Sowing the seeds of sustainability
Preparing for tomorrow’s challenges
New research posts boost learning
Innovative schemes for mature students

University of Plymouth
the enterprise university
Welcome to the third edition of Enterprise, where we have chosen to showcase our links across the region and beyond. This edition demonstrates a wide range of projects and activities conducted through partnerships, underlining the University’s unique approach to collaborative working.

Universities are places of discovery – through learning and research, sharing, developing and indeed creating knowledge. In the past, they have sometimes been perceived as ‘ivory towers’, somewhat removed from the communities they serve in order to pursue the higher order scholarship activities that distinguish them. However, this perception of academics working in isolation, separate from the responsibilities of society and funders, is outdated.

There is a new model emerging – that of the connected university – not separate, but deeply relevant to society and firmly engaged with its stakeholders, delivering in response to demands to drive up economic competitiveness and social inclusion. This new model maintains its commitment to knowledge creation, dissemination, innovation and transfer, but pursues its mission in partnership in order to sustain and enrich its academic offer.

Today, as universities, we need to demonstrate how we add value and how investing in higher education and research benefits our economy and society at large. In essence, universities need to be more firmly connected with both place and people. While learning is still pursued for its own sake, there is a deeper awareness of how it can add value – both in terms of transforming lives and in helping society make progress through innovation.

For example, back in March we announced exciting plans for a new world-class marine facility to be developed on our campus. This new facility will house the UK’s most advanced wave tank testing facilities and marine researchers will have access to state-of-the-art simulators and monitoring equipment alongside a bespoke coastal research vessel. The University will be the only institution in the UK to offer such a combination of facilities. This development helps position Plymouth as a global centre for marine energy research and will support the marine sector and the economy. The project is being part funded by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, alongside University funds.

These plans are part of a wider £25million City Legacy Project in which the University is playing a key role as a partner in the newly formed Plymouth Science and Innovation Programme, together with Plymouth City Council, Tamar Science Park and the SWRDA. In partnership across the region, we are developing a strategy aimed at creating jobs, businesses and economic success based on higher level skills and enterprise.

I am also delighted that, in partnership with Tamar Science Park, we recently secured a contract from Cornwall Council, fighting off strong competition, to manage the Pool Innovation Centre – the first of its kind in the county of Cornwall. This landmark £12million, purpose-built centre is set to open summer 2010, and will have space for 49 offices of varying sizes, shared meeting rooms and a conference facility, which have all been designed to meet the highest environmental standards.

We are inspired by – indeed shaped by – the people, the places and the world around us. These pages represent just a snapshot of our activities and excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation. If you would like to find out more or join us on our journey, please email enterprise@plymouth.ac.uk

Professor Wendy Purcell
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
From developing online authentication systems to tracking down cyber fraudsters, the University of Plymouth has a long history of excellence in IT security research. Students benefit hugely from research-informed teaching in partnership with the Centre for Security, Communications and Network Research (CSCAN).

Research-based content feeds directly into courses in areas such as user authentication, cybercrime and forensic investigation, and usable security technologies. “Research-informed teaching has clear advantages for students, exposing them to the latest advances in their domain as well as offering an opportunity to link delivery directly to contributions being made at Plymouth,” says Professor Steve Furnell, Director of CSCAN.

This approach delivers results. Our students swept the board at a 2009/10 dissertation competition run by the London Chapter of ISACA (an internationally recognised provider of professional certifications in IT assurance, security and governance). Against competition from several other UK universities, Plymouth took all three prizes (collectively worth £2,000). The winning papers were featured in international conferences and journals, and one was even used to inform a whitepaper for the European Network and Security Agency (ENISA). Using research to inform teaching has lead to national recognition and international partnerships.

The international nature of security research also offers an opportunity for student engagement beyond Plymouth. Members of the newly formed University of Plymouth Security Society have just had the chance to meet and exchange ideas with students from the Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences in Hagenberg, who have successfully run their own Security Forum event for the last seven years.
Internet security experts at the University have played a major role in the development and endorsement of an online e-safety tool for schools, developed by the South West Grid for Learning Trust.

