This review charts the progress and development that we have made here at Plymouth University – thanks to our staff, our students, our alumni, our partners… our people.

The year has not been without its challenges, both from within the sector and beyond. The important thing is how you respond to challenge, how you adapt and move forward. And move forward we have.

Perhaps the defining theme for the year has been our strong focus upon the core activities of the University: teaching excellence and high-quality research. It is these that are both the pillars and lifeblood of academic institutions.

Of course, we have also given great focus to those activities that support these endeavours. These include new state-of-the-art facilities to support teaching, research and student wellbeing; a digital learning environment that crosses the boundaries of our campus; and a programme of curriculum enrichment that is transforming our student learning experience.

These changes are all designed to enable our people to flourish and focus on what they do best – teaching, learning, researching, questioning and collaborating – as you will see from the abundance of examples included within this Annual Review.
IT HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR AT PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY; HERE ARE SOME OF THE MANY HIGHLIGHTS

THE YEAR

2014

AUGUST

BRAIN TUMOUR RESEARCH becomes an official charity partner of the University, shortly before Plymouth is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for research into low-grade brain tumours. Right: students and staff take part in the sponsored Wear a Hat Day.

SEPTEMBER

QUEEN DRUMMER Roger Taylor (below), cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber (left), Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and dancer Wayne Sleep are among a cast of thousands at Graduation 2014.

OCTOBER

THE PIONEERING CUMBERLAND GP PRACTICE, the first to be run jointly between a university and an NHS primary care provider, celebrates a major milestone when its 1,000th patient registers.

NOVEMBER

THE CURTAIN RISES on the University’s £7 million performing arts centre, The House, opened by acclaimed choreographer Russell Maliphant.

DECEMBER

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS of the University’s research is graded as world-leading or internationally excellent in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.

2015

JANUARY

TOPPING THE PEOPLE & PLANET GREEN LEAGUE for the second time, Plymouth is ranked the most sustainable university in the country.

FEBRUARY

PLANS ARE CONFIRMED to redevelop the Plymouth Science Park, a hub for high-growth IT and digital businesses, creating 190 skilled jobs for the city.

MARCH

THE UNIVERSITY OUTREACH TEAM welcomes around 1,000 visitors aged 6–12 to the University as part of British Science Week. The young people explore the latest research and learn about pyromania, chemistry, marine ecosystems, robotics and engineering.

APRIL

THE UNIVERSITY ACHIEVES its highest ranking yet in the Times Higher Education 100 Under 50 league table – placing 37th in the world and fourth highest in the UK of those institutions under the age of 50.

MAY

UNIVERSITY SCIENTISTS are at the centre of two major biological discoveries, with Dr Robert Puschendorf (above) among a team that discovered a new species of glass frog in Costa Rica, and Dr David Bilton (left), Reader in Aquatic Biology, identifying a new species of diving beetle in South Africa.

JUNE

MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE flock to the campus for the Big Festival Weekend. The occasion offers a huge range of events and activities, and also incorporates the Plymouth Respect Festival and HOT ’15 arts degree show.

JULY

SENIOR FIGURES from the South African government visit the campus to meet University leaders and academics across science, engineering and business sectors and discuss potential collaboration opportunities.
Almost without exception, students choose Plymouth University for two compelling reasons: programme and ‘place’.

Time and again, students tell us that coming to Plymouth is about the courses they want, in a location that is hugely desirable. And, as you’ll see over the next four pages, we have been working to enhance those two aspects even further.

In moving towards an internationally recognised semester model, we have enriched our teaching and learning with co-curricular opportunities that focus on key aspects such as employability, personal development and retention.

We’ve invested in our campus, providing new facilities – both real and virtual – and have taken steps to ensure that our forums reverberate with the student voice.

Our partnership with the Students’ Union is central to so much of what we’ve done this year and we have supported and enabled its members to make important changes and undertake key pieces of work. Taken together, this represents a genuine commitment to empower our students, as partners and as co-creators of the Plymouth experience.

Professor Richard Stephenson
Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience
Replacing the University’s existing module-focused virtual learning environment with something that was fit for purpose for 2015 and beyond was always going to be a huge undertaking. However, with early buy-in from a large number of students and staff, the process has delivered a more innovative and engaging learning experience for all.

“I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say there was genuine excitement when the Digital Learning Environment (DLE) project launched,” reflects Technical Project Manager Rupert Frankum. “After battling for so long with SharePoint, people really embraced the change and engaged with the process.

“We held ‘show and tells’ with staff and they responded to.”

The DLE’s functions include timetable information, coursework submission, e-assessments and module information that guide students towards extensive learning options. Users can also access peer-reviewed learning and book meetings with tutors, all through a single sign-in.

