

★ Celebrating
SUCCESS★

April/May 2013

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Eastwood

Vice-Chancellor's Open Forum *highlights*

Answering the big questions

In this term's Open Forum, the Vice-Chancellor was interviewed by David Gregory-Kumar, BBC Midlands Today Science and Environmental Correspondent, on key issues facing the Higher Education sector and the University of Birmingham. The interview covered a wide range of topics including civic responsibility, student recruitment, global ambitions, and research strengths.

Birmingham was founded as one of the UK's first civic universities – what benefits does the University bring to the city and region?

We are critical to the skills and infrastructure of the city, we import talent to the city and around 27% of our students are from the greater Birmingham region; just under 50% stay for their first jobs in the city. We're also critical because of the research base of the University, and the way that we interpret that particularly with high tech, high-end employers. I think there are a small number of institutions in Birmingham that are critical to the city and this University is one of them.

How is the planned University school going to work for staff and the wider city?

What we're seeking to do is open the first University Training School (UTS) that will be based on our Selly Oak Campus. What's novel about the UTS is that it will be an 11–18 comprehensive school, but it will also be a centre in which we do a significant amount of our initial teacher training. We have a very distinguished School of Education within the University, we are providing high quality initial teacher training PGCEs and the school will enable us to train more teachers. It will also be a school that works with our School of

Education to provide continual professional development for the teachers and the educators in the city.

What do you think are the University's research strengths?

The great challenge for this University is balancing our breadth; we are the most broadly based university in England. Over the last three years we have been working with colleagues in the Schools and Colleges of the University to define the areas of real quality, and that's where the investment is going.

But you have been slimming down as well?

Yes, there are some areas where the University has disinvested and we will continue to do that. There are two drivers for that. One is student recruitment, just over half of our income comes through tuition fees, and if we can't recruit good students the tuition income doesn't flow. A recent example of that was single honours archaeology, we were a relatively small scale provider in a very shrinking market, and it was not a position that we could sustain academically or financially. Our view is that if we make these interventions early we can turn an area of the University that is facing a challenge into an area that can succeed...it's not

YOUR BUZZ

Next edition 18 June 2013
Copy deadline 15 May 2013

Contact us
university-buzz@bham.ac.uk

Buzz online
www.buzz.bham.ac.uk

Follow us on Twitter
<http://twitter.com/buzzunibham>
Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/buzzunibham



Edited by Bryoney Johnson
b.r.johnson@bham.ac.uk

Your details

Please let us know if you want extra copies of Buzz or if you think we need to amend your distribution details.

Views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the University or a statement of University policy. The publication of advertisements does not imply any endorsement by the University of the goods or services advertised. All submissions may be subject to editing. The Editor's decision is final.

Front cover image:

Steve Taylor, BUAF TA 2013 winner, Head of Strategic Projects and Partnerships, Finance Office.

about closing down activities; it's about reconfiguring them in more effective ways. This has happened around the IAA where we are in the process of reconfiguring it around our very strong School of History and Cultures.

Impact of research is an element of the REF, what are you doing to engage the media and to show wider impact?

There are a number of ways in which impact is measured. It is measured in the translation of basic research into applied research, and there we can tell a very strong story in terms of some of the industrial partnerships that we have. It is also measured in terms of policy impact and particularly, though not exclusively, in the College of Social Sciences we do outstanding policy intensive research and there is a strong story of how research can be linked to policy outcomes. Then there's where you come in David (Gregory-Kumar), as universities have a responsibility to that kind of wide public engagement and communication. Whether you're talking about the Birmingham Heroes which has been a hugely successful campaign, or the kind of press exposure we get, or the direct interaction between researchers here in the University to communicating research, we're in a vastly different position to where we were three or four years ago. The credit for that doesn't rest with me; it rests with my colleagues, whether they are in Communications or in the various research groups across the University.

You're one of the top universities charging £9,000, how do you compare with other universities charging similar fees?

As most colleagues know, the competition for high quality students is ferocious; we are doing a whole series of quite innovative things to reach out to the best and the brightest. We recently held a music day because we have increased the number of music scholarships available to non-musicians. We have high quality sports scholarships and are a high performance sporting university.

We are doing different things to compete in the market, to attract outstanding applicants to Birmingham, and to convert them. I've been very clear from the outset that all of the fee income that the University gets will be spent on the student experience. When the new fee regime was introduced there was a lot of understandable anxiety that this may deter students from more disadvantaged backgrounds from coming to a university such as this. Last year from our A2B (Access to Birmingham) outreach programme we took more students than ever before, and that's because we have a generous financial aid package to support students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

You have a lot of international partnerships, does that sort of thing count in helping international recruitment?