The 360 degree safe Self Review Tool assesses the quality of each school’s e-safety provision and has so far been used by over 200 educational establishments.

The University of Plymouth’s CSCAN was part of the group responsible for the production of the tool, and has since given its official endorsement of the process. Members of CSCAN, who are recognised experts in the internet security and online safety fields, conducted an independent evaluation which involved feedback on the content and structure of the assessment method, alongside practical trialling of the tool.

CSCAN was able to confirm that the tool offers best practice for schools to review, challenge and improve their e-safety provision. Professor Steve Furnell, Director, CSCAN, said:

“"We believe this will have a significant impact in assessing and improving e-safety provision in schools across the South West and beyond.”

We are also involved in providing official accreditation for e-Safety Assessors in schools, proving that they have received training in how to use the tool.

Feedback from schools using the tool has also been excellent. Julie Bowden, E-Safety Coordinator at St Mark’s School, Weston super Mare, said:

“"The 360 degree safe online tool was easy to login to and use. The tool generates very comprehensive reports which were useful to identify areas of strong performance and where we had room to improve, giving practical suggestions for action.”

Information Security & Privacy Workshop

enterprise in action

Improving e-safety for schools
Preparing for tomorrow’s challenges

With mounting awareness of the challenging socio-economic and ecological trends that will affect students during their working lives, embedding sustainability in the educational process is high on our agenda.

The Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF) has worked over the last five years to promote sustainability ideas and principles in policy and practice across the University. One example has been a series of ‘sustainability training’ workshops, so far delivered to over 600 people within and outside Plymouth. Developed after two years’ research, these focused on engaging students and staff directly with sustainability by providing individuals with opportunities to explore the impact of their values, attitudes and beliefs.

The sessions, which can be up to eight hours long, follow a structured developmental approach that helps individuals to make personal sense of the otherwise abstract terminology and connect with the underlying issues using photographic images. Paul Murray, who developed the training techniques, says:

"The overall purpose is to provide participants with the confidence and motivation to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that will maximise the positive contribution they can make to sustainability and to their own, personal wellbeing. Responses from the workshops are overwhelmingly positive and research is now planned to assess any values and attitudinal shifts resulting from the activities, so that we can determine the overall effectiveness of the scheme."

We are looking to embed this good practice by establishing a Research Centre for Education for Sustainable Development, which will work with the Pedagogic Research Institute (PedRio). For example, Dr Debby Cotton and others in the Teaching and Learning Directorate, are currently investigating whether students understand sustainable messages on campus.
Research is at the heart of the University’s activities, and one of our core aims is to ensure that research-led teaching becomes standard practice across the board.

To encourage closer links between research and teaching activities, the University of Plymouth is currently establishing a Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory (PedRio). It aims to influence institutional, national and international agendas in learning and teaching as well as building the confidence and capacity of staff to engage in research in the broad field of pedagogic endeavours.

PedRio provides a cross-University platform to share knowledge and best practice for the benefit of staff and students of the University and the wider community – in areas like sustainable development, information and communications technology and professional and work-related learning. It will explore research issues in fields such as new patterns of graduate employability, changing employer requirements, the staff training needs of local businesses and the promotion of sustainability both in the world of work and more widely.

PedRio will provide the raw material for a scholarly, research-informed and evidence-based approach to teaching and the shaping of our students’ wider learning experience. It provides a bridge between our teaching and our research strategies says Professor Brian Chalkley, Director of Teaching and Learning.

When I teach about qualitative data analysis I draw on examples from my research in Education for Sustainable Development so my students gain from working with real research data, enabling research-led and research-orientated teaching.

Debby Cotton, Education Development Coordinator.
The University has boosted its already impressive research record through the creation of a substantial cohort of fully-funded research studentships.

