HOT ’15 IN THE SUMMER

Arts and Humanities showcase draws the academic year to a close

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Dental students HELPING IN THE COMMUNITY
Student-powered submarines ON THE GLOBAL STAGE
The launch of the TAMAR ENGINEERING FUND
A message from our Chair of the Board of Governors

I had the pleasure of attending the handover of the University of Plymouth Students’ Union executive officers in June. It was a wonderful event – one marked by feelings of pride for the legacy left by Sarah Bowman, the outgoing UPSU President, and her team, and the optimism and excitement shared by Ruth Titmuss and hers.

It reinforced to me how important it is that we keep our students at the centre of all that we do. They are the reason that we are here; it is the investment in their future that drives us forward as a university.

Our work to review and strengthen the governance, strategy and executive leadership of the institution is focused upon supporting that progress, that journey from good to great. We have made some important strides already, and there is much work ahead of us as we learn from the lessons of the past and create a governance structure that will stand as an exemplar for the sector.

We do this for our students, and the communities that rely on the University – from the SMEs that thrive in our growth and investment network, to the NHS patients who benefit from our medical and dental treatment. It is inspiring stuff, and that’s why I’m keen to see our governors getting out there into the University community to experience for themselves the work that we do, with our students at the core.

Regards

James Brent
Chairman of the Board of Governors

WELCOME...

A message from our Interim Vice-Chancellor

As a former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, you’ll forgive me if I admit to taking a special pleasure in our annual arts degree showcase, this year branded as HOT ’15.

Every June, the Roland Levinsky and Scott Buildings, and our studios at Royal William Yard, become an exhibition to the imagination, creativity and craft of our students across fine art and photography, design and digital art, animation and architecture (and more besides!).

It is at once a celebration of student learning and a statement of intent from graduate artists, designers and creative industry professionals on the cusp of launching their careers. These themes take centre stage in this edition of CONNECT, not just in the cover story on HOT ’15, but also in the interview with alumni acting company Drake’s Drummers; in the pioneering community work of our dental students; and the feats of engineering from our human-powered submarine racing team.

Our University must always be focused on nurturing student talent and supporting our graduates, so I am delighted to see the progress that is being made by Careers and Employability, highlighted here in a special four-page report. By hooking into our regional Growth Acceleration and Investment Network, establishing rapid internship and graduate recruitment services, and developing online alumni support networks, we can ensure that we give our graduates the best possible chance of turning sheer potential into professional and personal fulfilment.

Enjoy the issue – and the summer.

Professor David Coslett
Interim Vice-Chancellor

IN THIS ISSUE

04 | HOT ’15
06 | An underwater competition to set the PULSE racing
08 | Dental students celebrate community impact with National Smile Month showcase
10 | Careers and Employability
14 | Academic Partnerships – Shanghai Maritime University
16 | Engineered for success – Ajen Limbu
18 | From research to relief mission: Ellie Walsh in her words
20 | Spotlight: Megan Crawford, Drake’s Drummers, Natasha Stephen, Annette Daly
28 | Campus round-up
And Kirsty was by no means alone among her art and design contemporaries, whose final year projects were proudly on display to fellow students, academics, industry experts and the general public at this year’s showcase, Hot ’15.

This year’s event ran for two weeks in June – coinciding with the University’s first Big Festival Weekend – and saw more than 500 pieces of work spanning a range of disciplines adorn the walls and floors of venues across the city, including the Roland Levinsky Building and Scott Building, and the Mills Bakery and Slaughterhouse at Royal William Yard.

For many, the multi-venue exhibition represented their first chance to engage with a critical audience, providing an opportunity to enhance their employability and gain further knowledge and experience of the marketplace they are about to enter.

Professor Dafydd Moore, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, said: “The University is blessed with hundreds of talented arts students, and HOT ’15 provided an opportunity for them and their lecturers and tutors to celebrate their achievements. For many of them, what people saw was the product of years of hard work and the results are something of which they can all be very proud. We now hope the creativity and imagination nurtured during their studies at the University can inspire them to even greater success in their future careers.”

HOT ’15 featured works by final-year students from 3D Design, Fine Art, Illustration, Media and TV Arts, Photography, Digital Media and Animation, Architecture, Graphic Communication with Typography, and Digital Art and Design. There were sculptures, paintings, photographic collections, illustrations and digital innovations, many with interactive elements designed to capture visitors’ imaginations. And while many of the works were completed in studios within the University, other students drew inspiration from the wider city, the South West and beyond.

BA (Hons) Photography student Olivia Dunn spent several months gaining the trust, and then documenting the activities, of naturist groups within Plymouth while BA (Hons) Architecture student Oliver Millett developed a plan to incorporate craft-based activities into the regeneration of Exeter Quay.

Benjamin Peake, completing his BA (Hons) Architectural Technology and the Environment course, developed the concept for a conservation-based culinary institute, while students on the BA (Hons) Graphic Communications and Typography course combined their final-year projects with a

They are ceramic vessels created by a 3D printer, but deliberately ‘glitched’ to ensure that no two pieces are the same. As an example of creative ingenuity and imagination, the work of Kirsty Lloyd, BA (Hons) 3D Design, is up there with anything around; little wonder she has already had commercial interest in her collection.
crowdfunding initiative to enable them to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Dr Steve Butts, Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, said: “Inspired and inspiring, the two weeks of HOT ‘15 were an opportunity to celebrate the ingenuity of our graduates as they embark on the next step of their journey. With so many projects on show, it was also a great chance for members of the University and wider community to see the creative talent in evidence among our student body.”
"It's a confined space and a strange experience," says Doug Megran, a final-year mechanical engineering student, when asked to describe what it’s like to pilot the Mayflower. On the screen next to him runs a silent video of the sub being tested in the Plymouth Life Centre, with Doug diving down and jimmying his way into the hull. As the door is sealed, you could be forgiven for giving a little shiver.

"I mean, scuba diving itself can feel a little weird, but when they close the hatch and you’re lying there in the sub...it’s not for the claustrophobic!"

A little under nine feet in length, and constructed from woven cloth, epoxy resin and carbon fibre, the Mayflower clearly hasn’t been built with comfort in mind. But that it’s been built at all is testament to the vision and skill of the staff–student team behind PULSE – the Plymouth University Leg-powered Submarine Engineering.

The project originated with Dr Keri Collins, who joined the University in 2012 as a Research Fellow. A graduate from the University of Bath, she’d seen the way her Alma Mater had integrated it into its programme and wanted to do the same at Plymouth.

"We have this great marine tradition at the University, and there’s the naval dockyard in the city, so it just made sense on a thematic level," says Keri. “But initially it was difficult to show people what we were trying to do, and at the outset we couldn’t even be sure we’d have the funding to do it. So it wasn’t an easy ‘sell’ to the students.”

But sell the idea Keri did, and at the beginning of the 2013/14 academic
year a team with “zero experience” embarked on the project. The submarine was designed through dissertation projects and it was that first version that Doug, dive lead Daryl Oosthuizen, Mike Prest and Matthew Merrett took to the European International Submarine Races at Europe’s largest freshwater tank, QinetiQ’s Ocean Basin in Gosport. There, they achieved a remarkable third place overall around a demanding slalom course, reaching speeds of 4.6 knots despite effectively losing their hatch early on.