We do different things in different areas, for example in Brazil we have a joint initiative with colleagues at the University of Nottingham. Brazil is obviously a huge market, it's a market where UK universities have not performed particularly strongly so we and Nottingham are offering studentships to highly qualified Brazilian

If you were unable to attend the forum, or would like to look back on the issues discussed, read our highlights, and some of your questions for the Vice-Chancellor.

postgraduates to come and study here. That enabled us to be one of the principal beneficiaries of a government scheme to encourage Brazilians to come and study in the UK. In China the strategy is different, we have a number of well-established research partnerships there, we have a team out there, and we have intake partnerships with a couple of Guangzhou based universities. So there are different models, but of course having international students at Birmingham is important and will remain to be important, but as those systems develop it's also important that we have the right kind of in-country presence and partnerships.

Visit intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/events/VCOF for further details on the VC Open Forum.

Is there any chance that terms such as 'markets' could be reined back in the next 20 years and we can get back to a focus on 'scholarship'?

I don't think it's true to say that Vice-Chancellors consistently use the language of markets; nevertheless we owe it to the universities that we lead to ensure that they are positioned to succeed. It is important that we do understand competition and the markets that we are in, but we do that for a higher purpose and that higher purpose is to be a university which transforms the life of our students who are indeed the lifeblood of the University.

The fact is that there will be 2 million fewer 18 year olds in 2020, what impact will that have on Birmingham?

I'll give you the straight answer – we have to increase our market share. The demography is very clear, there will be fewer 18 year olds coming in to the system, there are 7% fewer 18 year olds now than there were in 2010. We are looking at flexibility, and whether there are more courses that we should deliver in a part time or more flexible way, but I think that the identity of this University, particularly for undergraduates, is fundamentally a full time residential experience, and to get the full richness of the Birmingham experience then being part of the University family is particularly important.



Professor Dave Charlton

Physicist takes on lead role at CERN

Professor Dave Charlton, of the School of Physics and Astronomy, took up the position of Spokesperson, the overall scientific lead, for the ATLAS project at the Large Hadron Collider, CERN, in March 2013.

ATLAS is a large scale international collaboration of approximately 3,000 scientists. Since 2009 it has been one of the world's two largest operating particle physics experiments, alongside its sister experiment CMS, at the Large Hadron Collider. Together, ATLAS and CMS

recently discovered the elusive particle, the Higgs boson, a key building block of the Standard Model of Physics.

Professor Charlton said *'it is a great honour to have been selected to act as Spokesperson for the next two years by my colleagues on ATLAS. The major step forward in discovering the Higgs boson is a result of the dedication and drive of so many colleagues from all around the world over the years, and it is a great privilege to represent them'*.



Bold initiative to attract brightest students

The University has launched an innovative new initiative to attract the very brightest students by making unconditional offers to a targeted group of high performing applicants. The pilot initiative will see around 1,200 unconditional offers being made to students applying to study one of 12 subjects from September 2013. The list of subjects, which ranges from maths to metallurgy, and modern languages, reflects the broad range of disciplines on offer at Birmingham.

The unconditional offers are being made to individuals who have already demonstrated their motivation through exceptional academic performance. In addition to having predicted grades in excess of 3As at A-level, the views of their current institution and teachers are taken into consideration as well as the candidate's personal statement.

Roderick Smith, Director of Admissions, said *'this is an exciting new initiative which enables us to target the very brightest students in certain subject areas. Students who we believe will make a significant contribution to the academic work of the University and will gain immensely from their time with us'*.

The subjects included in the pilot are; Accounting and Finance, Business Management, Classics, Economics, European PSE, International Relations, Mathematics, Metallurgy and Materials, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology.

University opens Centre for Research in Race and Education

Twenty years after the death of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, his mother, Doreen Lawrence OBE, recently helped launch a new Centre for Research in Race and Education at the University.

The Centre aims to pursue race equality and social justice by working to close gaps in educational achievement and improve the career prospects of black and minority ethnic people. It is the only dedicated research centre of its kind in England and will play a leading role in the field internationally.

Professor David Gillborn, Director of the new centre, said *'there is a widespread assumption that racism is no longer an issue in education but across the board in experiences and outcomes in primary, secondary and higher education, there remain significant race inequalities. The Centre aims to work with a wide range of people – from parents and pressure groups, to policy-makers and teachers – with the aim of better understanding and combating racism in education.'*



Professor David Gillborn, Symon Sertain (Chair, Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust), Dr Nicola Rollock, Doreen Lawrence OBE, Professor James Arthur (Head of the School of Education, University of Birmingham) at the launch of CRRE.