We are currently ranked within the top 50 UK Universities for research, with 80 per cent of our research judged as being of international repute, according to the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). On the back of this achievement, Plymouth aspires to expand its research student population and to double the level of current activity.

In October 2009, 33 full-time Research studentships commenced, selected from an original line-up of 278 well-qualified and highly motivated candidates, (holding a 1st class or 2.1 honours, along with a masters qualification and experience of research).

The successful candidates were selected and mapped directly with the relevant University strategic priority subject areas. They include David Jones (Marine and Maritime), who is researching the chemistry and toxicology of novel marine pollutants, Emma Whittlesea (Biomedical and Biology), who is investigating controlling gestational weight gain in obese women, and Iain Channing (Law), whose work is entitled ‘From Blackshirts to Bombers: Social Fragmentation, Extremism and Public Responses’.

We see our researchers as innovators and entrepreneurs; and value people who are passionate about delivering excellent, sustainable research. And we encourage interdisciplinary working, urging researchers to develop synergies across different research subjects, both within and beyond the University says Professor John Scott, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research.
Two years after the University launched its Fast Track two-year honours degree in Business Management, the course is fast gaining in popularity – applications for next year are more than 100 per cent up on the same time last year.

We developed our two year BSc to fill a gap in the portfolio of Business and Management honours degrees and as a response to government-sponsored initiatives to encourage greater enterprise, flexibility and efficiency in the provision of undergraduate learning opportunities.

For students, there are many attractive aspects of a two-year course. For a start, it’s less expensive, and there are also financial gains from entering the workplace a year earlier. It provides evidence to employers of a commitment and ability to work hard, and, of course, less time is spent studying. This type of course can be particularly appealing to mature students, those living at home, individuals pursuing vocational degrees, and people already in work looking to change careers by achieving new qualifications. For these students and many others, it offers an attractive alternative to a three-year course.

The degree provides students with the chance to develop a wide range of business and management knowledge and skills, including the opportunity to enhance their employability by undertaking a work placement. The University is now also seeking accreditation from the Chartered Management Institute for the course.

Students have been extremely complimentary about the support and assistance offered by the placements office and staff, and they like the opportunity provided by the elective choices to focus on a particular area of study,

says programme manager Mike Leat, Associate Head of the School of Management.
A new perspective on fighting red tape

One of the key problems facing governments in developing countries is bureaucracy – which can lead to weak, ineffective government and corruption. Research conducted at the University by Dr Rupert Hodder of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences into the civil service in the Philippines, has unearthed some striking findings in this area, which have the potential to be applied to governments worldwide.

In a new study, to be published shortly, Dr Hodder argues that, rather than tightening up on rules and formalities, in fact, emotion, social relationships, and informality are vital to the emergence of professional and stable organisations. The work makes extensive use of interviews with ranking politicians and civil servants in the Philippines, whose government and bureaucracy is commonly held to be one of the most corrupt on earth. The project is supported by the Senate and the La Salle Institute of Governance.

According to Dr Hodder, the main reasons for the Philippines’ weaknesses are the excessive fragmentation of authority, and the constant layering of rules and procedures and their rigid application. This results in the best civil servants and politicians being constrained in what they can do, with the worst of them ignoring rules and bypassing procedures.

His work – which is drawn into teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level – suggests that bureaucracies can be strengthened with common informal practices that often go unrecognised, and that being formal, impersonal and unemotional may create the very problems governments are trying to avoid. In short, the resources for improvement are already in-country – they just need to be identified and encouraged.

"These ideas and empirical materials and experiences may also begin to re-shape how we look at our own bureaucracy and democracy," says Dr Hodder.
China connection creates new insights on employability

If there is one global issue that concerns students, parents, the academic world and government policy makers alike, it’s employability. The University of Plymouth Business School has therefore linked with a leading Chinese university to launch a new study into employability. The study, entitled Employability – insights from Chinese and UK universities, was led by Dr Troy Heffernan of Plymouth Business School, together with researchers at China Agricultural University, one of the largest universities in the People’s Republic with over 20,000 students. It is backed by a PMI2 (Prime Minister’s Initiative 2) grant from the UK Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

The work is aimed at enhancing understanding of employability, so that we have a better grasp of what skills are relevant to today’s industries and what businesses look for in a graduate employee. Students from China Agricultural University, which specialises in natural sciences and business related subjects, will spend time at Plymouth as part of their degree course.