With students John Cima, Oliver Powlesland and Nicholas Arthur joining the project at the start of 2014/15, and the support of staff in the School of Marine Science and Engineering, including Dr Richard Cullen, Adam Kyte, Alastair Reynolds and Matt Brown, the focus switched to refinement and improvement for the International Submarine Races (ISR 13). Held biennially at the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), in Carderock, Maryland, the event places an even greater emphasis on speed, requiring the teams to make a straight run down a 100-metre course – in a facility so long that the designers had to take into account the curvature of the earth.

Daryl, who is on the masters programme in Mechanical Engineering, said: “This year, we made a number of modifications to the design, addressing the hatch problems, adding a new nose cone, modifying the control system and making the sub more rigid. These have all been designed to improve the hydrodynamic performance and reduce drag.”

With the aim of improving the speed by 25%, the team introduced a new propeller system, switching from a contra-rotating design to a single set, which in itself necessitated changes to the control system to counter the torque roll caused. The team flew out in late June, joining 24 others from seven countries, and having passed both the dry and wet inspections, they were all set for testing. And then, like the downbeat middle section of a sports biopic, came the setbacks.

“We crashed on our first run, and unfortunately that was the story of the competition,” says Keri. “The sub proved very difficult for Doug to control – our rudders were too good if anything. Some of the other teams had used static fins, which give you greater stability and I think that was something that we were missing.”

On the PULSE team’s one completed run, the Mayflower had started well, reaching an estimated 3.6 knots as it approached the video time gate. But as it drew near, it rose through the water and passed over the top of the gate, and so, upon finishing the course, failed to register a time.

It wasn’t all bad news though – the team was commended by the organisers for its design report, and its UK record remained intact as many of the other UK entrants also experienced technical difficulties. “It was disappointing, but we shouldn’t lose sight of the progress we’ve made,” says Keri. “The skills gained and the contacts forged with local businesses like Babcock and GMD Eurotool, whose experienced engineers have helped us to develop our submarine, have all been hugely positive. We were also very grateful for the financial backing and sponsorship from Research & Innovation, the Plymouth Fund, Santander Scholarships, MSubs, the joint IMarEST/RINA branch, and our school.”

With all bar Nick Arthur graduating, the PULSE team is facing up to an autumn of transition. But the waves made by its founding members have set it on course to become a valuable extra-curricular activity.

Keri adds: “It’s more than just allowing students to race submarines. It’s a chance to guide them through the whole engineering process and to help them to learn some very important lessons about co-operation, design and project planning.”
From primary school pupils to Age UK carers, the homeless to family nurses, and cancer patients to sportsmen and women – the community brush strokes have been broad for second-year students at Plymouth University’s Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry.

More than 60 students took part in this year’s Inter-Professional Engagement (IPE) programme, which enables undergraduates to work and engage with different groups in a range of community settings. Orchestrated by the Community Engagement team, within the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise, the IPEs not only provide students with experiential learning opportunities, but contribute to oral health awareness and improving access to dental care – especially for the most vulnerable groups in society.

So it was smiles all round in May, when PUPSMD held a symposium at the John Bull Building on the Derriford campus to celebrate, and reflect upon, the eight projects undertaken by this year’s cohort. Each project was presented to an expert panel including Stephen Hancocks OBE, Editor of the British Dental Journal.

Dr Robert Witton, Lead for Community-based Dentistry at the PDSE, said: “Community projects are integral to our dental curriculum for Year 1 and 2 undergraduates, and the IPEs really challenge them in a meaningful way to develop their inter-personal, communication and listening skills, and their ability to work as a team. “The IPEs also enable them to work with other health professionals and in settings outside of the dental facilities, and every year our students are simply wonderful ambassadors for the University.”

During the course of each IPE, teams of nine students work under academic supervision with one of the community organisations. This might take the form of running educational sessions with schoolchildren; holding tooth-brushing or varnishing clubs; or addressing psychological issues, particularly with the homeless who might perceive barriers to obtaining dental treatment. Students have also overseen a number of triage sessions, in which more than 90 vulnerable patients have been recruited, and by hosting sessions at the Dental Education Facilities, they’ve helped to challenge perceptions of dental care.

“It was great – it was something really different,” said student Hassan Adnan, reflecting on the experience of working with schoolchildren at Ford Park Primary School. “We didn’t turn up and give a PowerPoint presentation – we actually did some acting, which I’ve never done before.”

Stephen Hancocks led the judging panel for the symposium for a second year, along with Bridget Ashton, a general dental practitioner; Kevin Elliston from Public Health England; and Rob Nelder, consultant in public health at Plymouth City Council.
Paying tribute to the impact of the IPEs, Stephen said: “The community projects carried out by dental students at Plymouth University leave me with huge inspiration and optimism for the future of the profession. The students’ energy, commitment, excitement and skills bode well for the dentistry of tomorrow.”

The IPEs are just one of the reasons why the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise has been picking up national accolades, with both a Green Gown Award for Enterprise, and a Guardian University Award for Community Impact under its belt over the last nine months.

Professor Christopher Tredwin, Head of the Peninsula Dental School, said: “Launching a social enterprise has helped take our community engagement – and impact – to a new level. It’s provided the governance to run our Dental Education Facilities in Devon and Cornwall, and concentrated our ability to provide experiential learning opportunities for our undergraduates. As a consequence, our students are graduating with a truly rounded set of skills that will serve them well in their professional careers.”

**Those IPE projects in brief:**

- **Sure Start** in Plymouth at the LARK Children’s Centre, focusing on pregnancy, breastfeeding and weaning, with an emphasis on reducing intake of sugary food and drinks, and salt. The project resulted in advice and support for parents-to-be and new parents, with cookery demonstrations and a recipe leaflet.

- **Ford Park Primary School**, where students created a number of fun activities to help pupils understand more about their own oral health, including games, a catchy brushing song to learn, as well as dressing up as a dentist and learning more about teeth using models and puppets.

- **The Salvation Army’s Devonport Lifehouse**, helping residents to become more aware of how to maintain good oral health and access dental treatment, including setting out stations in the Lifehouse to look at tooth brushing, cleaning between teeth, denture care, diet, and smoking and alcohol – and the effect they have on teeth.

- **The Family Nurse Partnership Programme** at Plymouth Community Healthcare, where students provided the nurses with training and an information pack on the care of milk teeth, which they could then use with the young families under their care.

- **Age UK**, sharing with carers advice on brushing techniques, flossing, diet, denture care and how to spot common dental diseases, to improve their own care for the elderly.

- **Sports students at the University of St. Mark & St. John**, raising awareness of the hidden dangers to teeth of sugary energy drinks and snacks, and producing a web-based resource of advice and suggestions which could be used by all sports people.

- **Plymouth Stop Smoking Service**, where students not only raised oral health awareness and access to dental care, but also designed information leaflets for the service, and shot a video of a patient who managed to quit smoking.

- **Peninsula Head and Neck Cancer Support**, which is a Facebook-based support page, created by PUPSMD students, for patients to share their experiences; they also helped develop a referral system for Derriford patients to be fast-tracked to the neighbouring PUPSMD dental facility.
Plymouth’s remarkable run of FLUX wins – maintained this year by the Igniting Enterprise team – has become a genuine talking point for competing universities. Whatever the challenge set before our students, whether it’s to design a bridge and associated marketing campaign for the city of Lancaster, or create a new concept for wearable technology, we’re ahead of the game in providing the answers and pitching them to the judges in a compelling fashion.