“It opens up a wealth of possibilities for teachers to engage with students outside of the classroom,” said Professor Neil Witt, Head of Academic Support in Technology and Learning. “Of course, that does mean that we might have to work a little harder to provide that additional content that will enrich their studies, but with the DLE automating a number of processes, it frees up time to provide that rich content students respond to.”

With 6,000 Academic Partnership students now also able to access it, and the potential to open it up to prospective students and other external contacts, the DLE has become a portal into the teaching and learning community of the University.

“Throughout the summer of 2014 we underwent an impressive renovation of the commercial areas within the Students’ Union, which completely transformed what was originally a dark, underground space into a bright and lively venue. We were able to achieve this with the incredible support and investment from Plymouth University. Since the refurbishment we have seen a huge increase in daytime usage, as well as a more diverse variety of events.

“USPUS was also recognised as a successful organisation this year, as we achieved NUS Best Bar None Gold, Plymouth Best Bar None – Best Student Venue and NUS Green Impact Gold, and moved into the top 20 students’ unions in the country in the National Student Survey.

“We are incredibly proud of everything our students and staff have accomplished over the past year, and the statistics on the next page outline many of these achievements.”

Investing in digital textbooks

In October, the University rolled out a pioneering scheme that will eventually see more than 31,000 ebooks made available to students.

In partnership with Vital Source Technologies Inc., the scheme is accessed through the new Digital Learning Environment and builds on a successful pilot that began in the School of Psychology in 2011. Students will be able to read ebooks – either online or downloaded to their preferred device – from more than 16 publishers.

“Providing personal electronic copies of core texts significantly cuts the cost of university, and gives all an equal opportunity to succeed. We are immensely proud that Plymouth is pioneering this very practical way of supporting students, and it delivers on our strategy to enrich what we do through appropriate use of digital technology.”

Enhancing graduate employability

“We’re now moving to a position of greater clarity, where we’re differentiating skills development from the reflective learning and evaluation work. The work we’re doing with employers is being reflected back into our service, so that we can tailor what we do accordingly.”

As an overall strategy, this work supports the University’s institutional focus on employability and, in time, help to boost Plymouth’s position in terms of the prospects of leavers.

“Through these programmes we can help our students to develop their skills and their understanding of how and why employers rate those skills,” adds Professor Richard Stephenson, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience. “By doing so, our graduates will stand out in the marketplace, which will be reflected in the league tables.”
In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), a substantial proportion of Plymouth University’s research was graded as world-leading or of international quality, with more than 63% of our research graded at three or four stars.

The University’s highest-rated submission was for Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences, which includes marine science, environmental chemistry and geology, with 85% of its research graded as world-leading or of international quality.

The University returned four-star rated, world-leading research in all 18 categories that were submitted and was ranked number one for Research Output in Clinical Medicine, which measures the quality of research publication and the number of citations.

Over the coming pages you will find just a few examples of the many significant research projects that have been carried out at Plymouth University over the past 12 months.

In order to further build on our areas of world-leading research and to provide an institutional focus for cross-disciplinary research excellence, this year has seen the formation of three new institutes: the Sustainable Earth Institute; the Institute for Social, Policy and Enterprise Research (iSPER); and the Creative Arts and Humanities Institute.

These new institutes sit alongside the existing Marine Institute, Cognition Institute, Institute of Health and Community, and Institute for Stratified Translational Medicine.

The University also continues to push forward the boundaries in pedagogic research in higher education through PedRIO.
WAVE STRUCK

SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND THAT THE STORMS THAT PUMMEL OUR COASTLINES ARE EVEN MORE DESTRUCTIVE THAN WAS PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT

The huge storms that the UK experienced at the start of 2014 were some of the worst in living memory, with images such as the railway line collapsing into the sea at Dawlish in Devon appearing on media channels across the world.

Now, by using seismometers, laser scanners and video scanners to measure the impact of the waves that struck the coast in West Cornwall, scientists from Plymouth University have found that the massive waves physically shook the cliffs to a much greater degree than has been recorded in the past.

In just two weeks during January and February in 2014, 1,350 cubic metres of cliff were eroded along a 300m stretch of coastline — more than 100 times greater than the previously measured average.

“What we’ve seen right across the South West is unprecedented damage and change to our coastline — from sandy beaches stripped from beaches to rapid erosion of cliffs,” said Professor Paul Russell. These figures will help to gauge some of the invisible forces our coastal structures face, and highlight the risk of sudden cliff damage.”

Healthy interaction

‘Social robots’ are helping children with diabetes to become more positive about their condition. Known as AUZE-E, this €6.5 million European Commission-funded initiative proved successful in enabling children to accept their condition as well as to become more confident about their futures. The programme uses “Nao” robots, each of which is around 60cm tall, to interact with children to deliver responses personalised for each individual.

Professor Tony Belaeme, who leads the research, said: “This is not just about a novelty factor catching the youngsters’ attention, it is about the robots engaging in a way the children accept; giving them information they can understand and be motivated by. By personalising their responses and recognising the children they have met before, the robots can support and educate, and we have seen many times the positive impact this is having on children and their families.”