Dr Heffernan said:

“This project allowed us to develop our relationship with China Agricultural University and work together in analysing our markets and how we might further develop our academic curricula to meet demand. China offers a number of ways for us to learn from in the long term, and I think the reverse is also true."

The research has also led to the University developing a new masters programme, MSc in Marketing Management and Strategy, in which students undertake internships with businesses in the UK and take part in real world business projects.

Dr Heffernan said:

“As a University, we play a vital role in providing the employees and entrepreneurs of tomorrow with a range of skills developed through their learning in an academic and a workplace setting. It’s critical in today’s global environment that we enable our graduates to secure their place as leaders and members of a highly skilled mobile workforce, with the ability to operate seamlessly across industry sectors and international borders in an agile and ethical way.”
sharing enterprise knowledge

drawing on our experience as the enterprise university, we have much knowledge to share with other educational establishments worldwide. this year, plymouth business school has begun an important partnership with sri lankan universities to promote enterprise and graduate entrepreneurship in the country.

the faculty has won a prestigious pmi2 connect (prime minister’s initiative 2) grant for developing entrepreneurship through collaborative delivery in a partnership between sri lanka and the uk. the project is led by dr dulekha kasturiratne and involves academics from all three schools of the faculty, including dr jonathan lean and professor simon payne.

supported by the british council, the initiative is designed to develop enterprise education and promote graduate entrepreneurship in sri lanka through education partnerships with leading entrepreneurial universities in the uk.

the partnerships were launched in sri lanka in march at an enterprise summit and policy dialogue in colombo. dr kasturiratne said:

"our team presented on how the university’s educators are practising enterprise education and how we are working with industry to create mutual economic value. the vice chancellor of kelaniya university, sri lanka, professor sarath amunugama, has also now visited plymouth for further discussions on the project."
Collaboration to diagnose dementia

Recent estimates from the South West Dementia Partnership suggest that only around a third of people suffering from dementia in Plymouth are actually recorded on GP registers in the city. Often a diagnosis is received only when the condition has reached an advanced stage – in many cases following some other crisis, such as hospital admission. Many sufferers describe feelings of isolation and a lack of support once a diagnosis is made.

This is why the Vice-Chancellor’s Community Research Awards helped to fund the Plymouth branch of the Alzheimer’s Society in their research into local arrangements for people with dementia and their carers and how they could be improved.

The project involves interviewing people with dementia and their carers, to gain insights into their own experiences, exploring both positive and negative aspects. It will also use group interviews with primary healthcare professionals to discuss their experiences of, and attitudes towards early diagnosis.

Funded by a total community research award of around £10,000, the project is run by a steering group which includes membership from University staff, the NHS, the Alzheimer’s Society and Plymouth Age Concern.

Dr Mike Sheaff, of the School of Applied Psychosocial Sciences, is leading the team. He commented:

"This project is one example where the University can work in a genuinely collaborative way with local organisations to identify important research questions, and apply appropriate methods to investigate them, so that we can offer practical suggestions on how things might be improved. It’s a really positive experience to work in this way, drawing on the different expertise and knowledge those involved in the project can offer."
Helping children at risk

Recent high profile examples, such as the tragic case of Baby P, have drawn attention to repeated failures to protect vulnerable children.

Now, experts at the University of Plymouth have teamed up with health professionals from Plymouth NHS Trust in an innovative project that will pilot the use of internet technology to improve decision making around complex child safeguarding scenarios.

Professor Michael Sheppard, Professor of Social Work, and Graham Russell, an Enterprise Enabler from the Faculty of Health, are running the project.