“Undoubtedly, in the context of FLUX, we’re producing competition-ready teams because we’re putting them through rigorous qualifying events at faculty and university level,” says Shirley Walker, the University’s Head of Careers and Employability.

“But underpinning this is the culture of employability that we’re cultivating at the University, encouraging students to develop their skills, supporting their entrepreneurial ambitions, and working in partnership with the business community in a way that benefits their recruitment and growth too.”

For Shirley and her team, the work to support greater student and graduate employability is taking shape across a number of major projects that serve to sharpen the focus on the ‘core business’ of career’s advice, placements and jobs. Some are intrinsic to the University’s pedagogy or services; others gaze outwards to the business community, framed through the University’s Growth Acceleration and Investment Network (GAIN). All are linked by the ‘golden thread of connection’.

“Historically, we’ve been an institution that has conducted pockets of very intensive careers work,” Shirley says. “We’re now moving to a position of greater clarity, where we’re differentiating skills development from the reflective learning and evaluation piece. And all of the work that we’re doing with employers is being reflected back into our service, giving us a better understanding of the local employment market so that we can tailor what we do accordingly.”

Among these major projects is Catalyst, a graduate recruitment and internship service, which launched in October 2014. Through Catalyst, final-year students and
recent graduates can access live employer opportunities and vacancies, and tap into training and resources in areas such as interview techniques and CV writing. The Catalyst team liaises directly with employers, and even replicates the role of an internal recruitment agency by holding pre-selection tests for students and graduates.

Remy Foucher, Graduate and Internship Project Manager, and lead for Catalyst, says: “Essentially, we’re bridging the gap between employer need and student and graduate aspiration. We’ve got a great view of different recruitment markets and of student expectations around things like salary, and we’re able to share that insight and knit the two together.”

The internship aspect is part-funded by the Santander Universities programme, with local companies offered £1,500 towards the cost of the salary, and there are close links with the GAIN programme as well. So far, more than 45 South West businesses have benefitted from the scheme, and this year, the University will look to support a further 100 interns.

Among those to have already gone through the process are Rebecca Cavanagh and Noreen Jeffries, who undertook placements with Plymouth firm IU Energy, and are now both graduate trainees.

History graduate Rebecca works in a business administration role and liaises with the ‘big six’ energy suppliers on behalf of her clients. Now studying part time for her Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma in Digital Marketing, she is supporting IU Energy’s marketing strategy. Rebecca says: “Although it was a steep learning curve, I have
had constant support and training and am getting an all-round understanding of the business. I wanted to build upon my skills by becoming part of a business with drive and enthusiasm, and learn about an industry which was new to me. IU Energy offered just that.”

Noreen studied a civil and coastal engineering degree, followed by a masters in sustainable environmental management. Her role at IU Energy involves detailed surveys to establish how much energy a business is using and devise ways for it to reduce that consumption.

“The Santander Internship Scheme meets a very real need in providing a stepping stone for graduates into meaningful employment,” says Noreen. “Many of my skills are transferable, yet businesses are understandably reluctant to employ staff with no previous experience in the sector. The Santander Internship Scheme has bridged this gap by giving me valuable experience while my employers have been supported in recruiting a graduate.”

Nearly 70% of interns recruited through the programme have been given permanent jobs, and with 4,000 followers on Facebook, Catalyst has no shortage of people interested in working with it. Remy says, “By helping our students and graduates find work and internships, we’re supporting local businesses and helping to inject new talent and fresh ideas into the economy.”

Many of the projects underway look to internal partnerships to create new employability opportunities. The Graduate Attributes Framework and the Curriculum Enrichment Project are both major Teaching and Learning programmes that have significant employability elements embedded within them. Another example is an online alumni network, to be officially launched at graduation, which involves close collaboration with the Alumni Engagement team within the Development Office, as well as the Devon and Cornwall Business Council and the Plymouth and Devon Chamber of Commerce.

“It’s an amazing project,” says Shirley. “It provides our alumni with the opportunity to support students at precisely the level of engagement they feel they can offer – whether simply answering questions, reviewing CVs, or providing full mentoring for one or multiple students.”

Powered by a piece of software known as ‘Aluminate’, students can search the network for people with particular specialisms (or even locations) and then send them a connection request. Aluminate is synched to LinkedIn, so when an alumni updates their profile on LinkedIn, it automatically updates on the database.

“Stage two will see us offer it up to prospective students, who can connect with current students, and then step three will be to launch this to all businesses in the region,” says Shirley.

Also on course for a September launch will be the revamped Careers and Employability Hub, which will make some significant adjustments to the support services delivered from the space on the ground floor of the Roland Levinsky Building. Based on extensive consultation with students and staff, the facility will replace the ‘one stop shop’ approach with a hub-and-spoke model, creating a ‘job shop’ in the area currently known as The Commons, where employers can come in to hold careers fairs and assessment centres.

“We know that students were confused about what Gateway/The Commons offered,” Shirley says. “It had become too noisy for confidential conversations and we started to see the footfall reduce. Even the name ‘Gateway’ can have negative connotations for international students as it can signify some sort of barrier. “With this new hub-and-spoke model, we’ll be able to signpost students to services within RLB, and extend that offer to prospective students as well.”

The FLUX winners: Mingaile Rutkauskaite, BA (Hons) International Business; Jack Stevenson, BA (Hons) Business Studies; Usaj Basnet, BSc (Hons) Economics with International Relations; Francesco D’Alessio, BA (Hons) Business Studies; Marc Rowbury, BA (Hons) Business Studies; and Michele Singh, BSc (Hons) Psychology.

FEATURE: CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY
All of this work supports the University’s institutional focus on employability, such as the launch of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) and the work being conducted in analysing league table performance. In particular, while the University continues to thrive in the Times Higher Education tables (where research is an important metric), it has fallen in those that place heavy weighting on the destination of leavers.

Professor Richard Stephenson, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor, says: “Our employability performance is improving year on year, but there remains much that we must do if we are to match or outperform our competitors. Through programmes such as the Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP) and HEAR, the work being done through Careers and Employability, and a greater alignment of our employer networks with opportunities for work-based learning and the student experience, we can help our students to develop their skills and their understanding of how and why employers rate those skills, such that when they come to graduate, they will stand out in a competitive market place. As that happens, it will be reflected in the league tables.”

The steps to better employability

1. Catalyst / Santander Internships / Growth Acceleration and Investment Network
Bringing together the graduate recruitment and internship programme that is Catalyst, with the Santander Internships programme, and ensuring both are aligned to GAIN.

2. Student Jobs service
The Student Jobs programme offers employers the chance to advertise part-time and contract work free of charge on campus. “We advertise a wide variety of opportunities,” says Mark Beresford, Careers Consultant. “We want students to gain commercial experience through part-time work and develop an awareness of the expectations that employers will place upon them.”

3. Mini-FLUX
Introducing FLUX competitions within faculties (and there are plans to hold them at an even more granular level) is producing battle-hardened teams who understand the process. This year’s national FLUX champion, Igniting Enterprise, had to qualify through both a faculty event and then the University final. Local companies such as Babcock Marine have been hugely supportive and have provided mentoring support – and even internships and graduate trainee positions – for some team members.