The robots can be programmed to perform many tasks, including helping children to keep a diary of their food intake, insulin injections and blood sugar levels. The results showed that children were more inclined to provide this information if helped by a robot, as well as developing a broader understanding of diabetes and their health.

Debris in the ocean

Using reports from across the globe, researchers have found evidence of 44,000 animals and organisms either killed or harmed by the plastic rubbish and debris they encounter in our oceans. The majority of cases were reported off the coasts of North America, Australia and Europe. The debris is most commonly responsible for entanglements — plastic rope and netting — was found to have a major impact on North Atlantic right whales, green, bryde’shead and hawksbill turtles, and the northern fulmar.

Professor Richard Thompson, who is acknowledged as one of the world’s leading experts on microplastics in the marine environment, said: “Encounters with marine debris are of particular concern for species that are recognised to be threatened. With 17% of all species reported in the paper as near threatened, vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List, it is evident that marine debris may be contributing to the potential for species extinction.”

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Bee-free zones?

Studies by ecologists at Plymouth have shown that the continued use of pesticides by farmers is resulting in bumblebees being more than twice as likely to visit flowers on the side of hedgerows away from fields.

“This dramatic reduction in the potential habitat of this insect group, vital for agricultural production through pollination, could have a bearing on their numbers if farmers fail to leave more space between fertiliser and pesticide spraying and hedgerows.

Historically, a healthy hedgegrow would have meant numerous bees and other insects on both sides. The field-side hedgegrow is now effectively working as a filter to protect the road-facing hedge.

“The pesticides and fertilisers in use today tend to mean plants such as nettles flourish, whereas honeysuckle and other bee-friendly species do not,” said Dr Mick Hanley. “Any work farmers do to encourage bees and other insects could have reciprocal benefits for their crops.”
Those living in affordable housing could soon benefit from improved energy-saving technology.

Being part of musical sessions can help women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence, researchers at Plymouth University have found. Mothers and children were able to begin building resilience, helping to ‘break the cycle of abuse’, through sessions that encourage self-expression.

The research was conducted by Professor Jocey Quinn and Claudia Blandon from the Plymouth Institute of Education, and was based on observations and interviews conducted at a domestic abuse refuge in the city.

SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY

LINKING SMARTPHONES WITH SMART METERS COULD LEAD TO BIG SAVINGS

Building experts from Plymouth University are hoping that being able to reduce energy and CO₂ consumption in homes via a game on a smartphone could drive up energy efficiency practices in affordable housing, while also enhancing IT literacy for residents.

With smart meters being rolled out in homes across the UK between now and 2020, householders will be provided with a range of detailed data on their energy usage. EnerGAware, a three-year initiative, will enable residents to test out variations in a virtual home within the game, before putting the most effective solutions into practice in real life.

“At the present time, people only tend to worry about their energy consumption when the bills come through but there is very little knowledge about the fact that changes in behaviour can influence it,” said Dr Alba Fuertes, the Principal Investigator on the project.

“What we are trying to do is make energy less of a chore, and more something they can directly impact on in an interesting and fun way. The increased use of apps and smartphones provides us with that opportunity, and we hope this project can have a genuine and lasting effect on issues such as fuel poverty, IT literacy and social exclusion.”

Mind music

In July, four people living with severe disability joined to make music with a string quartet through a Plymouth University-developed system known as Brain Computer Music Interface.

The initiative – led by Professor of Computer Music Eduardo Miranda, with Dr Julian D’Kelly and Dr Sophie Duport from London’s Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability – allows a person to control musical systems through brainwave signals detected by electrodes placed on the scalp.

The developers believe the technology could have a transformative impact on people being treated for medical conditions such as locked-in syndrome.

Professor Miranda, who is Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Computer Music Research at Plymouth, said: “Our work is giving people the opportunity to put their physical impediments aside, to use music to communicate in ways that would not normally be possible because of their medical conditions. It is an amazing example of research being taken out of the laboratory and into the real world, with both inspiring and very emotional results.”

Steve Thomas, one of the patient musicians involved in the project, said: “This is a truly magical experience. It is a chance to play with other severely disabled musicians, and it actually sounds impressive.”

Building resilience through music

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“Those living in affordable housing could soon benefit from improved energy-saving technology.”

ABOVE: Participants select which note to play by looking at flashing lights.

ABOVE: Sessions that encourage self-expression through music can help victims of domestic abuse.
LESS IS MORE?
REDUCING THE SIZE OF FOOD PACKS WITHOUT REDUCING THE COST, A RUSE THAT HAS BEEN LOOKED INTO BY PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY ACADEMICS

An international research team, led by Dr Stephen Wilkins from the Plymouth Graduate School of Management, has been investigating how consumers react when they discover the goods they buy are smaller than they once were.