We know that problems occur when communication between agencies is lacking, but failure can also be attributed to poor decision making by health and social care professionals, says Mr Russell.

The project aims to improve practitioners’ decision-making through better personal awareness of common cognitive errors and identification of individual training needs, using web tools. It will present pairs of health visitors with child-safeguarding scenarios and will record their responses through transcripts from chat-room conversations and case-records posted onto wikis. To make things realistic, health visitors will have to prioritise the scenarios according to risk, and then record the reasons for their decisions. The aim is to give child-safeguarding supervisors insight into how individual practitioners make decisions, which will make it easier to identify individual training needs.

The project is one of a new breed of ‘short’ Knowledge Transfer Partnerships that has been funded by the ESRC, enabling the University to work with Plymouth NHS Trust and employ a part-time project officer. If the pilot is successful, the team hopes to develop the method to embrace multi-disciplinary training.
Collaboration with local businesses has always been a priority for the University and one of our latest ventures also represents a first in a new government-backed scheme.

In August 2009 we joined forces with Saltash-based Spinnaker International, which leads the market in the development and supply of electronic cash protection systems, for the design of a new prototype of security box. The collaboration is the first in the South West under the new Shorter Knowledge Transfer Partnership (sKTP) programme.

The new sKTPs, which launched in July, are shorter versions of the successful Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme which has been running in the UK since 1975, and are aimed at addressing more short-term, tactical issues. sKTPs are designed to be flexible and can act as a stepping stone for businesses that may not have worked with higher and further education institutions before.

The scheme saw a recently-qualified graduate Amundeep Hothi seconded to Spinnaker for 40 weeks, supported by top academic staff from the University’s Faculty of Arts, who will also spend some time at the firm. Spinnaker has run eight KTP schemes with Plymouth over the past 15 years.

Emma Hewitt, Head of Knowledge Transfer and Business Development at Plymouth, said that such schemes could help boost the local economy:

“Supported by grant funding, businesses can take full advantage of academic knowledge available on their doorstep to innovate and remain competitive. At Plymouth we are keen to develop more partnerships with all types of businesses and organisations particularly to help prepare for the economic upturn.”

Nick Tripp, Product Development and Engineering Manager for Spinnaker, said:

“We are looking forward to the sKTP providing us with solutions in much shorter timescales. The University has put this sKTP together in a very efficient, timely manner, meaning we can be working on new innovations sooner, to gain a competitive advantage.”

Thinking outside the box
Design for life

Cornish furniture design firm Zoeftig became the first local business to benefit from the Plymouth Graduate Internship Programme (PGIP). Launched in February 2009, the scheme helps employers find the ideal graduate for a paid internship by providing a recruitment service free of charge, as well as funding towards salary costs. It’s also a huge boost for local graduates seeking that invaluable first step into the workplace.

Richard Giles took up a post with Bude-based Zoeftig following his BSc in Product Design Technology at Northumbria. He read about PGIP on the Unlocking Cornish Potential website, and was subsequently employed in the role of Design Engineer to assist the in-house design team on a range of seating projects. He helped with new product development, design studio daily operations, design modifications and drawing registry.

Mr Giles said being based in a busy company provided him with a valuable insight into industry, allowing him to observe the day-to-day operations of a fast-paced industrial environment and receive mentoring from experienced designers.

Richard Giles

It’s given me a good overview of the day-to-day functions of the design office in a growing company. Observing and being involved in product development in the real world has shown me that priorities on ever-evolving projects can change rapidly. As a designer, you have to be really aware of this. I’ve gained fantastic exposure to the task of dealing with other departments within the business and external suppliers, and I know that I can take this experience and use it effectively in the future – whether that’s at Zoeftig or elsewhere.

For businesses, the scheme provides extra funding towards salary costs as well as an extra pair of expert hands. Ian Coates, Design and Engineering Director at Zoeftig, said:

We found the entire process straightforward and were delighted with the quality of CVs we received. The £1,450 funding towards salary costs was also a welcome addition. Richard has the skills we look for in an employee and he has shown himself to be a valuable addition to the Zoeftig team.
A student from Cornwall has progressed from a foundation degree to becoming a Lecturer at University of Plymouth partner college, Cornwall College, thanks to some of our innovative schemes for mature students.