4. Curriculum Enrichment Project
Several aspects of the CEP focus on employability, such as the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences working with Antony Jinman’s ‘Education Through Expeditions’ social enterprise, focusing on leadership skills development.

5. Graduate Attributes Framework
A cross-institutional project, led by Professor Debby Cotton, to reintroduce a framework that will define key graduate skills and where they might map onto curricular and extra-curricular activity. It will also help define those attributes that should set apart a Plymouth graduate from counterparts at other universities. The work also feeds into the Plymouth Award.

6. Employer networking events
Two networking events are planned for this year, one for STEM subjects and health, the other for arts and humanities – in which targeted employers will be invited onto campus for networking sessions with students. A keynote speaker will set the ball rolling, before round-table sessions. The employers will then move to a different table to ensure that students will have been able to speak to more than a dozen employers by the end of the event. There will be an opportunity to take part in follow-up, informal sessions.

7. Careers and Employability Hub
Significant changes are being made to The Commons in RLB, transforming it into a ‘job shop’ focused upon careers and employability.

8. Online alumni networking programme
A three-step plan to create a network of prospective students, students, alumni and businesses, as well as mentoring and employment opportunities.

9. International employability
Two weeks have been planned for the new academic year that will bring together international students for sessions on employability skills. Run in partnership with the Library and the International Student Advisory Service, it will also focus on encouraging domestic students to consider developing their international experience.

10. The Accelerate programme
Weekly workshops held in the Careers and Employability Hub for all students that provide assistance on particular aspects such as CVs and application writing.
Described as the ‘cradle of international shipping experts’, it is easy to see why Shanghai Maritime University (SMU) should have become a key partner for Plymouth over the past six years. With 20,000 students and around 120 academic programmes across engineering, management, economics, law, liberal arts, and science, SMU is now a global player in the sector – and one that offers Plymouth students the chance to enjoy an international experience.

Every year, around 50 undergraduates (including those from partner colleges) fly out to China for a summer school in the world’s biggest city by population. With SMU students travelling to Plymouth in return, it’s an arrangement focused upon cultural exchange and adding more than a dash of internationalisation to the student experience.

The partnership is based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2009, and rooted in the networking of Jingjing Xu, Professor of Maritime Law and Economics. Jingjing, Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Business, is a graduate of SMU (and a visiting professor) and recognised the mutual benefits of helping to arrange a meeting of maritime minds.

“They are one of the main players in the international maritime community in terms of teaching and learning, and training, and they have great links...
with bodies such as the International Maritime Organization,” says Jingjing. “They have a century’s worth of tradition, and a multidisciplinary focus that crosses arts, business and science, so we’re a natural fit. We enhance each other’s international networks and reputation – and Plymouth has become a popular destination for their students.”

Around 20 students from SMU enrol on Plymouth courses and programmes every year, with many coming on the three-plus-one undergraduate arrangement and then staying to enrol as a postgraduate student.

Yu Hongrong, Director of the International Office at SMU, says: “More than 200 SMU students have now been to Plymouth for professional study or summer schools. In their study reports after returning to SMU, they all express that the amiable and helpful teachers and the inspiring teaching and learning styles impressed them deeply. Through the cooperative programmes, they had not only improved their English language skills and professional competence, but also enhanced their understanding of British culture and society and acquired international perspectives.”

Jingjing adds: “For many universities, a relationship such as the one we enjoy with SMU would be viewed as an opportunity solely to recruit more students. But we’re leveraging it more broadly, most notably in the form of the summer school, which has been a huge success.”

Launched in August 2011, the summer school initially saw nearly 60 SMU students fly to the South West for a month-long programme. The following year, it became reciprocal, and this year, 130 students are swapping places for a programme based around language learning, cultural exchange and broadening understanding of societal and economic issues.

The universities fund the cost of the trip for their students, with the exception of the flights, and Plymouth provides lessons in Mandarin to prepare the chosen students for the experience. For some, it is a voyage of discovery.

“One of my favourite stories came two years ago when a mature student from Plymouth took with him a photo of the house where his mum grew up,” says Jingjing. “At the weekends he would get on buses and look for it – and after searching many, many streets, he found it. He ended up doing a presentation, and the people at SMU were amazed and touched – and his mum was delighted as well.”

Interim Vice-Chancellor Professor David Coslett recently accompanied the International Office on a visit to SMU, and met the leadership team – including Vice-President Professor Yongxing Jin, whose daughter studied at Plymouth. With its stunning campus, complete with an aquatic training centre, a ship simulator that dwarfs our own, and a 10,000-tonne container ship for teaching and internship training, SMU has travelled a long way since it was founded in 1909 as the Shipping Section of Shanghai Industrial College. And its progress is being followed keenly from these shores.

“An old Chinese saying goes, “You can broaden your mind and enrich your soul by reading a thousand books as well as by travelling a thousand miles’;” adds Yu Hongrong. “We, as the educators, undertake the responsibility to help students to experience different civilisations and societies, and help them grow into more internationally competitive talents in the integrated world. I wish the cooperation between SMU and Plymouth can be expanded in the future and bring benefits to more students and faculty, both in China and in the UK.”

**Professor Jingjing Xu was recently involved in the visit of the Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization – Mr Koji Sekimizu. As reported in the last edition of CONNECT, Mr Sekimizu received a tour of the Marine Building and met with senior leaders to discuss education and training issues. On the back of this, Jingjing has been invited to address the IMO’s World Maritime Day Symposium in September on the topic of ways and means to attract young people into the maritime profession. “It’s a huge honour,” she says. “Plymouth is the only UK university to be invited and demonstrates the respected global position we are held in. For Mr Sekimizu to take the time to visit a university like that has made many people sit up and take notice.”**
ENGINEERED FOR SUCCESS – AJEN LIMBU

Meet the student being personally mentored by Lockheed Martin’s CEO, Stephen Ball.
“I’ve always been interested in building things,” says Ajen Limbu, a second-year undergraduate on the BEng Civil Engineering course. “Even when I was at school, I would enter Lego competitions where you had to construct something that could answer a particular challenge – I find that sort of thing really exciting.”

It’s that passion, and a desire to help people through problem-solving and design, that has drawn Ajen to civil engineering. And that in turn has led the 20-year-old to Plymouth, home to some of the most iconic civil engineering monuments, such as Smeaton’s Lighthouse and Brunel’s bridge spanning the River Tamar.

“When you turn on a tap in the morning, the pipe system that brings you your water has been created by civil engineers,” he says. “The roads you drive to work on have been designed by civil engineers to ensure they are flat and have the right surface. It’s a profession that enables you to help people on a really wide scale.”

And it’s here in Plymouth that Ajen has been afforded a remarkable opportunity – to be personally mentored by Lockheed Martin’s CEO Stephen Ball. Stephen, a graduate and honorary doctorate from Plymouth, was introduced to Ajen through the Development Office, and the two hit it off immediately. They now have weekly hour-long calls, where Ajen has an opportunity to explore issues around leadership, problem-solving and communication, and gain a remarkable insight into how Stephen would handle different situations.

“Stephen Ball

“Stephen says, ‘As a career path, engineering offers the highest level of social mobility and the second highest graduate premium of any profession. Students who are passionate and prepared to work hard can transform their lives, but they often need support to realise their potential. For some, help with funding is the difference between success and failure. For all, mentoring and advice provides insights from those with more experience and this gives them the confidence they need to be successful. In short the key thing they learn is to expect more of themselves.’”