Manufacturers of fast-selling goods have come up with a novel way of dealing with increases in cost—by shrinking pack sizes. For example, in the UK in 2013/14, the content in Alpen muesli packs fell from 1.5kg to 1.3kg, that of Hovis Best of Both bread fell from 800g to 750g, and that of Surf washing powder from 2kg to 1.6kg, but without a corresponding drop in price. Consumers tend not to notice these changes when making a purchase as most do not read the content information on the packaging, instead using a visual estimation of volume as a proxy for actual volume.

Dr Wilkins will be reporting the team’s findings in the European Journal of Marketing later this year, but the research so far seems to suggest that firms carrying out this strategy may suffer in the long term owing to damaged consumer loyalty to the brand.

The art of persuasion
Dr Nigel Jackson and Professor Sheela Agarwal from the School of Tourism and Hospitality are undertaking research to investigate people’s perception of the nature of persuasion, how they persuade others and how they are persuaded.

This investigation has been prompted by the recognition that the majority of studies use observation to assess the impact of persuasion on behaviour. This project aims to determine the extent to which the head (rational decision-making), the heart (emotional responses), or a mixture of both, guide individual persuasive behaviour within a set of identifiable circumstances through a quantitative survey. Such knowledge will inform the development of a persuasive index for how best to apply persuasive communications.

Outwitting the opinion pollsters
Professor Colin Rallings and Professor Michael Thrasher from Plymouth University’s Elections Centre, were two of the ‘exit poll eight’, the team that planned, designed, executed and analysed the BBC/ITV/Sky News exit poll that took the nation by surprise at 10pm on 7 May 2015.

The centre’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact case study confirmed the importance of Plymouth University’s mix of academic and applied research for bodies as diverse as the BBC and the House of Commons Library. For the sixth general election in succession, the School of Government’s Professors Rallings and Thrasher had significant on-screen roles in overnight and next-day election results programmes.

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Kenyan farmers reaping the rewards
A project run by Dr Robert Newbery and funded through a £533,000 Comic Relief grant has this year supported the start-up of 20 new agro-vet shops, employed over 60 members of staff and run almost 190 community events in the Kiambu County region of Kenya.

Dr Newbery and his colleagues from the Plymouth Graduate Management School and Plymouth Business School are now working in collaboration with the Seale- Hayne Educational Trust, and will be sending out a team of staff and students during the rapid expansion of their social enterprise in Kenya.

Keeping the 24-hour economy going
With funding from the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust, Dr Chris Pac-Soo and Dr Oliver Smith from the School of Law are examining the experiences of foreign nationals working in Plymouth within the night-time economy (NTE). Plymouth is an official migrant dispersal centre, but new arrivals, often working either as taxi drivers or staff in fast-food outlets, have experienced a well-documented level of racist victimisation. Working with a researcher who has experience of fast-food outlets at night, the study will utilise participant observation as well as semi-structured interviews to catalogue the perceived rise of victimisation amongst immigrants working in the NTE.
Research has found that offenders who take part in alcohol treatment programmes when sentenced are significantly less likely to reoffend in the year following their release.

The researchers, led by PhD student Marie Needham from the School of Psychology, found that offenders who did not participate in this kind of programme were twice as likely to be charged and two-and-a-half times more likely to be reconvicted. The researchers said: “Given the hundreds, if not thousands, of offenders who might be eligible to attend an alcohol treatment programme each year, this could amount to substantial public savings. Beyond financial gains, committing fewer offences and staying out of prison have strong and continued benefits for the offenders, their families and the community.”

The study – conducted in collaboration with the former Devon and Cornwall Probation Service – is part of the response to the World Health Organization’s call to consider the link between alcohol use and criminal behaviour a public health issue.

There are nearly one million violent attacks in the UK each year as the result of alcohol misuse, with alcohol-related crime costing between £8 billion and £13 billion each year.

Talking to parents and young people about their drinking has been found to significantly reduce their likelihood to reoffend, the study said.

“Sustainable development is a concept vital to healthcare,” said Professor Jackie Andrade, who is leading the project. “Owing to its relatively large carbon dioxide emissions, the use of toxic materials and the production of vast amounts of waste, healthcare is compromising public health and damaging the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

“In the European Union, the health sector creates at least 5% of total CO2 emissions, so improving energy and resource efficiency, procurement policies and waste management are vital for a more sustainable health sector.”

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Psychologists at Plymouth University found surprising results when investigating the association between sensation seeking and delinquency in intelligent young women.

The study, led by lecturer in psychology Dr Alison Bacon, found that young women with high levels of emotional intelligence (EI) were more likely to engage in delinquency than young males in their peer groups.

“Levels of sensation seeking peak in adolescence, and there is a well-documented association of them with delinquency and other risk-taking behaviours,” said Dr Bacon. “We predicted the relationship between sensation seeking and delinquent behaviour would be affected by EI, but, to discover it seemingly only lessened delinquency in young men—and not young women—was a surprising and unprecedented result.