Having left school in London with few qualifications, Samantha West got back into education when she moved to Cornwall and took a University of Plymouth accredited Foundation Degree in Personal Training at Truro College. She went on to read for a BSc top-up at the University of Plymouth in Health and Fitness, before searching for ways to make a living from her talent for communication.

Samantha found the solution in the University of Plymouth Certificate in Education taught at Cornwall College, which provided her with a qualification to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector. She said:

“I enjoyed working with young people in the gym and found I had a knack for helping them make sense of things. I’ve always been interested in teaching and training. The Certificate in Education was intense but has been very rewarding.”

Samantha is now employed full-time as a lecturer at Cornwall College, teaching sports-related topics.

Tanya Ovenden Hope, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, said:

“Sam’s case perfectly illustrates the variety of options that are on offer for mature students through the University; she moved to Cornwall with virtually no qualifications but found an educational route that suited her skill set and has progressed to teaching and training others.”
Helping healthcare professionals achieve more

Health sustainability and climate change, non-medical prescribing, and infection prevention and control are just some of the topics covered on this year’s Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events programme, offered by the University’s Faculty of Health. The faculty is committed to providing CPD opportunities that recognise international, national and regional health and social care priorities.

As well as the events, some of which are held at The Knowledge Spa, our state-of-the-art healthcare facility in Truro, the faculty offers a variety of CPD master classes and short courses, with both traditional face-to-face and distance learning options. Building on a strong relationship with the regional Strategic Health Authority (SHA), these CPD learning opportunities are developed by leading experts in their field based on the needs of those within the industry. The SHA do their part by providing that feedback and subsidising many of the masterclasses in order to make the training accessible for as many staff as possible. The courses cover a wide spectrum of areas across health and social care – from child welfare and emergency care, to nutrition and social work.

Professor Richard Stephenson, Dean of the Faculty of Health, said:

“For healthcare professionals, a CPD programme is a major investment in the future that can significantly improve the quality of their professional and personal lives. It’s important that they use this time to maximum advantage so that their learning experiences are rich, varied and positive. By providing flexible CPD opportunities and learning locations, we can help them to make the most of that time.”
Sowing the seeds of sustainability

The University is helping to lead a major Plymouth city centre project that is transforming a vacant piece of land into a sustainable – and moveable – garden.

The City Jigsaw Garden is being constructed through a unique city partnership on the plot of land outside Drake Circus, opposite the Roland Levinsky Building, involving input from students and enterprise enablers, as well as the University’s botany and insect academic experts.

The earth was first turned in April and the garden was launched to the community on May 22 – part of a huge programme of events that included the University’s Open House and the Lord Mayor’s Day. Work is ongoing on this exciting initiative with the official public opening planned for July.

Sarah O’Leary, Active in Communities Co-ordinator, said:

The idea is to build a temporary garden that embraces issues of sustainability, regeneration and social and cultural inclusion, reflecting the city’s strategic Learning and Cultural Quarter within which the site is located.

We will be using locally sourced plants and trees, calling on volunteers during the construction process, and including art installations and an amphitheatre for community performances.

The 1,750 square metre plot, vacant since the construction of Drake Circus, was born from a partnership including Marks and Spencer, the Plymouth City Centre Company, site owners Kandahar and charitable organisation Groundwork as well as the University of Plymouth. Partial funding was
generated by the Marks and Spencer Plan A carrier bag charging scheme and the Greener Living Spaces project. Providing multiple opportunities for student development and experiential learning, blueprints for the garden were drawn up by the University’s Designers’ Society architecture, landscape and 3D design students and Groundwork’s landscape designers. Students also assisted with public consultation, helping with a questionnaire to ensure the wider community was involved.