“It can really inspire a student to work even harder and really maintain that level of commitment to the course,” Ajen says when he’s asked about what he’d say to a potential donor. And working with Stephen has really enabled me to challenge myself and push myself out of my comfort zone – all of which is going to benefit me in the long-run.”

And what does the future hold for Ajen? After next year’s placement, he’ll return to Plymouth for his final year, before moving on to the master’s degree. Beyond that, it’s a potential chartership, a role in project management, and the chance to leave his own legacy-piece in the world.

“I went to Singapore and I saw the Marina Bay Sands resort, which is essentially a giant boat perched atop two buildings, and it’s beautiful,” he says. “So alongside working on projects that make a difference to people, I want to be able to leave my mark.”
Less than 24 hours ago I was on a menial PhD research errand, searching for a cheap place to print out an old Tharu newspaper that had been scanned and sent to me from the US. Now I am trying to make my way across the chaotic, crumbling central region of Nepal to Gorkha, the perilous seed of the earthquake.

PhD student Ellie Walsh was researching her dissertation on Nepalese low-caste poetry when the devastating earthquake hit the country on 25 April this year. Five weeks into a three-month trip – her third to the country – she’d been integrating into a remote community, working in schools and at an elephant stable, while setting up interviews with cultural and societal figures. In conversation with CONNECT, and through her own writing, she shares her story.

“I was in a paddy field, knee deep in water, and suddenly I lost my balance,” Ellie says when asked about the moment the 7.8 Richter scale quake struck. “It was as though I’d lost my footing; I felt drunk. But then I saw that the water around me was rippling and I thought ‘it can’t be an earthquake, can it?’”

In a state of disbelief, she cycled back to her village and found that it had avoided heavy damage – the rickety mud and bamboo huts had, to a large extent, absorbed and swayed with the quake. But as the hours ticked by and news filtered through of an escalating death toll it became clear that a humanitarian crisis was unfolding elsewhere.

“There was terrible displacement in Kathmandu – worse than anywhere else,” says Ellie. “But there was plenty of aid too, as many of the NGOs were based there. It was in the remote areas that we knew that aid was badly needed and where we felt we might make a contribution.”

With friends from Chitwan, Ellie set out for the Gorkha district, and arriving
in the early hours of the morning, encountered a scene she describes as ‘genuinely post-apocalyptic’. Many of the buildings, perched atop wooden stilts, had been hobbled and reduced to rubble, and the sense of confusion and chaos was suffocating any relief effort. After a few days of frustrated inaction, they returned to Chitwan, but only to load up with food and other supplies and head back with a plan of action.

“The journey was really tough though – we had to climb over landslides, it was pitch dark and I kept falling over,” says Ellie. “I had altitude sickness and I was covered in leeches – it’s fair to say I was regretting it after ten minutes!”

Establishing a base in Gorkha, the team would raise money through overseas donations from friends and contacts, and would use the funds to buy tarpaulins, rice, noodles and tea from the town of Narayanghat. Then, by truck wherever possible, they would distribute the supplies to the surrounding villages, before repeating the process.

Small children pushed their hands through the bars of the truck, begging for just one of something...one tent, one bag of rice. We drove past so many people in need. Some villages weren’t accessible by road at all and we had to climb on foot, laden with boxes of tea and noodles, walking well into the night, muted by intense tiredness and sickness.

Aftershocks perpetually changed the landscape, rendering many roads impassable, and the risk of further building collapse meant sleeping outside or in buffalo sheds, in cold, dirty and dusty conditions. And Ellie also saw evidence of corruption dogging the relief effort – at one stage the police even requested that the group hand over their aid, necessitating a rapid and clandestine distribution.

After half a dozen relief runs, the team returned to Chitwan to focus on the rebuilding process amid the merciless heat and mosquitoes. Ellie spent much of her time looking after the boys who were working in the area, many miles from their families. They clung to her constantly for reassurance. And it was there that she also endured some of her toughest experiences, seeing members of the community ‘fall apart’, succumbing to hopelessness and an anger further fermented by ‘raksi’, a local spirit distilled from millet or rice.

The perpetual fear is disarming, it has reduced us to children. I’m certainly no better, obsessive about everyone sticking in a group, whining if anyone leaves for too long. But everyone is doing their best. People look out for each other fiercely. I am proud that not once has anyone asked me to go home. Friends bring me clean clothes, force me to eat, chaperone me everywhere, but they trust my judgement in staying.

Ellie flew home in June, but has kept in touch with friends and loved ones in the country. “It does feel a little unfair that I was able to hit ‘game over’ while everyone else has to keep going,” she says. “But I’m not going to lie and say that it hasn’t been a relief to have a proper bed and bath after so many nights of sleeping in filthy conditions, with people getting sick.”

I am trying to be brave and smart, but it’s impossible to be both at the same time. But whatever happens, I hope I am here to see things begin to get better.

Quite apart from the earthquake, Ellie’s PhD, which is being supervised by Professor Anthony Caleshu, in the School of Humanities and Performing Arts, has been a challenging topic to research. The caste system places Tharu people at the base of society, but prejudice and a rapid westernisation of the younger generation has made it difficult for Ellie to find and conduct meaningful interviews.

“I have gone to Nepal as a young white female, and getting taken seriously as an academic is a major hurdle,” she says. “I have had some disastrous interviews with people who cannot resolve the clash between the way I am and the way they think I should be.”

Ellie is due to return to Nepal later in the year to continue her research. She has received a Roland Levinsky Award of £1,200 to help fund her trips.
Dr Megan Crawford joined Plymouth University in October 2014, having previously been Deputy Head of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. She is now Director of the Plymouth Institute of Education.

Q So what persuaded you to move from one of the world’s elite universities to a very different, modern institution?

I was looking for a head of department role, but I particularly wanted to be somewhere that had good foundations in place that I could work to build upon – and Plymouth certainly fitted that bill. There has been a lot of great work done here in recent years, especially in light of the ever-changing national education policy, and we have first-rate lecturers, researchers and students who can take Plymouth’s reputation as an educator of educators to a whole new level.

Q What do you think are the Institute of Education’s greatest assets?

Aside from the students and staff I’ve already mentioned, there is the fact you can now get an education with Plymouth University right from early years to post-16 – through our work with the Mayflower and Marine Academy primaries – through to postgraduate level. Then there is the way we are embedded within our communities, with the majority of our undergraduates coming from, and staying in, Cornwall, Devon and Dorset. Add into that the links to our partner colleges and you have an exciting package, which I think gives us quite an exciting offer within the higher education sector.

I would like to create more of an atmosphere in which people feel they can be innovative and bold, taking their existing good work to a new level.
I think the people who apply to study here have a genuine love for their subject, and a wish to pass on that enthusiasm to others.

And in contrast, where do you feel our offer can be improved or expanded?

We are just about to launch a new qualification in early years education, and I think there is potential for expanding our postgraduate offer, but largely I do think we need to have a period of consolidation on the teaching front. However, from a research perspective, while we had a reasonable showing in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework – especially in terms of impact – I would like to create more of an atmosphere in which people feel they can be innovative and bold, taking their existing good work to a new level. Having more strings to our bow is one of the factors that will continue to encourage students to make us their number one choice.