“By showing that high EI is a positive thing for young men, we can see that promoting it in schools and other social arenas could have positive outcomes. For young women, we need to further explore why traits which should lead to high levels of self-esteem and self-regulation might predispose them to antisocial relational behaviours.”

Plymouth University has been recognised as being at the forefront of dementia care after a partnership with Devon Partnership NHS Trust was named Dementia Team of the Year at the British Medical Journal awards. The team, which included Professor Rod Sheaff from the School of Government, was praised for its “truly person-centred” project.

Work was undertaken in care homes in the Torbay area, where dementia champions worked to improve knowledge, leadership skills and confidence among care home staff.
A durable vaccine for Ebola

With African apes seen as the main source of Ebola virus transmission to humans via the trade in bush meat, a Plymouth University-led study is seeking to reduce infection through a vaccine that will both stabilise the endangered ape populations and protect humans against the effects of Ebola.

The novel approach the study team is adopting — using a vaccine that spreads easily from individual to individual — can lead to high levels of protective Ebola virus-specific immunity in apes, without the need for direct vaccination. As these apes live in one of the world’s least accessible regions, conventional vaccination is near impossible.

Building on a 2011 study by the same team, in which the cytomegalovirus-based vaccine provided long-lasting protective immunity in mice from Ebola virus, the research team will trial the vaccine in macaques.

“We must walk before we can run, but this study provided a little skip,” said Dr Michael Jarvis. “However, this disseminating approach does potentially provide a workable solution to a currently intractable problem: achieving high vaccine coverage in inaccessible ape populations.

“Given the impact of Ebola virus on African ape numbers in the wild, and the role of apes as a reservoir of Ebola virus transmission to humans via the bush meat trade, such a vaccine would be a win-win for humans and wild apes alike.”

“As these apes live in one of the world’s least accessible regions, conventional vaccination is near impossible.”

Further uses found for wonder material graphene

Graphene — the atomic-scale honeycomb lattice made up of carbon atoms — is being used to develop an innovative diagnostic technique for dementia. Researchers from Plymouth University, working with colleagues from Swansea University, have created a new way to detect so-called biomarkers found in bodily fluids — such as blood, fluid in the spine and brain, urine and saliva — which indicate dementia in the early stages of the disease. The technology will also be used to track the progression of the disease.

Unlike existing techniques, graphene-based biosensors will provide clinicians with real-time data and a conclusive test within minutes of a test being taken. The process will increase the accuracy of the detection of dementia, and may enable scientists to detect dementia objectively at the early stages of the disease through a simple blood test.

In October, the study, led by Professor Emmanuel Research from Plymouth University, received £1m in funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, Professor Research said: “This is truly new technology and one that has enormous potential for improving the diagnosis of dementia, especially Alzheimer’s disease. The team from Plymouth includes colleagues from the School of Computing and Mathematics and the Peninsula School of Medicine, while the graphene technology will be developed at Plymouth and Swansea.”

Studying chronic lung disease in East Africa

Chronic lung disease is a growing health issue in East Africa, and sufferers, who are prone to breathlessness and inactivity, are disproportionately from deprived communities.

The research team from Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry have received funding to evaluate a pulmonary rehabilitation programme, working initially in Uganda. If successful, the trial will continue in Uganda, as well as incorporating centres in Tanzania and Zambia. The researchers will assess the content of the programme and their ability to teach local health workers how to deliver it consistently.

Dr Rupert Jones, Clinical Research Fellow at Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, is leading the study. He said: “This is a disease that affects one in five adults in Africa; yet its treatment and rehabilitation for patients are not regarded as a health priority. By helping to develop a rehabilitation programme that takes into account local needs, resources and culture, we hope to go some way to supporting patients.”
Few can match the proud tradition of Plymouth University in the field of achieving fellowships. In total, 20 members of staff have become National Teaching Fellows. Six have been awarded in the last four years alone, this year’s recipient being Debby Cotton, Professor of Higher Education Pedagogy. Debby, like so many of those Fellows who precede her, has an international reputation for her work in areas such as sustainability pedagogies in higher education, the impact of technology on how students absorb information, and the experience of care leavers at university.

Professor Pauline Kneale, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, said: “This award demonstrates again just how many influential thinkers, theorists and practitioners we have in our teaching line-up that so many have been made Fellows over the years.”

Community engagement

The University is proud to play a key role within the region, be that through its research, its many routes to providing access to higher education across the greater South West, its support of local schools, or its desire to be an open and welcoming institution.

Around 70 members of staff are connected to the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise, helping to overcome the provision of dental care and treatment to some 16,000 NHS patients. Many are involved with, or help to facilitate, specific community-based projects that target some of the most disadvantaged sections of society, such as the elderly, the homeless and those with drug addictions.

