audience, and one that goes beyond the usual ‘geo-porn’ of super-volcanoes, mega-tsunamis or dying dinosaurs to show how geology is pretty much central to our everyday lives.”

Journeys is due to air on BBC2 in February and the book, published by Century, is available from bookshops from 27 January, priced £20.

T he University is justifiably proud of its international students. As well gaining a qualification in their area of study and developing English language skills during their time here, their presence enriches our community.

However, many of these students can face considerable challenges studying in English and some tutors may have noticed that their international students would benefit from English language support.

“The students themselves appreciate how important it is to improve their level of English. What they may not know is that there is a range of support available, free of charge, to all international students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, at the university,” said Ricky Lowes, Programme Manager for In-Sessional English Language Support at the English Language Centre in the Plymouth Business School.

This is available through ELSIS (English Language Support for International Students), which provides expert tuition and support to non-native speakers.

“Currently, support comes in the form of weekly classes in academic writing, academic communication or survival English; personal one-to-one tutorials and email writing support,” adds Ricky. “We also run bespoke classes for certain courses where there is a high proportion of international students – these are funded by the requesting department.

Students can attend up to two classes a week and access the individual support as often as they need it.

“Students are enthusiastic about the sessions and appreciative of the help they get. As the term progresses and deadlines approach, the one-to-one sessions where students can get help with specific English problems or discuss a piece of work they have written or a text they have not understood become increasingly popular!”

If you think your students would benefit from English language support, they should contact Ricky on ext 3585/ email: ricky.lowes@plymouth.ac.uk
Equality update

• Did you know that the majority of taught postgraduates are women? The first student data report to provide baseline data on taught postgraduates as well as undergraduate students is now available at http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/equalopps/intranet.htm

• In November the Civil Partnership Act received royal assent. From this autumn, same-sex partnerships can be registered in law, and the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) will soon publish a leaflet detailing its impact on higher education providers.

• A series of equality developments were announced at the Queen’s Speech. Proposals were made for the following legislative developments:
  - The Gender Equality Bill/Disability Discrimination Bill, which will place a ‘positive duty’ on institutions to promote equality, bringing gender and disability legislation in line with the existing provisions for race. The ECU will be producing guidance leaflets for higher education institutions this year.
  - The Religious Hate Crime Bill, which will make it illegal to incite religious hatred and will extend the outlawing of religious discrimination, (implemented in the 2003 Religion and Belief Regulations), to goods and services.
  - A Commission for Equality and Human Rights will bring together all equality strands under one agency, replacing the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, and will assess performance of an institute’s public duty to promote equality. This will be operational by 2007.
  - The university’s Equal Opportunities Development Unit will be convening a working party to discuss the impact and implementation of the new legislation. If you’d like to be part of this, get in contact. The unit has moved to 4 Portland Villas – other contact details remain the same, ext 3973 email:eodevelopment@plymouth.ac.uk

The move of the Faculty of Arts’ School of Media & Photography to the Plymouth campus has made possible the launch of an exciting new degree – complete with state-of-the-art facilities at the newly renovated Scott Building.

Jointly taught by staff in the School of Sociology, Politics & Law and the School of Media & Photography, BA (Hons) Media Practice and Society is a challenging course focusing on the central role the media plays within contemporary society.

The degree combines practical media production skills with a sound grounding in sociological analysis and research methods skills.

Students are making the most of the new facilities, including dark rooms and state-of-the-art computer equipment, housed in the re-designed Scott Building.

“While the new integrated course does not claim to offer students a passport to working within the media, it will provide the chance to critically analyse the changing nature of reporting, considering, for example, why and how events become newsworthy at any point in time,” said Colin Searls, BA Combined Arts Co-ordinator.

“Simultaneously, students will be involved in developing assignments in the new facilities through video, photography and sound.”

“This is a very exciting development,” said Dr Alison Anderson, Programme Co-ordinator for the new degree.

“We have done a lot of research into the views of potential employers and their feedback has been built into the design of the course.”
A design company set up by four University of Plymouth graduates is receiving interest from across the globe, thanks to its latest hi-tech creation.