Teachers often get a bad press, and yet our application numbers remain strong each year. Why do you think that is, and how can we maintain that?

I think the people who apply to study here have a genuine love for their subject, and a wish to pass on that enthusiasm to others. But one of the key issues facing the education sector in recent years has been the drop-out rate among teachers, with many new recruits buckling under the pressure placed upon them. We all know schools where those teachers who have been there for decades are the ones who make the school special, but I feel we have a job to do in ensuring our trainees leave full of enthusiasm and with a realistic appreciation of the challenges to come.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know.

My dad was a naval architect who was apprenticed in Devonport, and I had cousins in Plymouth we used to visit. But I spent my mid-to-late childhood in New England, and it gave me a fascinating and first-hand insight into different ways of educating. In the States, things were quite laid-back – t-shirts rather than blazers – and I did then struggle with certain aspects of my schoolwork when I returned to the UK aged 13. But the experience helped me enormously and, I believe, I still regularly put many of the lessons I learned out there into practice today.

You’ve already indicated that education is a constantly changing field. Just what impact could national policy decisions have on the Institute of Education over the coming years?

This is a very difficult time for the whole sector, and national education policy can – and does – regularly change at the flick of a switch. That means we have to constantly monitor what we do and will potentially have to revamp the content of our courses each year in line with government decisions. Changes in policy do signal changes that we, as teacher trainers, have to implement very swiftly if we are to correctly prepare our graduates for the world they will enter when they leave the University.
They are currently rated as one of the hottest comedy stage acts by national critics, Broadway Baby. Their debut at the Edinburgh Fringe garnered four-star reviews, and they’ve been invited back to do no less than 21 dates this year. And all this just a matter of months since they formed, post-graduation in 2014. CONNECT requested an audience with Drake’s Drummers – Pelham Grosvenor-Stevenson (aka Plum), Callum Moffat and Adam Toon.

**Q** How did you get into acting?

**Cal.** I did an A Level in drama but chose to do something more scientific at university (geography) because I thought it would be more useful in the long term. That’s what happens when 18-year-olds make decisions that will affect the rest of their lives!

**Adam.** We all met through the University of Plymouth Amateur Dramatics (UPAD) society, all being on the committee in our final year. That’s when things became really interesting...

**Cal.** We used to write these enormous productions with, like, 28 characters. We wanted to get everyone in the society involved, regardless of ability, and in our third year we had more than 100 people involved in a six-hour production that consisted of six different shows.

**Q** So what inspired you to form your own company?

**Adam.** It all started with Edinburgh...

**Cal.** Plum and I grew up in Stratford, with this enormous Shakespearean influence. And we were writing a play called Shakespeare’s Avengers Assembleth, in which we took these iconic characters – Shakespeare in the Nick Fury role, Romeo, Hamlet, Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and Brutus – and we smashed them together with as little subtlety and tact as possible. And Plum said he wanted to take it to Edinburgh.

**Plum.** I called this company and by chance they had just had a cancellation. They gave us the opportunity, and it was perfect
It’s great that critics have taken notice of us – we were recently placed in Broadway Baby’s top ten comedy acts, sandwiched between Reginald D Hunter and Paul Merton.

because they had a 70-seat venue, and we sold out in more than half of our shows. When we got back we received a commission to write, produce and perform some shows for the Outpost Theatre Festival, and it was at that point we decided to form the company.

Where does the name Drake’s Drummers come from?

Cal. Well, I was in Francis Drake Hall, and I’d heard about Drake’s Drum on a visit to Buckfast Abbey, and the myth that it will sound whenever England is in need. And we’ve loved living in the South West so much that we wanted an element of folklore in there.

Plum. It’s not that we’re egotists and narcissists whatsoever!

Who are your comedic influences?

Adam. We have a very similar sense of humour, and that really helps with the writing. Our influences would be Fry and Laurie, Blackadder, Monty Python – farcical stuff but not to the point of pantomime.

How much do you enjoy being up there on stage?

Plum. I love the acting. I mean, I still get terrified before I go on stage, but then three minutes in and I’m ‘get me back on that stage!’ It helps that we’re still laughing at our jokes months after we’ve first written them, and Cal also does things up there on stage that he’s never done in rehearsal.

So what have been the challenges of running your own company?

Adam. Finding rehearsal space has been perhaps the toughest thing. We’re all working part-time jobs and there are times when we’ve had to rehearse in parks and public spaces. But the University has been brilliant and has recently offered us rehearsal space in the Roland Levinsky Building. And one of the more surprising things we’ve found is that ‘performing’ is only a small part of running a theatre company. So many hours are spent on meetings, budgeting and devising – it’s much more of a business than we perhaps thought it would be.

How have you found the writing – especially with your scientific backgrounds?

Plum. When I wrote Shakespeare’s Avengers Assembleth, it was the first piece of writing I’d done since GCSEs. I sent it to Cal and he said, “We’re going to need some punctuation here!” But over the last six months, I feel we’re definitely developing our craft.

So what’s next?

Plum. We’ve been offered another slot at the Edinburgh Fringe, this time for 21 days, and we’re filming a trailer for the new play, which is a semi-sequel to Shakespeare’s Avengers Assembleth – titled Age of Oberon.

Cal. Our costumes are being made, and we’re close to our Kickstarter total to fund the trip – this time we’re going up with eight people. It’s great that critics have taken notice of us – we were recently placed in Broadway Baby’s top ten comedy acts, sandwiched between Reginald D Hunter and Paul Merton, so there’s a real sense of expectation now.
From completing her undergraduate studies to securing a position at the Natural History Museum, Dr Natasha Stephen’s career path is – on the face of it at least – what you might expect from an aspiring geologist. But in 2009, she chose a study topic that continues to take her work outside of the Earth’s atmosphere.

“I had always enjoyed studying igneous rocks and volcanoes, but geologists in these fields globally were tending to focus on a few regions, such as Iceland and Hawaii,” Natasha says. “I wanted something a little more exotic and had always been fascinated by space – so I chose to study Mars.”

In making that choice, the 28-year-old, who joined the University after completing a PhD at Imperial College London, consigned herself to confronting a number of logistical challenges. We know very little about the volcanoes on Mars, and without the means to visit them we’re limited to gleaning insights from the handful of Martian meteorites in collections around the world and the findings of space missions, which are continually sending back new information about our planetary neighbour.

But that, in itself, has always been part of the appeal for Natasha, who is now Scientific Officer within the Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre (EMC). And by establishing links with museums and organisations throughout the world, she is generating a unique picture of what happened to the ‘red planet’ and anything that may have existed there.

“Around 45,000 meteorites have fallen to Earth and have been collected and recorded, but just 72 of those are presently known to have come from Mars.”

Natasha is one of a few geologists now using two very different techniques to analyse the Martian meteorites, and she is building up a
Natasha’s research then focuses on where the rocks were formed – on the surface from a volcanic eruption, or ejected from below the planet’s surface at some point in its 4.6 billion year history. Using the state-of-the-art equipment within the EMC, Natasha can generate magnified images of the rocks, making it possible to catalogue the precise physical structure of each specimen. The nature of her work also means that the materials are fully analysed but not damaged, so that scientists with enhanced technology in the future will be able to re-use the same rocks for further tests.