The Cumberland Surgery in Devonport recently registered its one thousandth NHS patient, and has brought badly needed medical treatment to one of the poorest areas of the city. And last year, the Widening Access to Medical School (WAMS) team visited 60 schools and colleges across the South West, to help break down the barriers to young people entering the medical profession.

Many staff and students give up their time to ensure that major University events go smoothly and are memorable occasions for attendees. And this year saw one of the largest events ever to be held on campus – the Big Festival Weekend. The event attracted more than 5,000 people, and staff and students were involved with putting on a huge range of activities and events.

Global issues, global impact

The University’s research is defined by its excellence, its practical application and its focus upon issues that affect communities both global and local. The University’s expertise in low-grade brain tumours, for example, has been recognised by the charity Brain Tumour Research, and the University site has become one of four national Centres of Excellence.

Similarly, in the field of dementia research, academics in Plymouth are leading a new research network on behalf of Alzheimer’s Research UK. With nearly 15,000 people in Plymouth and Exeter alone suffering with dementia, the formation of the new network in the area will strengthen research taking place to understand and find a cure for the condition.

As the newest member of the Alzheimer’s Research UK Network, which was first established in 1998, funding for the South West Network Centre will provide brand new opportunities for scientists to share resources, attend scientific conferences, and pursue innovative projects with small experimental grants.

In the School of Marine Science and Engineering, a team of storm chasers has continued to monitor and report on the state of some of England’s most iconic sand and gravel beaches.

More than 400 social housing residents have now completed surveys about their home energy usage and internet access in the first stage of a three-year project to improve efficiencies, IT literacy and community engagement. Residents will have smart meters installed in their homes, and the data recorded will be used in a ‘virtual home’ with a game that participants will be able to interact with, and test out new behaviours.
Whether it is the £24 million in contracts we have with local businesses, the £100 million regional network of business support we oversee, or the successful collaborations that help to care for local people, Plymouth University’s central role in the economic and social prosperity of the South West cannot be underestimated.
A UNIVERSITY-LED NETWORK HAS OVERSEEN THE CREATION OF MORE THAN 1,000 JOBS IN THE SOUTH WEST

With jobs created across Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, the Growth Acceleration and Investment Network (GAIN) – a partnership between Plymouth University, Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Science Park – is really making its mark on the region.

By linking regional businesses with the knowledge, skills and facilities found at the University, GAIN aids the creation, growth and investment in new business ideas in the South West. It does this through providing space for entrepreneurs and growing businesses, internships and placements, world-class R&D facilities, and access to a wide range of business support.

Since the first of four awards from the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) was agreed in 2011, around 90 businesses have successfully applied for funding from a total £19 million of RGF money, £8 million of which was distributed in the past year. This in turn has unlocked more than £22 million in private investment.

Adrian Dawson is head of GAIN Projects and Partnerships: “Securing £11 million to continue our work to boost job creation across the South West is fantastic news, meaning we’re able to support dynamic companies in the region to grow and expand much more quickly than they would otherwise be able to.

“Growth Fund grants have made a vital difference to ambitious businesses in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, unlocking millions of pounds in private investment and bringing forward expansion plans which have made an extraordinary difference to the region’s economy. This latest award from the RGF means we can keep the momentum going in the South West, and continue the great work of the GAIN Growth Fund to support even more businesses to grow.”

The Regional Growth Fund has helped to create over 1,000 new jobs in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset.

With the opening of three new facilities over the past year, the University’s physical presence has added considerable weight to Plymouth’s development. The Marine Station, The House and the Wellbeing Centre all represent significant developments for Plymouth University, and we look forward to welcoming those from Plymouth and beyond to these excellent new facilities.
When it comes to sixth formers looking into a university’s facilities, Plymouth’s new Marine Station will be hard to beat. Located between the National Marine Aquarium and Queen Anne Battery, the £4.85 million development combines a waterfront teaching facility with a boathouse and crane, a compressor room for filling diving air cylinders, and drying rooms.

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

The new Marine Station is an awe-inspiring building.

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A dozen staff, among them the academic diving team, boat skippers and technical and support staff, are based at the Station. Teaching facilities include a ‘wet lab’, where up to 50 students can study samples collected from Plymouth Sound. There is also an aquarium with continuous fresh seawater, giving students a place to store samples.

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Location, Location, Location

The new Marine Station is an awe-inspiring building.

The University’s new Wellbeing Centre is fast becoming an integral part of the campus. The focal point for students, staff and community partners is located in a new three-storey building, which includes a renovated neighbouring facility.

There is now a medical surgery on the first floor, and there are ongoing discussions between the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences, Learning Support and Wellbeing and the Students’ Union as to how the facility and space can be best used with a range of services and practices.