HMC Entertainment Systems has devised Eye Borg, an eye-piece that could improve the lives of thousands of colour blind and partially sighted people. It works by being connected to a computer carried on the person’s back and can distinguish colours by ‘hearing’ differences in the wave patterns.

The device has already won international acclaim, with HMC beating competition from 28 countries to take first prize at the recent Europix Multimedia Design Awards, which will give them the opportunity to promote Eye Borg at several exhibitions.

Adam Montandon, who gained a first-class honours degree in mediablab arts at the university before studying MSc Digital Futures here, set up HMC last year with fellow graduates Korash Sanjideh, Mike Cobb and Andy Early.

“I have been interested in cybernetics for a long time, and I was giving a talk at Dartington College about using technology to extend the senses,” he said. “After the talk, a student called Neil Harbisson came up and said he was completely colour blind and we took it from there.”

Then followed seven months of research by Adam and his colleagues with Neil, who has a rare condition meaning that he can only see in black and white, and Eye Borg was born.

“With development, Eye Borg could eventually be as small as a personal stereo or MP3 player,” said Adam.

“It’s the closest you can get to hearing what colours sound like and it has helped Neil, a painter and musician, to paint in colour with surprising accuracy.

“We’ve had a lot of interest from colour blind and partially sighted people.”

To find out more about HMC Entertainment and Eye Borg, contact 0845 2011462 or visit www.hmc.uk.net/
It's a little-known fact that the university boasts the country's main centre of expertise on elections, providing data for government departments such as the Home Office and to international media including Sky TV.

Professors of Politics Colin Rallings (right) and Michael Thrasher (left) are the brains behind the Local Government Chronicle Election Centre (LGCEC), tucked away in Caprera Cottage on North Road East, Plymouth campus. They started writing about elections in 1984 so have recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of being experts in this field.

"When we started compiling electoral data no-one else was doing it because it was seen as too complex," said Professor Rallings, who has acted as Special Adviser to House of Commons' Select Committee enquiries on both postal voting and electoral registration.

"However, it wasn't long before people began to knock our door down to get at this unique information!"

The LGCEC was named after the magazine Local Government Chronicle, which has sponsored the centre since 1989. Once local media started using Rallings' and Thrasher's material it was only a matter of time before national - and indeed international media - followed suit. The duo has written about elections for the Sunday Times since 1986 - with Professor Rallings regularly appearing on ITN's general election results programmes and Professor Thrasher having a similar role with Sky News.

Their data is so well respected it is regularly used to support policy-oriented work and to answer Parliamentary Questions by government departments such as the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department of Transport, as well as by bodies like the Electoral Commission, the Audit Commission, and the Local Government Association.

"Our work is also the base for significant academic achievements," added Professor Rallings. "We have been 'flagged' for the quality of our work in each of the last two Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs), and we have earned some £500,000 in Research Council funding alone since the 2001 RAE. Currently, we are involved in projects on how people engage in European elections, and on explaining the outcome of the referendum on regional government in the North East."

Professor Chris Harris and his team at the Centre for Theoretical & Computational Neuroscience have been awarded £104,000 by a national charity to help them study eye movement abnormalities in children with neurometabolic disease.

Inherited metabolic diseases are a group of over 1,500 conditions in which the body does not produce the correct amount of one or more enzymes needed for normal metabolic function. Most of these diseases are at birth and the brain is often affected as well.

The conditions, which are notoriously difficult to diagnose, are very serious and often fatal, causing untold misery to thousands of families all over the world. Diet can help in some of these conditions but, until recently, there has been no treatment for most metabolic conditions.

"Amazing advances have been made recently in molecular and genetic medicine and there is no doubt that we are entering a new era of potential treatments for these dire diseases, providing hope for many families," said Professor Harris.

"Lives could be saved if diagnosis can be correctly made and treatments started early enough. This places an extraordinary emphasis on measuring brain function in infants and young children so that we can test how well new therapies work.

In our laboratory we will measure babies' eye movements as this will tell us how well the brain is working with minimal co-operation."