To find out more about the centre visit birmingham.ac.uk/crre



Image courtesy of University of Birmingham student Laura Pasvianskaite

Colourful time for Old Joe

You may have noticed a few colourful changes to the University's 'Old Joe' clock recently, as the historic tower has helped the University to take part in several high profile initiatives. Old Joe turned green for the University wide Go Green week in February, providing a focal point for campus green activities including a slow bike race, and energy debates. The tower was illuminated in red to raise awareness for Cure Leukaemia. Marking the end of the West Midlands Red Alert Appeal in partnership with BBC Radio WM. The 110 metre high clock tower was

also lit up blue for World Autism Awareness Day at the start of April. Old Joe even switched off its lights in support of Earth Hour. Earth Hour encourages people from around the world to switch off their lights for an hour to help ease the effects of global warming. The event, run by the World Wildlife Fund, has been running for nine years, and is recognised in 152 countries. The University joined iconic landmarks for the big switch off including Birmingham Symphony Hall, Westminster Palace and the London Eye.

Did you know?

It is possible to drive a double-decker bus through the clock face of Old Joe, and students believe that if you walk under the tower as the clock chimes you will fail your degree.

University honoured at Civic Trust awards

The University has received a prestigious Civic Trust award for design of the Bramall Music Building. The University Steam Bridge also received a commendation at the awards ceremony in March 2013.

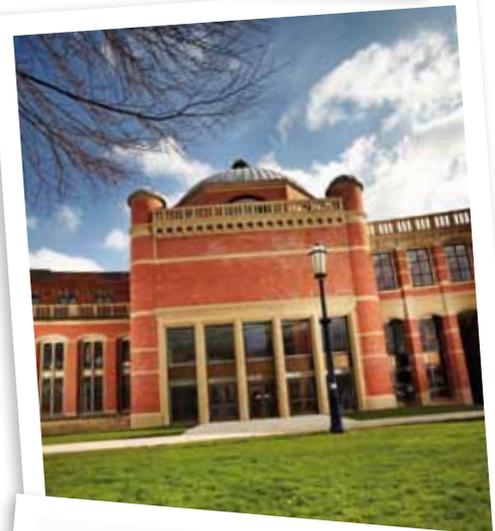
The Bramall Music Building, designed by Glenn Howells Architects, was specifically recognised by the Civic Trust for its sympathy to the original design of the surrounding buildings, carefully sourced materials to match those used in the original buildings, high quality construction methods, and its adjustable concert hall acoustics, staging and seating to suit different uses.

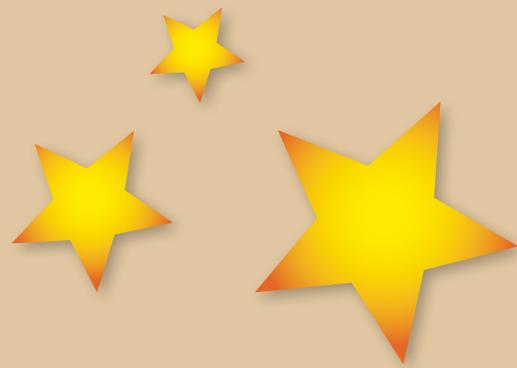
The 55-metre, stainless steel Steam Bridge at the University train station, designed by London architects MJP, received a commendation at the awards. The bridge carries major pipework that

transports energy from the Combined Heat and Power Station to the Medical School. Designed to save a projected 1,500 tonnes of carbon each year the actual saving is an impressive 1,850 tonnes.

The Civic Trust Awards scheme, established in 1959, recognises the very best in architecture, design, planning, landscape and public art. Awards are given to projects of the highest quality design, which are judged to have made a positive cultural, social or economic contribution to the local community.

Ian Barker, Director of Estates, said *'for the University to be recognised for two projects out of only five in the region to be shortlisted demonstrates the enormous efforts being made by the University to continually improve the campus environment.'*





BUAFTA stars of 2013



01

02

03

Staff from across the University came together on 8 February to celebrate the sixth annual Birmingham University Awards for Tremendous Achievement (BUAFTAs).

Hosting the evening was presenter Arti Halai, known for her work on Central News. Guests were greeted by Bhangra Dancers, with entertainment continuing in the Great Hall with a string quartet, dancers, and an acapella choir. A special additional 'Principal's Award' was announced on the night, recognising the efforts and achievements of all staff involved in resolving the Power Outage that took place on campus in November last year. The Vice-Chancellor presented this very special award, which was accepted by representatives from the teams across campus that worked tirelessly to restore power to campus and ensure that disruption was reduced to a minimum.