Boots began trading in the ground floor commercial space in April, and store management are liaising with the University’s Estates and Facilities Management teams to ensure they provide a complementary offer to the current on-campus catering provision.
THOSE WHO BEGIN, OR CONTINUE, THEIR CAREERS WITH QUALIFICATIONS FROM PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY ARE PART OF A THRIVING GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Ongoing relationships with the University – in all its forms – are invaluable to our students and staff and add significantly to our impact. These pages provide a snapshot of some of these activities.
Honorary doctorates

In an annual gathering that attracts more than 22,000 visitors to the city and contributes £2.5 million to the local economy, last September’s graduation week saw many thousands of graduating students joined by the University’s honorary doctors for 2014.

From the worlds of entertainment and sport, healthcare and tourism, charity and science, almost two dozen leaders in their field were awarded honorary doctorates or sporting colours in recognition of their lifetime achievements.

Professor David Colcutt, Interim Vice-Chancellor, said: “This is the seventh year we have hosted the graduation ceremony overlooking Plymouth Sound, surely one of the most spectacular events of its kind in the country. We look forward to welcoming our latest cohort of honorary doctors and sporting colours into our community, and joining with them in celebrating their achievements, and those of our graduating students.”

Ajen Limbu, a second-year BEng (Honours) Civil Engineering student, and the first Tamar Engineering Fund beneficiary supported by Stephen Ball, said: “It has given me a great deal of confidence, and as a result, I have pushed myself into project management tasks and have spoken in front of audiences. It can really inspire a student to work even harder and really maintain that level of commitment to the course.”

Ajen with Stephen Ball at an event at the House of Lords

Alumni portraits

Those visiting Plymouth University’s campus over the past 12 months cannot fail to have noticed the alumni portraits on show. Mixing fantastic photography with stories to inspire, the portrait series is a great way to find out how Plymouth’s graduates are helping to change the world. Here are a few of the portraits that show the range of compelling stories from among our graduates.

JOE KENNEDY BA (Hons)
3D Design | Graduated 2013

“At University I was a sponge, soaking up the specialties of my teachers, and learning to work with new materials like plastic and metal. I learned from experimenting and making mistakes, and from listening to those around me.”

SOPHIE COUSENS MRes
Marine Biology | Graduated 2010

“From the earliest age I’ve always been fascinated by water. Now I’m working towards gaining a better understanding of how our seas react and recover. I get to see the wider picture.”

Linking with those in the know

A new online alumni network, which was officially launched at the 2015 graduation, is a close collaboration between 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.

Powered by a piece of software known as ‘Aluminate’, it is possible to now search to network for people with particular specialisms or locations, before sending them a connection request. As Aluminate is synced to LinkedIn, when alumni update their profiles on that social media site, the Aluminate database is automatically updated too.

“This is an amazing project,” says Shirley Walker, the University’s Head of Careers and Employability. “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 more students.

“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.”

RISING TO THE TOP

THE TAMAR ENGINEERING FUND IS GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE MISS OUT ON

Aiming to transform the lives of students who might otherwise not have access to higher education, the Tamar Engineering Fund was established through the generosity of alumna Stephen Ball, now CEO of Lockheed Martin UK.

Stephen says: “As a career path, engineering offers the highest level of 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.”

In order to meet its growth aspirations, it has been forecast that British industry needs 100,000 new graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics every year until 2020. With the higher education sector currently producing less than 90,000 graduates per year, there is currently a significant shortfall in UK talent. The Tamar Engineering Fund provides annual financial awards to help students whose background or circumstances might otherwise be a barrier to higher education. Students who qualify will be awarded between £1,500 and £10,000 for every year of study, and in addition they will benefit directly from Stephen Ball’s influence through his time, experience and extensive network in the world of engineering.

Ajen Limbu, a second-year BEng (Honours) Civil Engineering student, and the first Tamar Engineering Fund beneficiary supported by Stephen Ball, said: “It has given me a great deal of confidence, and as a result, I have pushed myself into project management tasks and have spoken in front of audiences. It can really inspire a student to work even harder and really maintain that level of commitment to the course.”

Some of Our Honourary Graduates

AMITA LAVERTON
Previously programme director for the UK’s VisitBritain, former head of strategy at VisitScotland
Honorary Doctorate of Business

NIGEL KEMP
BSc (Hons) in Business and Accounting
Honorary Doctorate of Business

PETER VOSPER
Plymouth-born businessman, former chairman of the South West Ford Dealer Association
Honorary Doctorate of Business

SIR ROBBIE KNOX
BSc Hons in Physics
Honorary Doctorate of Science

MARIA LEBEURSTAM
MSc in Data Science, Plymouth University
Honorary Doctorate of Business

TREVOR FRANCIS
Footballer, manager and sports presenter
Honorary Doctorate of Sport

JAZZ SINGH-KHAIRA BSc (Hons)
Wildlife Conservation | Graduated 2011

“When injury forced me to turn my back on professional football I was at a low ebb, but I had always loved chemistry, and enrolling at Plymouth University re-ignited that passion and enthusiasm.”