"We are extremely grateful to Cerebra for this grant. It is a landmark for the research effort in the inherited metabolic diseases, which are so devastating to so many, yet so often overlooked by other funding agencies."
The university’s 1:1 Mentoring Scheme has received praise from local teachers who say they have seen ‘considerable improvement’ in their pupils’ performance since taking part in the initiative.

The scheme is an initiative developed from the National Mentoring Pilot Project (NMPP). University students volunteer to be mentors and provide ‘one-on-one’ help for pupils (between the ages of 11 and 18) who’ve been identified as being in danger of failing to achieve their full potential.

The project, which focuses on children attending Parkside and Tamarside schools in Plymouth, aims to help such pupils to be successful in their studies; to improve their grades in school assessments, SATS and external examinations; and, where appropriate, to progress to further or higher education.

“Since the school’s involvement in the programme we have seen a considerable improvement in the pupils’ performance,” said Chris Ling, Deputy Head Teacher at Parkside Community Technical College. “Our percentage of five A*–C grade at GCSE level has risen from 15% in 2002 to 33% in 2003 and 43% in 2004 and we feel this is mainly down to our strong relationship with the University of Plymouth’s Mentoring Programme.”

“The personal development that our undergraduate mentors go through is amazing,” said Jayne Stanyer, the university’s Widening Participation Development Worker. “A high percentage find that they want to be teachers and go on to apply for a PGCE in their final year.”

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- The sessions are approximately 30 minutes to an hour once a week.
- Each university mentor is allocated three/four pupils, and pupils are usually seen individually, but can be seen in their groups of three or four.
- The student and pupil build a relationship in the first instance. Then they draw up a programme of work that is specifically designed to address individual learning and development needs. The mentors aren’t teachers but they help to reinforce key learning messages.
- The mentors provide pupils with support, advice, guidance, information and encouragement, mainly drawn from their own experience of school. One of their main aims is to help break down old beliefs, such as “university isn’t for the likes of me” and “university is for rich and clever people”.
- This academic year the university has placed 12 students at Parkside, mentoring approximately 51 pupils in years 10 and 11, and 47 students at Tamarside, mentoring approximately 188 pupils in years 10, 11, 12 and 13.
Launched last May, Peninsula Arts has now been up and running for nine months. The force behind the programme, Mike Hope, Director of Arts & Exhibitions, and Simon Ible, Director of Music, reflect on happenings during that time - and look forward to the diverse and inspiring events that lie ahead.

“This has been the most exciting job I have ever had,” said Mike. “Every single day brings new challenges and we’ve undergone a huge amount of on-the-job learning. Dealing with so many individuals and organisations – a combination of the well established and the up and coming – has been a heady mix, and at times an administrative and organisational nightmare! We have come an awfully long way and what really set the last nine months apart was seeing the success of such a coherent programme where the music, lectures and exhibitions were created as a whole and dovetailed together so effectively.

“Simon and I hadn’t worked together before Peninsula Arts but we’ve developed an amazing ability to pick up, improve and run with each other’s ideas. In addition, we’ve developed a strong friendship – in fact, the building where we’re based is now famous for ‘rocking with laughter’! We have also had the invaluable contribution of another person who has become a good friend, Brian Norris, the third member of the team, whose support and business acumen has kept us grounded.

“We’ve been hugely encouraged by the success of Friends of Peninsula Arts and the dedicated core of supporters we have attracted. And university staff – everyone from designers and the Press Office to admin, security and catering staff - have worked extremely hard to ensure the programme’s success. We couldn’t do it without them.

“The quality of events has been outstanding, and a personal high has been that staging of the Henrion exhibition, the largest-ever exhibition of arguably the single most important designer of the 20th century.

“But this is just the beginning for Peninsula Arts. Already we have amazing events planned for up to the end of next year. The Intimate Space exhibition, including the controversial work of four exceptionally talented female artists, is currently on display in the university’s CUBE3 Gallery, and next year’s programme includes staging the Treasures of the Deep exhibition, which will include the famous Nanking Treasure Cargo, with Mike Hatcher, the man who recovered it, making a personal appearance.