You can see a full list of the winners and commendations at intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/university/BUAFTAS



08

09

10

★ 'Being this year's BUAFTA Chair of the judging panel was a huge honour. When asked initially to take up this role, it did seem a daunting responsibility, but I knew what an important task this was and I felt privileged to be part of such a worthy event. Reading the nominations was an amazing insight into all of the wonderful work and achievements that take place at our University and opened my eyes even further to the breadth of talent we have here at Birmingham'. ★

Professor John Heath, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Estates and Infrastructure



04



05



06



07

Our 2013 BUAFTA stars

01 Team Player of the Year

Winner: Nicholas Stretton, Student Records Assistant Academic Services

02 Team of the Year

Winner: Trial Acceleration Team, School of Cancer Sciences
Commendations: Conference Park, and Government and Society Undergraduate Team

03 Best Customer Service

Winner: David Gorjup, Desktop Support Specialist IT Services
Commendations: Alastair Rodgers, Enquiry Services and Registration Manager Academic Services

04 Best Newcomer

Winner: Phillippa Treharne Jones, Study Administrator School of Public Health
Commendations: Natalie Hard, Administrative Assistant Academic Services

05 Role Model of the Year

Winner: Steve Taylor, Head of Strategic Projects and Partnerships Finance Office
Commendations: Richard Johnson, Equipment and Fieldwork Technician School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

06 The Student Experience Award

Winner: Deborah Clements, Administrator Department of English
Commendations: Access to Birmingham Team

07 Best Support for Research

Winner: Research Information and EU Funding

08 Best Support for our Working Environment

Winner: Ian Tidmarsh, Technical Manager School of Chemical Engineering

09 Idea of the Year

Winner: Alison Darby, Cultural Partnerships Manager

10 Vice-Chancellor's Award

Winner: Jamaican Pre-Games Camp Team
Commendations: Global Challenge Internship Programme

11 Principal's Award

Power Outage Response Team 2012



11

Thanks to our BUAFTA 2013 sponsors

- GV Multimedia
- Couch Perry Wilkes Partnership
- Oyster Communications
- Bergen Energi
- Pertemps
- Associated Architects
- Prolinx
- A&H Construction and Developments Plc
- Gresham
- Office Depot



Teaching benefits of social networks

Tarsem Singh Cooner, Associate Director at the Centre of Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health, tells buzz about some of the innovative ways that Facebook can be used as a teaching tool.



Social networking is becoming an integral part of many students' everyday experiences; in a recent poll of Birmingham students, 96% reported having an active Facebook account. As a Social Work Lecturer, and trainer in enquiry-based blended learning, I am very interested in looking at how these social networking sites (SNS) can be used within teaching. Using social media as a learning environment can help to mirror students' real-life practices, ensure buy-in for a module, and increase relevance for workplace application.

For example, what better way to examine online behaviour and confidentiality issues surrounding Social Work than via the SNS that many students use in their personal lives? I tested this theory by integrating Facebook into a recent Think Family and Whole Systems (TFWS) module examining whether SNS are an appropriate medium to engage in social work activity.

Prior to redesign, no location existed within a congested curriculum to exclusively explore the implications of SNS on professional practice. A creative rethink changed the teaching approach from one based primarily on didactic lectures to one that integrated enquiry-based blended learning and closed Facebook groups. The redesign provided students with opportunities to critically reflect on their everyday Facebook use, whilst retaining original objectives of the module – to explore the limits between personal and public 'space' within SNS.

The module had to ensure students did not perceive the use of Facebook as a 'bolt on', but as an important part of the learning process. A complex family case study was created to act as a learning trigger; online lectures and guided reading exposed students to underpinning knowledge required for the case study. At the end of each lecture, students had to pass an online quiz and apply their learning in closed Facebook groups. Six MA and eight BA groups were created for each team. A hardcopy workbook provided a roadmap and milestones as well as enabling students to record their learning.

Exercises encouraged students to reflect on the type of information publically available about them. Students considered a number of key boundary questions, such as would it be possible for case study members to find you on Facebook, and what type of image does your Facebook profile convey?

Results

The module increased student confidence in articulating issues of personal privacy; outlining ethical issues of using Facebook for social work practice; and explaining potential positive and negative aspects of using social networks in professional practice.