Entomologist Pete Smithers advised on the choice of plants that would best attract the insects, so that the garden could become part of a planned educational nature trail, also being partly designed by University students, linking in five other city parks and the City Museum and Art Gallery.

Placement student Christina Carr is designing a celebratory booklet telling the story of how the garden was created, while also organising the first launch ceremony involving the newly elected Lord Mayor, and says:

"The opportunities to engage with multiple organisations on this project have been hugely beneficial. My confidence and practical experiences have been greatly enhanced by participating in strategic planning sessions, creating marketing materials and in organising high profile events."

Eventually the land will have to be returned to the owners, but as the name suggests, the garden can be taken apart like a jigsaw puzzle, and reconstructed elsewhere, providing ongoing regeneration elements for the city. According to Miss O’Leary:

"This inspirational project demonstrates that the University is once again at the heart of a great community project, applying academic expertise, staff resources and student creativity, working in successful partnerships with key city organisations to make dream and vision reality."
An innovative social enterprise project with a local charity has seen Plymouth students help create a new children’s book about the heritage of Looe in Cornwall.

*We Love Looe* is the result of a collaboration between the University and Groundwork South West, a charitable organisation that helps people and organisations change so that better neighbourhoods can be created. The colourful book, which mingles both storytelling and facts, was written, illustrated and published by University of Plymouth students, working with pupils from Looe Community School.

Students took part in a competition for the opportunity to write and illustrate their first book, with students from the MA Publishing degree responsible for its printing and aspects of project management. They worked with staff and students in Year 8 at Looe School who were involved in researching the story and creating story ideas. Local children’s author Helen Greathead mentored all three of the University students and provided editing expertise.

The book will be distributed through University of Plymouth Publishing Press and a local distributor to help generate income through book sales. All profits will be used to help fund future projects.
Marc Lintern, Head of Student Development and Employability, added:

We Love Looe is special because it celebrates and uncovers the history of this delightful Cornish town for children in a new way. It provided the University students with a unique opportunity to develop their skills and career potential, and has proved a wonderful experience for young people at Looe Community School, bringing them opportunities to increase their appreciation of where they live and broadening their horizons and aspirations.

Anne Tillett, Education and Training Manager for Groundwork South West, oversaw production of the book and said:

Working on this book was a fantastic opportunity for our students, not just to develop specific publishing skills, but to enhance general graduate skills such as project management, team work and working to commercial deadlines.

From left to right: Charlotte Chase (student, author); Danielle Woodbridge (student, publisher); Anne Tillett (Education and Training Manager, Groundwork South West, project manager for the book); Marc Lintern (Head of Employability, University of Plymouth, project originator)
Real work experience, real life skills

Student placements within the University are just one of the ways in which we help our undergraduate students experience the real world of work. Lee Fordham, studying for a BSc in Sociology, is about to complete a year long placement within the Careers and Employability Service. Here’s his view of the experience:

I was the first ever BSc Sociology placement student at the University of Plymouth, and it’s an experience I would recommend to any undergraduate. There are plenty of reasons for taking a placement opportunity – the financial reward, the chance to meet a whole new network of people, the opportunity to live and work in Plymouth, the chance to test a career, and being able to experience the world of work. But for me, one reason really stood out – the opportunity for real personal development.

A placement student will almost always develop important ‘soft’ skills like communication, teamwork, problem solving, professionalism, negotiation, decision making, adaptability and leadership. These skills will complement their academic skills when they leave university, which is why, in my experience, the post-placement student seems to be so appealing to the graduate employer.

Taking the placement was the single best decision I have made since being at University. The opportunities and experiences I have had throughout the year have been extremely varied, allowing me to experiment in a number of different roles to find my personal preference. A typical day just doesn’t exist – my role has involved everything, from researching and negotiating with organisations, to designing brochures and working with printers to meet delivery deadlines. I’ve worked with our team for FLUX, the national student business competition, on presentation skills or business plans. And I’ve project managed the Arts Graduate Employment Showcase, from research design, implementation and analysis, to participating in conferences with the South West universities.