“The great thing about Peninsula Arts is that it supports such a rich diversity of music.”

“The great thing about Peninsula Arts is that it supports such a rich diversity of music and, in particular, a wealth of contemporary styles,” said Simon. “The official launch kicked us off with a specially composed avant-garde fanfare performed by jazz trumpeter Byron Wallen, the Ten Tors Orchestra premiered Dr Eduardo Miranda’s Triptych for Distributed Strings, and the University Choral Society will premiere Clive Jenkins’ The Mayflower Pilgrims on 21 May.

“The university is quickly establishing itself as an important European institution for contemporary music and computer-based musicological research and will host - from 25 to 27 February - a Contemporary Music Weekend, featuring contributions from staff and students who are all accomplished musicians in their own right.

(Left & right) Anna Gillespie’s exhibits at Intimate Space
“We are also presenting a dynamic line-up of contemporary jazz musicians, starting on 29 January with the 2004 BBC Jazz Award winner Richard Fairhurst and his sextet.

“The success of all these events rests on the support of the university and also the increasing investment of corporate sponsors, such as the Arts Council and Making Music.”

More Peninsula Arts information is available at www.peninsula-arts.com

If you would like to receive regular mailings about forthcoming events, just fill in and return the form below.

I would like to receive information about forthcoming Peninsula Arts events. Please include my details on the mailing list:

Prof/Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss
Full Name: ____________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________

____________________________________________
Postcode: ______________
Tel. No. _____________________
Email: _________________________________

RETURN TO: Peninsula Arts
2 Endsleigh Place, University of Plymouth,
Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AA
A round-up of where the university has appeared prominently in recent weeks

- The university’s innovative new MSc in zoo conservation, run in partnership with Paignton Zoo, was featured in an Independent article on new degrees that provide hands-on experience of wildlife conservation. The one-year programme, the only one of its kind in Britain, covers ecology and animal nutrition - with one of its aims being to train the curators and zoo directors of the future.

- Artificial intelligence expert Dr Eduardo Miranda was in demand after BBC Radio Four showed interest in his research into how music affects us. Eduardo, a Reader in Artificial Intelligence and Music, has found new ways in which the brain recognises notes and translates this into music. His interview was broadcast in a piece called ‘Music and the Mind’.

- A scheme to encourage people to turn to self-help books instead of pills to tackle the symptoms of depression attracted nationwide coverage. Senior Lecturer in Health Psychology Dr Paul Farrand, who set up the ‘bibliotherapy’ scheme, was interviewed by the BBC for its BBC Online service, the Radio Four Today programme and Radio 5 Live, as well as articles in the Guardian and Observer, the Telegraph and the Times and Sunday Times. Self-help clinics are being set up in GP surgeries and run by the university’s mental health graduates (see page 18).

- The undergraduate degree in cruise ship management was featured in an Independent article on exciting opportunities available for graduates interested in a life at sea. Plymouth’s course, which is the first of its kind in the UK, is cited as ‘catering for the growing sophistication and scale of the cruise industry’. The industry is keen to attract more recruits at graduate level and students on the course benefit from a year’s placement on-board some of Princess Cruises’ most prestigious liners.

- Lizzie Ridout, a member of staff in the Faculty of Arts, has been causing a stir at the Newlyn Gallery with her exhibition, Tanks & Tablecloths.

  The exhibition - a joint venture between Lizzie and Elizabeth Haven - is an ongoing project. The duo are now working on a website that will form part of their archive.

  Lizzie, a graduate of the Royal College of Art who runs a design company, Empress, joined the university last January and lectures on the graphic communication with typography degree.

  “The project identifies common themes between the military and the domestic - our areas of interest,” said Lizzie.

  “This research underpins a series of continuing visual responses, which will be documented and supported in chapters of an ‘exploded book’. The book is ‘exploded’ in the sense that it will progressively radiate as ideas grow to become a continually multiplying unbound volume.