Natasha says: “All of the rocks on Earth have specific oxygen signatures and they are largely similar to those from the Moon, suggesting a similar origin. We know the meteorites are from Mars because they have a different oxygen signature and trapped gases in them, with a composition that matches exactly with the Martian atmosphere measured by the Viking landers in the 1970s. These gases are likely to be the result of all the volcanoes on Mars.”

Natasha works with researchers around the world to source new material, and hopes to travel to Australia in the search for more material later this year. She says: “Many of the samples we are analysing have been floating in space for millions of years, and it is by pure chance that they get trapped into our orbit and land here.”

She adds: “As well as establishing the first comprehensive database for mineral spectra to help use spacecraft and rover data, the main goal of my work is actually not about trying to figure out whether there was ever life on Mars but to establish what happened to the planet. Our work could give us an insight as to what caused it to become geologically dead and whether it might also occur here on Earth in the future.”

Natasha also places huge importance on doing outreach work with schools and colleges across the region, and she was among the speakers during this year’s British Science Week events at the University. Through that, she hopes to inspire more people to ask questions about a planet that is so near, in the context of the universe, but so far in terms of its geological state.
SPOTLIGHT

ANNETTE DALY
BREATHTAKING ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

It’s Murmansk, Russia, and the April air temperature is below freezing. More pertinently, the water into which you are about to step is at freezing point – and you’re going to be spending the next 20 minutes or so swimming in nothing more than a bathing suit. You raise the flag of your native country above your head, and the crowd go wild. How do you feel?

“Absolutely terrified,” says Annette Daly, Careers Adviser at the University, and gold medallist for Zimbabwe at the 2015 World Ice Swimming Championship. “I thought to myself, ‘What on earth am I doing here? This is really going to hurt’. Just talking about it now is giving me butterflies.”

For Annette, it was the pinnacle of a remarkable adventure – one that saw her transported to the realms of superstardom for five days. Now, back on campus with her feet firmly on dry land, the story unfolds equal parts bravery, eccentricity...shivery.

“It all began when I became a member of the Devon and Cornwall Wild Swimming group,” she says. “Through the club, I discovered a group of like-minded people who enjoy swimming in cold water.

“Absolutely terrified,” says Annette Daly, Careers Adviser at the University, and gold medallist for Zimbabwe at the 2015 World Ice Swimming Championship. “I thought to myself, ‘What on earth am I doing here? This is really going to hurt’. Just talking about it now is giving me butterflies.”

Training at a quarry lake on Bodmin Moor, Annette completed her first ice mile in 2014, becoming the 74th person to achieve the feat. Despite enjoying the experience, a back injury took her out of the water for a number of months, and it was only when she applied to take part in the World Championships – and was accepted to represent Zimbabwe – that things really began to happen.

“There’s something about swimming in really cold water – it’s the mental challenge for sure, but you also get this tremendous endorphin rush afterwards. I’ve always enjoyed it.”

“It’s something about swimming in really cold water – it’s the mental challenge for sure, but you also get this tremendous endorphin rush afterwards. I’ve always enjoyed it.”

“I’d been off work and having physio on my back and the combination of the exercise and the cold water really helped me get back to work,” Annette says. “I did a couple of swims, including one at Lake Windermere,
and began to regain my fitness. With ice swimming, it’s not something you can do on your own – you need a lot of support, like medical teams around you in case you get into difficulties.”

For an ice mile to be officially ratified, the water has to be below 5º Celsius in three separate readings, and must be videoed and ratified by observers. Simply finding water that is cold enough can be a challenge in the UK, and meant Annette had to find some truly novel ways to acclimatise. She says: “Apart from my pool training, I would swim once a week at the quarry in Cornwall. One day we turned up to find it had frozen, so we cut a hole in the ice and sat in the water! And then an engineer friend took a fresh water tub, of the type you find on building sites, and modified it for me. I filled it with water, and I would sit in there every day before work. I started at five minutes and by the end I was in there for 20. It was torture.”

Annette completed her second ice mile at the Lough Dan Invitational Ice Mile in Ireland in February, braving 3.8º water, and then set off for the combined World Ice Swimming Championships and Russian Open Water Swimming Championships in March. Touching down with competitors from 15 nations, she found herself greeted at the tiny airport by media, personal translators, regional dignitaries, and the warmth of a hugely excited local population.

“Ice swimmers are viewed as celebrities in Russia, so we had television reporters and photographers swarming all over us before we’d even grabbed our bags,” she says. “And I’ve never signed autographs before!”

Just 24 hours later, she was led out for her ‘heat’ in a pool that had been carved by chainsaw out of the ice of Lake Semenovskoe.

“You have to mentally prepare yourself for that initial shock when you first get in the water,” she says. “I concentrate on my breathing – you have to control it otherwise your body can quickly slip into difficulty. First, you get pins and needles all over and then numbness through your hands and feet. Next, the muscles start to contract and your stroke essentially begins to shorten. The water in Russia was the coldest I have known – it was like swimming through a slush puppy. I could feel the ice crystals forming.”

Annette took 21 minutes to swim the one-kilometre course – securing a gold medal for her age category as a result. Over the next two days, at the same venue, she took part in four sprints and finally a 450m race in which she won a bronze medal. She describes this as the hardest race of the competition as she had not yet recovered from the previous five races. Plenty of others didn’t even get that far – thorough medicals before each event saw some athletes refused permission to compete, while ‘seconders’ watched each competitor closely for signs of fatigue, with some forced to retire, even with mere metres remaining.

“On each occasion, I was assisted from the pool by a couple of burly Russians, and taken to the medical tent, where they gradually and quite expertly warmed you – it was worth it for all the hot towels they wrapped you in,” she says. “They looked after the competitors incredibly well.”

Annette is keen to repeat the experience at the 2017 World Championships in Germany, and with ice swimming potentially becoming a Winter Olympic sport, the possibility of representing Zimbabwe on the coldest, grandest stage is not beyond the realms of possibility. Mother, careers adviser, torch-bearer?

“We’ll see what the future holds,” she adds. “All I know is that I’m doing the Plymouth Breakwater Swim next, and it will be an awful lot warmer!”

Taking the plunge in Lake Semenovskoe.
THE BIG WEEKEND FESTIVAL

The inaugural Big Festival Weekend was held in June and attracted more than 5,000 people onto campus. One of the largest-ever events to be held at the University, it boasted a packed programme of activities for children and adults, and incorporated the Plymouth Respect Festival.

It kicked off on the Saturday morning with a parade by local schoolchildren from the city centre with costumes and creations on a marine and maritime theme. Many of the events had a particular family focus, including a ‘curious campus tour’, craft activities, including a fish-decorating competition, jewellery design and Father’s Day card making. There were animals and insects from Dartmoor Zoo, the Tamar Valley Donkey Park and Jack’s Zoo, live music, and a range of stands and stalls.

Michelin-starred chef Peter Gorton provided a cookery demonstration as part of a showcase on world foods, and Benjamin Mee, Honorary Doctor at the University, and owner of Dartmoor Zoo, hosted a question and answer session following a screening of We Bought a Zoo, the Hollywood adaptation of his book.

As well as the family events, the Big Festival Weekend included showcases of prominent partnerships and world-class research, and there was an opportunity to visit laboratories, the Immersive Vision Theatre and the Marine Building to get a flavour of the University’s work. The Big Festival Weekend also incorporated the HOT ’15 exhibition.