It really has been that varied. In the space of one week, I can remember sitting on an interview panel, working until 8pm painting a chalk board for an event the next day, promotion on campus, and staying up until 3am with the FLUX team as we worked on creating a business plan.

It’s that varied experience that makes it all worthwhile. The enjoyment I’ve had from being on placement this year, added to the personal development, the skills, the added employability, the networking, the financial gain, the friends, and the fact that I have got to spend an extra year in the city of Plymouth and the University, is why every student should take the opportunity of a placement.
Lee Fordham at Gateway, the University’s prominent new employability centre
Turning knowledge into performance

Harnessing innovation is vital to improving the UK’s productivity and future wealth creation prospects. At the University of Plymouth, we believe that higher education can play a pivotal role in this process, by working harder at forming partnerships that translate knowledge more effectively into business and public service opportunities.

That’s why the University has helped create the Plymouth Science and Innovation Programme (PSIP). It is a new strategic model aimed at creating a step-change in our effectiveness at translating knowledge into commercially sustainable businesses.

Backed by £25 million of regional and national funding being invested in the University to further enhance its credentials as a global centre for science, innovation and marine research, the PSIP has been created by a partnership led by the SWRDA, the University of Plymouth and Plymouth City Council. Working with others, such as the City Development Company, the PSIP will establish a city-wide strategy to create jobs, businesses and economic success from science and innovation related activities.

The initiative is in two parts. The first builds on the city’s existing world-class marine science and engineering research capabilities, emphasising the development of low carbon technologies related to the marine sector. The second involves the University working more closely with the Tamar Science Park, which will become the focus for turning research and development into commercial potential.

A newly created Plymouth Science and Innovation Council will bring together key stakeholders, education and research institutions, investors and innovative businesses, taking overall responsibility for coordinating and delivering the strategy.

Professor Julian Beer, Director of Research and Enterprise, University of Plymouth and Pro Vice-Chancellor, said:

“These investments bring together the city’s innovation and enterprise community to pursue a common goal – to make the transition to a thriving knowledge economy, creating lasting, well-paid jobs for Plymouth.”

In many ways Plymouth is a city at a crossroads, witnessing a decline of its traditional industrial base while evidencing local and structural potential that could see its transformation. It has been characterised by weak labour markets, and the business base is dominated by a relatively small number of large employers, a number of whose workforces have contracted substantially in recent years. The focus of the PSIP is therefore to help support the transition to a knowledge-intensive, and therefore higher value-added, business base.

Plymouth has a number of significant assets that can drive innovation and the commercialisation of R&D. But it also faces a number of challenges that need to be met. By enhancing the existing physical and human science and innovation infrastructure, improving the clarity of partners’ roles and their capability, and harnessing that in a unified strategy, we can achieve our full potential for the benefit of the entire city.”
Ideas that float

Entrepreneurial spirit and social responsibility go hand in hand at the University. It’s a combination of qualities that differentiates us on many levels and drives staff and students to create innovative solutions to real-world issues. Plymouth student, 21 year old Stephen Burnip, typifies this approach.

For his final year Marine Sports Technology degree project, he chose to develop a sea kayak for the physically disabled, and says:

“\[I\] wanted to reduce the limitations imposed by their disability and create something that had the same looks and capabilities as a normal kayak; something that filled a gap in the market."

After a series of interviews with a paraplegic volunteer, Mr Burnip discovered that the biggest problem he faced in developing the new kayak was the extra stability required to prevent the boat from capsizing. Tests subsequently carried out with the volunteer showed that the stability of the kayak was increased by 300 per cent when the upper body was able to move.

“I worked on ways to give the user additional upper body support, and incorporated these into the kayak designs. With this extra dynamic stability, physically disabled people will be able to enjoy the freedom and independence of sea kayaking. Designs for the kayak are currently in development so that a working prototype can be produced. It’s been a thoroughly enlightening project to work on – and one that has gone beyond the original honours degree scope and into the commercial world.”

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