  “Both the military and the domestic world can be defined by a desire for control. The obsessive tidying of the housewife can be equated to the pedantic spit and polish of the Sergeant Major. The Sergeant Major deploys endless chores to pacify the ranks. The housewife fights a constant, circuitous battle against the accumulation of dust and dirt, which quietly threatens to overrun the home and destroy it, just as ivy creeps into the cracks of pillboxes and rust eats into the hulls of obsolete submarines.”

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EX IN THE NEWS

Alan Petersen, Professor of Sociology of Health & Illness, has recently published a new book, Engendering Emotions.

The book has chapters that cover gender, emotion and war (with some analysis of gender in the the Iraq war), plus love, intimacy and sex, and ‘emotional literacy’ and the future.

To find out more, visit the publisher’s website at www.palgrave.com
The hundreds of students, families and friends who packed Plymouth Pavilions for the December graduation were joined by three distinguished people who received special awards from the university.

Professor John Morrow (right) was presented with a Doctor of Science (DSc) award*. Professor Morrow, who received a PhD from Plymouth in 1977, is based at the Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, where he is furthering his work on the development of new vaccines, with a particular focus on AIDS.

Honorary graduates were Derek O’Neill and Alan Harper. Derek, Managing Director and Chief Executive of Billabong International, was presented with a Master of Science award. Having joined the company in its early days, he has played a leading part in Billabong’s development as global brand with surf and extreme sports apparel and accessories selling in more than 90 countries and has provided much support for the university’s unique surf science and technology degree since its launch in 1999.

Alan, founder of the Plastech TT company, which specialises in resin transfer moulding (RTM) technology, developing new mould and machine designs for in-house use, received a Master of Engineering award. As well as supporting the university’s undergraduate project work, Alan has worked closely with the Advance Composites Manufacturing Centre since it was established in 1987.

* The award of Doctor of Science is made to graduates of the university who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of scientific knowledge. The applicant submits details of their scientific work, which is examined by three independent referees. The work submitted must be of very high distinction, establishing that the applicant is a leading authority in their field.

Tracy Wilson, the university’s Head of Marketing (Commercial), on the latest developments at University of Plymouth Enterprise.

• National Enterprise Week - In November the university participated in this, supporting the vision set out for Plymouth as the best place to start and develop successful businesses. We took part in several events throughout the week...

An educational theme day was aimed at local teachers and the 10 - 14 age group. Steve Edmunds from the Faculty of Technology had a stand promoting STOP, an interactive science and technology opportunities project, which proved one of the most popular exhibits.

The Enterprising Plymouth dinner, hosted by the Evening Herald, was attended by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roland Levinson, and Professor Steven Parissien, Dean of the Faculty of Arts. The evening included the presentation of the Abercrombie Design Awards sponsored by the university, in which the institution’s Portland Square building was highly commended.

Our stand at the Rebuilding Plymouth Theme Day and Enterprising Plymouth exhibition was well attended, and Professor Parissien gave a presentation on ‘Cultural Renaissance in Plymouth’. This was followed by an event we organised at which our Centres of Expertise demonstrated how they apply research for business innovation. We also played host to all those in Plymouth providing entrepreneur support, with a view to hosting a major entrepreneurship conference this spring.

The week ended with a ‘breakfast briefing’ at the Moathouse, attended by over 200 representatives of industry, the public sector and the local community, underlining the university’s commitment to, and engagement with, Plymouth and the region.

• Making Waves - The university recently took the lead in an exciting new video project aimed at promoting, through global broadcast media, cutting-edge research being carried out in universities across the region. London-based Research TV were on campus filming our pioneering research in harnessing the power of waves to provide clean energy.

Filming included interviews with Senior Lecturer in Geomatics Dr Samantha Lavender, Director of Enterprise Dr John Chudley and Fraser Johnson, Managing Director of university spin-out company ORECon, which is developing the South West’s first offshore wave energy device.
Staff on the Plymouth campus may have noticed some changes to the Document Production Centre (DPC) in Kirkby Terrace – the new glass front and reception area are just two. John Trewhella, Design Liaison Officer, explains some of the other changes within the department.