MATT KEMP BSc (Hons)
Cruise Management | Graduated 2012

“I was on my placement. Someone said to me ‘You’ve changed’. And I thought ‘I have’. The Plymouth University experience took me from being a very shy, quiet person to being the person controlling crowds and moving people about.”

Based on online activity and offline networking, the Tamar Engineering Fund will support 1,000 students over the next three years.

“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.”

Our Alumni

SOME OF OUR HONORARY GRADUATES

Some of our alumni portraits that show the range our graduating students.”

About Plymouth University

Plymouth University
Plymouth

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35

OUR ALUMNI
Our University has that same endeavour and ambition to reach out to the world, to embrace multiculturalism and work in collaboration with new partners.

Today, we are a global university, with more than 80 partnerships with universities and colleges in more than 30 countries – collaborations that extend our academic community across geographic boundaries. Our students now graduate with Plymouth degrees in over 30 countries – collaborations that extend our academic community across geographic boundaries. Our students now graduate with Plymouth degrees in 80 partnerships with universities and colleges in more than 30 countries.

As you’ll see from the stories contained in this section, we are also moving across pedagogic boundaries. Our new academic partnership with the Marine Learning Alliance, for example, will provide online delivery of professionally accredited marine and maritime programmes. Backed by IMarEST, the leading professional body for marine science and engineering, it has an ambitious plan for global expansion – one we will support whole-heartedly.

Professor Simon Payne
Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Academic Partnerships

In December, the Eden Project announced it would host the delivery of higher education courses for the first time.

Delivered in partnership with the Cornwall College Group and awarded by Plymouth University, students will be able to study a range of courses including a degree in horticulture, foundation degrees in horticulture and event management, and HNC/HNDs in garden and landscape design and small-scale theatre. Announcing the initiative, Sir Tim Smit, Co-founder of the Eden Project, said: “The future will belong to those who have real dirt-under-the-fingernails skills, allied to an intellect that enjoys problem solving.

“Our friendship with Cornwall College led us to work together on shaping new courses that will create a benchmark higher than any available elsewhere. Our passion is to offer the sort of courses we would want to go on ourselves, not dreary stuff. We want to be judged on the quality of our students, as they will become our ambassadors.”

The Marine Learning Alliance (MLA) specialises in marine and maritime qualifications through e-learning. Until recently part of Plymouth University, the MLA is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology. The MLA now operates as an academic partner to the University, which approves its programmes. The MLA works closely with Academic Partnerships and the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Plymouth University to offer short courses, and undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in subjects including hydrography, meteorology and oceanography. These have been designed to meet the needs of the maritime industry, enabling students to study while out at sea on vessels or oil rigs. Their learning is then supplemented by intensive sessions while on shore leave, and by web-based support from tutors.
PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

27,000
STUDENTS

1862 → 2015
founded as a School of Navigation

2,900
STAFF

the UK’s 15th largest university

£234m
ANNUAL TURNOVER

INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
80 partnerships in more than 30 countries

£24m
CONTRACTING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

13,000
off-campus students enrolled on Plymouth courses

£155m
invested in the campus over the past eight years, including the Marine Station, The House and Wellbeing Centre

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off-campus students enrolled on Plymouth courses

‘ANCHOR INSTITUTION’
Key partner in the South West Peninsula City Deal – potential to create 10,000 jobs

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
The first university to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark

58% of academic staff are PhD qualified

RESEARCH AND RANKINGS

TOP 50 RESEARCH FORTNIGHT POWER LIST

2/3
of Plymouth’s research was ranked as either ‘world-leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’ in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF)

REF #1
NATIONALLY, FOR CLINICAL MEDICINE RESEARCH OUTPUT

TWICE WINNER
The Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education, most recently in 2012, for marine and maritime expertise

TOP 100 GLOBALLY...
... and 19th in the UK – 2015 CWTS Leiden Rankings for the quality and influence of Plymouth University’s research – rankings measuring scientific impact and involvement in scientific collaboration

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY AWARDS 2014

WINNER – OUTSTANDING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

GUARDIAN UNIVERSITY AWARDS
Twice winner, in 2015 for Social and Community Impact, in 2013 for Student Experience

OTHER AWARDS
ISO 14001 accreditation, Fairtrade University status, four Green Gown Awards from 2011 to 2015

NATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE 2000

20

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION 2014 RANKINGS:
278th OVERALL
35th IN THE UK

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION, 2015 TOP 100 UNDER 50:
37th OVERALL
4th IN THE UK

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NATIONAL LEAD FOR THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE UNIVERSITY ENTERPRISE NETWORK

THE FIRST AND ONLY POST-1992 UNIVERSITY TO LAUNCH ITS OWN MEDICAL AND DENTAL SCHOOLS

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