Christian Burden, Head of the Development Office, said: “We had fantastic representation from all sections of the community, and anecdotally, the feedback we have had has been extremely positive. Certainly the vibe and atmosphere on campus was wonderful, and much of that is down to our people – our staff, students and alumni – who devoted their time over a weekend to really showcase the University.”

QUESTION TIME

The University hosted BBC’s Question Time programme in June, for a second time in four years. On this occasion The House was the venue, and it provided a great opportunity for students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Business to meet the crew and presenter Jonathan Dimbleby, to gain a behind-the-scenes perspective. They also met members of the panel, including Development Secretary Justine Greening MP; Labour leadership contender and Shadow International Development Secretary Mary Creagh MP; and Liberal Democrat leadership contender Norman Lamb MP.
AIR-RAID SHELTER VISIT

Around 90 local schoolchildren stepped back in time when they donned period costume and visited the World War II air-raid shelter beneath the Scott Building. The University’s Estates and Facilities Management team arranged for the party from St Stephen’s School in Saltash to have safe access to the site, for which the University acts as guardian.

A FAREWELL TO ANN AND FAYE

There was a special farewell this term for two of the most popular members of the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences – Dr Ann Humphreys and Faye Doris.

Around 90 people attended the symposium ‘Transforming Nursing and Midwifery: From Preference to Prominence’, held to celebrate the influence and impact of their 20-year careers at the University.

Ann, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and Faye, Academic Lead for Midwifery, both joined the University in 1996, and they took to the stage to give farewell lectures that looked forward as much as reflected on the past.

Professor Patricia Livsey, Executive Dean of the faculty, chaired and opened the symposium, and there was a debate in which Tracey Proctor-Childs and Professor Jos Latour challenged the audience on future trends in healthcare and the impact on the University’s nursing and midwifery education.

There were sessions with Heather Parker, Chair of the Regional Heads of the Midwifery group; Professor Ruth Endacott, who spoke about the University’s new Clinical Schools; and Carmel Lloyd, Head of Education and Learning at the Royal College of Midwives. Members of Faye’s family also spoke via Skype from New York, and both Interim Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Coslett, and Chairman of the Board of Governors, James Brent, attended to pay tribute to their work.

“It’s impossible to overstate the impact and influence that Ann and Faye have had upon thousands of students and staff within the University and out in practice,” says Patricia. “The symposium provided us with an opportunity to recognise their great work in nursing and midwifery, and to thank them both for the incredible contribution they’ve made.”
MARIE CURIE FUNDING
SUCCESS FOR ROBOTICS

The Centre for Robotics and Neural Systems has secured around £1.5 million worth of new funding from the competitive European Marie Sklodowska Curie programme. The funding for the Innovative Training Networks will bring seven new PhD fellows to Plymouth, to be complemented by additional locally funded students, across three projects. One project, APRIL, will create the first-ever industrial PhD network in personal robotics, establishing a partnership with European leaders Aldebaran Robotics and Sony Japan. The second, SECURE, will investigate safe human–robot interaction and includes colleagues in the School of Psychology. And the third, DCOMM, will study how people communicate with robots using gestures.

The bid was led by Angelo Cangelosi, Professor of Artificial Intelligence and Cognition. He said: “This new funding will guarantee continuous external income for the CRNS for the coming five years, further strengthening the sustainability of the robotics research priority at the University. And it makes Plymouth a de facto EU Doctoral Training Centre in Robotics, and strengthens our interdisciplinary collaboration between the School of Computing, Electronics and Mathematics and the School of Psychology.”

PEDAL POWER

It’s been a tour de force for a number of staff and students over the summer after successfully undertaking some impressive cycling challenges. Among them was Dan Hillier, Employment Relations Specialist, who cycled from John O’Groats to Land’s End to raise money for a cancer charity – and to undertake one last challenge before he turns 50!

Dan took 11 days to cycle the route, averaging 90 miles per day, and had to pedal through the pain barrier after developing knee problems within the first hour. But the support of family and friends, who joined him at various stages along the route (including one who cycled all the way from Cumbria to Bodmin), helped him to complete the journey.

“I met some incredible people along the way,” Dan said. “I came across Dave near Tain in the Highlands, walking from John O’Groats to Land’s End in aid of Cancer Research. Christine from Lockerbie who cooked me an impromptu meal at her B&B and her husband Ian who offered to drive me to Carlisle to ‘get ahead of the weather’, but we agreed it would be cheating!”

YOUR STORIES
AWARDS GALORE

A number of staff have been honoured for their work this term. Among them was Professor Camille Parmesan, Chair in Public Understanding of Marine Science and Human Health, who was awarded the 2015 Marsh Award for Climate Change Research by the British Ecological Society. The award recognised the work that Camille has done in areas such as species migration and ecological changes due to the changing climate.

Professor Iain Stewart, meanwhile, has received the President’s Medal from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Joining previous recipients including Lord Coe, Richard Branson, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Iain was recognised for his services to communicating science and to public relations in his field.

The third award was presented to Rosie Brennan, Director of the Law Clinic and Lecturer in the Law School (pictured). Rosie was given the Sam Kallon Award for her commitment to refugee work, in particular her involvement with Plymouth Refugee Week. As part of her work with the Law Clinic, Rosie set up the Family Reunion for Refugees Unit in partnership with the British Red Cross, in September 2014. The unit provides advice and representation to refugees applying to reunite with their families from whom they have been forced to separate – among them many clients from countries such as Syria, Sudan and Eritrea.

Rosie said: “It was a very great honour to receive the award, presented as it was by Isatta Kallon, wife to the late Sam Kallon who founded Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support. But it was important to me that I dedicated it to the people who have helped me in my work, especially our Plymouth students who assist me in the clinic and who all say how much they learn from being involved. I am delighted that students are also able to volunteer with the British Red Cross Humanitarian team. We are setting up a new initiative with the BRC from September in which students will deliver international humanitarian law workshops to school pupils.”

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT VISIT

Senior figures from the South African government visited the University as part of efforts to transform the country’s blue economy. Obed Mlaba, South African High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, led a visit exploring how the South West could potentially work with the country in areas such as aquaculture, shipping, offshore resources and marine renewable energy.

Mr Mlaba was joined by officials from the South African Department of Agriculture and Department of Transport, as well as by leaders from the fields of maritime and media, academia and commerce. They met academics from the Faculty of Business at Mast House, home to the University’s Graduate School of Management and the Futures Entrepreneurship Centre, and spoke to experts within the Marine Innovation Centre (MARIC).

Professor Nikolaos Tzokas, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business, said: “The South West has a rich tradition of maritime discovery, and this visit provided us with an opportunity to explore potential collaborations and establish new relationships. It gave us the chance to showcase our capability in delivering a wide range of education and research activities that could be useful in South Africa in the coming years. It also demonstrated our desire to develop more mutually beneficial partnerships, both in maritime and across higher education, and our work to engage with the local business sector now and in the future.”
The deadline for editorial submissions is **OCTOBER 5, 2015.**
Please contact Andrew Merrington on 01752 588003, andrew.merrington@plymouth.ac.uk

**CONNECT** is produced by EXTERNAL RELATIONS and is designed by DC GROUP (UK) LTD.

The University is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. If you require this publication in an alternative format, please contact: EXTERNAL RELATIONS on 01752 588000; eradmin@plymouth.ac.uk