“DPC was formed in August last year following a review by Wyse Solutions. Wyse recommended streamlining the service, building on our in-house experience to manage the university’s design and print needs, and complementing this with contracts for external design and print. For example, we used to undertake the majority of print work in house but we now outsource this work to local, national and indeed international companies, managing this process through each production stage.

“One of these companies is CATS, based in Swindon, which takes care of our digital mono and colour digital printing. They work 24/7 and have a vast array of equipment so, depending on the complexity of a job, it can be turned around quickly and efficiently, producing colour printing for teaching materials. Local companies like Deltor in Saltash (who print this magazine) and Rickards in the city centre produce most of our offset litho work.

“The materials we produce range from business cards to large exhibitions and corporate publications like the undergraduate prospectus. We have an in-house design team and three external design agencies offering a wide variety of creative options for publications. We can also design large-format posters and exhibition stands and these are printed by Servicepoint in Exeter. Many staff will be familiar with the work produced by our in-house photographer, Lloyd Russell.

“Our new facilities in Kirkby Terrace have given us a much-improved working environment. Anyone who wants to know more about DPC can visit our community on the staff portal or ring me for information.”

John can be contacted on ext 2487/email: john.trewhella@plymouth.ac.uk

Part-time lecturer Sue Kelley’s commitment and contribution to equality and diversity within training has been recognised at national level.

Sue, who combines lecturing within the Faculty of Education with her work as an Equality & Diversity Manager for the Directorate of Education for Arts & Libraries (EAL) at Devon County Council, recently received a National Training Award. Her achievement is all the more outstanding given that she suffers from generalised dystonia, which means that her muscles contract but don’t relax – a condition that affects her sight, speech, and ability to walk.

During the 25 years since the onset of her illness, Sue has gained an Open University degree in social sciences, a teaching qualification and a masters degree and is currently planning to complete a PhD.

“|am overwhelmed. Winning this award means a great deal to me,” said Sue. “It not only recognises the value of the work which I have undertaken individually but it also emphasises that, like most managers, I could not have succeeded without the constant support of, and valuable contributions made by my family, my training and development team and my EAL colleagues alike.”
As reported in the last edition of UPfront, the university is participating in the Royal Society's MP Pairing Scheme, helping MPs to gain a better understanding of what scientists do and vice versa.

In December, Dr Richard Kirby, who is based at the School of Biological Sciences, welcomed Plymouth MP Linda Gilroy, who spent an afternoon hearing about Dr Kirby's work and learning how to obtain DNA from the microscopic plankton on a coffee cup she used.

“I may not use my new-found DNA testing techniques in the House of Commons tea room in the future, but I’m sure I have a far better idea of the issues affecting the work of scientists and how I and other politicians can help,” said Mrs Gilroy, adding that it was vital to make the most of the ten-year Science & Innovation Framework published by the Chancellor.

The scheme – part of the Royal Society’s science in society programme, which aims to boost public confidence in science – is in its fourth year.

This year has been its most successful year yet, involving 26 MP/scientist pairings.

To date more than 100 MPs and scientists have taken part.

David Boak of the Royal Society, who was involved in setting up the programme, said its aim was to make scientists more ‘streetwise’ in their understanding of the political process.

“Scientists probably don’t get drawn into the political process to the extent that could help them and help politicians as well,” he said.

“By giving MPs and scientists the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what one another do, scientists will be much better placed to take actions to influence the political process.”

Above: Linda Gilroy MP with Dr Richard Kirby.
Atrium opens

One of the key features of the £15-million campus redesign at Somerset College of Art and Technology has been officially opened by celebrity chef Raymond Blanc.

Combined with the earlier completed conference and enterprise centre, the purpose-built engineering workshop and the forthcoming health and social care centre, the Atrium provides an architectural centrepiece of modern facilities. It houses the spacious main reception and shopping mall area, and is home to most of the College’s service industries division – covering areas such as beauty, leisure, sport, travel and tourism, business, hotel management and catering.

Great foundations

Students on Duchy College’s unique foundation degree in equine behaviour and training are undertaking exciting work placements in locations as diverse as Newmarket and the plains of Africa.

Second-year student Nicky Morgan recently returned from her stint as a research assistant in Africa, where she was involved in monitoring the behavioural patterns, social interactions, diet and surroundings of the Greyvi’s zebra within protected areas. This was done in order to compare the conditions to those in unprotected areas to aid understanding of the threats and challenges facing this endangered species.

Another second-year, Liz Done, is in the privileged position of being permitted to carry out research at the National Stud, Newmarket. She is studying the relationship between pre-weaning social behaviour in foals and racing performance in thoroughbred horses.

Foundation degree work placements can also involve riding instruction or training with top competitors in the showjumping and dressage worlds. Choices are left to the students, with guidance provided by tutors, programme managers, former students and contacts within the industry.

UPC students graduate

Well over a thousand University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC) students graduated in a series of nine ceremonies throughout the region in the autumn.

From Somerset to Plymouth, from Jersey to Truro, family and friends turned up in their hundreds to see loved ones receive their awards.

“The events have marked an important milestone for everyone concerned,” said Dr Ian Tunbridge, Dean of UPC. “The graduates have all worked hard to obtain their qualification and they richly deserve our respect and admiration.”

Cornwall College graduate Adelaide Hall (below) was awarded the UPC Student Prize for Outstanding Achievement. Adelaide is a mature student from Falmouth who started with an Access to HE course and then went on to a foundation degree in Computer Networking. She achieved a distinction and has now progressed to the final year of an honours degree in Multimedia Computing at the University.

Bristol shines

The City of Bristol College has been awarded the coveted Learning & Skills Beacon status for excellence and innovation within the sector. It is the only college in the West of England area – and only one of three in the South West – to gain this accolade.

The award, supported and funded through the Learning & Skills Council west of England, is held for three years and recognises the achievements of the college in delivering teaching and learning of the highest quality, supported by a well-led management team. It also means the college has £400,000 of additional funding to help improve educational standards in the region.

“We are absolutely delighted to have been granted the prestigious Beacon status,” said Principal Keith Elliott. “It reinforces the college’s outstanding achievements of the last few years and puts us firmly on the map as one of the region’s foremost learning providers.”
Kris Talikowski, Finance and Communications Officer, reports on the latest happenings in the Students’ Union.

**Spike is launched**

How safe is your drink?
That is the question highlighted by the SU’s innovative ‘Spike’ campaign, which we launched in December.

Headed up by SU Welfare Officer, Tom Grigor, and supported by the local police and Plymouth MP Linda Gilroy, Spike is helping to push the responsible drinking message and make drinkers aware that leaving their tipple unattended – even for a few seconds – can be dangerous.

Armed with special Spike clips that can be attached to glasses, our band of campaigners took to the nightclubs of Plymouth to drive the message home. They were joined by Linda, who was so impressed by what she saw that she hopes to get the team along to bars in the Houses of Parliament to raise the profile of the campaign. In addition, the National Union of Students has expressed interest in rolling out the scheme to universities throughout the UK.

The Spike launch fits neatly with UPSU’s focus on corporate social responsibility and the SU bar’s responsible approach to drinking. “The union offers students good value for money, but does not encourage excessive drinking” said Joff Cooke, General Manager.

**Joining the fight**

Last year, students marched the streets of London to demonstrate against fees – this year, we trod Welsh soil in a bid to crush fees in Wales, where the fees vote was won by a majority of one.

“If Scotland, Ireland and Wales don’t have fees, it puts more pressure on our government to revoke its decision to charge students more for their education,” said the SU’s Education Officer Brendan McDonald. “As a union, we believe students should not be left with debt of up to £25,000, which is what they will face when top-up fees come in.”
An innovative scheme launched earlier this month is providing a new approach for the treatment of depression and anxiety.

Under the self-help book prescription scheme, which is led by Dr Paul Farrand, a health psychologist at the university, and designed in collaboration with partner libraries and primary care trusts across Devon, patients with mild to moderate anxiety and depression will be directed to a self-help clinic by their GP. Within the clinic the patient’s psychological difficulties will be assessed and they will receive a prescription for a self-help book chosen from a list of 35 titles, tailored to meet their individual needs. They will be asked to take this prescription to their local library where they will receive the self-help book.

Informally, many GPs, psychiatrists and psychologists already recommend books to patients, and this new scheme – which has been welcomed by mental health charities including Mind – acknowledges growing evidence that self-help works.

In Devon, any professional with mental health responsibilities will be able to adopt the self-help scheme. However, the new profession of graduate mental health workers who have received extensive training run the self-help clinics and offer patients support and guidance in the use of self-help.

Graduate mental health workers – most of whom have a background in psychology – began work in primary care trusts across Devon and Cornwall in 2004. Their role is to offer short-term limited psychological therapy to patients with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. A major part of their role is in the provision and support of self-help psychological therapy.

“The book prescription scheme has enormous potential for the treatment of mild to moderate psychological difficulties,” said Dr Farrand. “It offers patients an easily accessible service with no waiting list to help them take control of their psychological difficulties whilst offering GPs a viable alternative to placing patients upon medication or long waiting lists.”

“Plymouth Library Services is pleased to be able to support the scheme,” said Ann Henderson, Information Services Manager for Plymouth Library Services. “We hope that patients coming to our libraries with a book prescription will also take advantage of these.

“Our library staff are trained in customer care and present a welcoming, friendly and helpful service to all users. Additional awareness training has been given to staff in all libraries in readiness for the launch of the scheme.”
THE Contract Research Online Survey (CROS), which was first used at the university in 2003, will be launched again in March. The project helps higher education institutions to develop, launch and analyse web-based surveys aimed at contract research staff. The surveys gather information on a range of issues, including personnel management, career development, training, communication and human resources administration processes, and should enable the university to evaluate the impact of any change of practice or new initiatives on the working lives of contract research staff.

Since the previous survey, action has been taken on a number of the concerns expressed. You can find this information in the Staff Development community on the staff portal.

Small ads

APARTMENTS FOR RENT: In historic Pont-Aven, near the Brittany coast. Large garden and barbecue area. Contact 0033(0)298 091508 or visit www.giteholiday.com for more details.

TO LET: Ski holiday house in France set in the picturesque hamlet of Beranger, a few minutes’ drive from St Martin de Belleville. Includes two double bedrooms (one en suite), a bunk room, shower room, kitchen and beautiful log cabin style sitting/dining room with balcony overlooking mountains. Contact Rhona and Jeremy Prichard, 01752 563363 or email Anne Marie Vullierme at amv@eligor.com for details.

CONCERTS
A Plymouth Chamber Music concert. 7.30 pm Upper Lecture Theatre, Sherwell Centre 22 January Simon Crawford Phillips and Philip Moore (piano duo) 19 February London Mozart Trio 12 March Fujita Piano Trio Tickets from alice.li@plymouth.ac.uk, ext 3988, Security Lodge Reception or at the door.

University of Plymouth Orchestra Spring Concert 11 March, 8 pm Davy Main Hall Directed by Simon Ible. Free admission but parting donations are invited.

University of Plymouth Choral Society and the Sherwell Chamber Ensemble Spring Concert 12 March, 7.30 pm St Andrew’s Church, Royal Parade, Plymouth. Directed by Simon Ible. Tickets from Plymouth Music Shop, Mayflower Street, Plymouth Tel: 01752 670403.

EXHIBITION
To 11 February
Exhibition by Sarah Keys
Venue: Sherwell Centre, Plymouth campus.
Contact nicola.griffin@plymouth.ac.uk for details.

LECTURES
Details about forthcoming lectures and seminars can be found under the ‘news and events’ section on the university website, www.plymouth.ac.uk.

For further details of the events listed here and any other 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 should email alice.li@plymouth.ac.uk with details, giving at least one week’s notice. Diary items for the next UPfront should be submitted by 3 February.
HATS OFF!

Graduates celebrate receiving their awards at the December ceremonies.