Engagement with Facebook triggered critical thought and discussion based on experiences of being in a life-like situation. This allowed students to explore

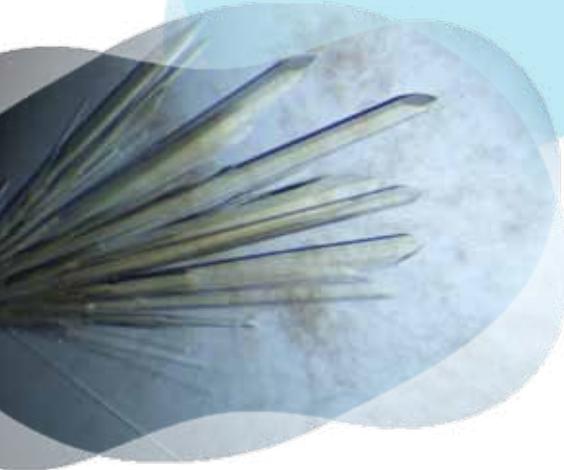
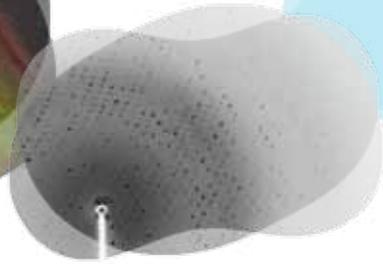
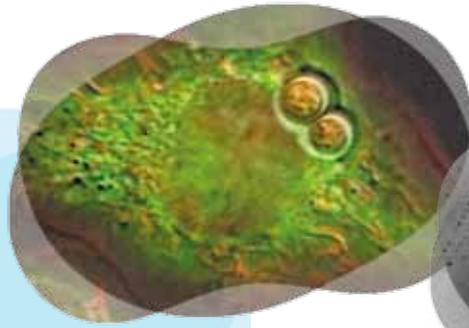
how they could use Facebook to share information and maintain confidentiality. When things went wrong, they were able to use Facebook Group Docs to record, reflect and discuss these experiences collectively and analyse broader potential consequences for professionals and service users.

Feedback also suggests that using Facebook made the learning experiences personally meaningful for the majority of students. Two major points they took from the module centred on their practice of accepting friends and reviewing privacy settings on Facebook posts. As exercises progressed, ethical issues particularly in relation to ownership of information, the ease with which information could be copied and shared without consent, data protection, and confidentiality, were examined in greater detail. It was only by engaging in the exercises that they began to realise the practical, ethical and legal complexities of the issues involved.

An on-going evaluation is planned to assess the impact of the module's learning on students' use of SNS in their first year of assessed practice. For further details contact Tarsem at t.s.cooner@bham.ac.uk.

A video outlining the learning design and student feedback can be accessed at storify.com/Akali65/combining-facebook-and-enquiry-based-blended-learn

Extracts taken from article originally published in the British Journal of Social Work also available via the above link.



WEAVING

the tapestry of life

Professor Ian Henderson introduces some of the leading research and people behind the recently formed Institute of Microbiology and Infection.

HISTORY OF MICROBIOLOGY AT BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham has been at the forefront of Microbiology research for many decades. At the formation of the University, Dr Edwin Rickards, a local physician and member of the University council, donated £1,000 to the establishment of the first bacteriology laboratories. He saw this *'as of the utmost importance both to the medical faculty and the health of the city'*. At the same time the School of Brewing and Fermentation was founded to meet the needs of regional breweries. This School, through various restructuring would eventually give rise to the School of Biosciences.

In the 1960s the University recruited Harry Smith to the Chair of Microbiology, and Peter Wildy to the Chair of Virology and Bacteriology. Both became world renowned for their work on viruses and bacteria; amongst their achievements were Harry's identification of the anthrax toxin and Peter's establishment of the international system for viral nomenclature. Later, Alasdair Geddes, one of the founding fathers of clinical studies on antibiotics, was appointed to the Chair in Infectious Diseases which he held until he retired in 2004.

Microbiology is, in simple terms, the study of viruses, parasites, fungi and bacteria. Many people associate this with the study of organisms that cause disease, and investigations into methods to diagnose, prevent and treat those diseases. We are often faced with 'doomsday scenarios' related to microbial disease, one only has to examine recent media coverage to see the range of stories on dangers of antibiotic resistant bacteria and the possibility of life threatening coronaviruses spreading across the globe.

Whilst these are real threats to modern medicine and human longevity which should not be underestimated, microbes also play a myriad of other beneficial roles. These important organisms are central to biogeochemical cycles, the manufacture of food and drinks, the production of revolutionary treatments for cancer and diabetes, and in providing fundamental insights into biological processes. In short, microbes are the fabric upon which the tapestry of life is woven.

The importance of Microbiology to humanity, and the strength of our research base, was recently recognised by the University through the formation of the Institute of Microbiology and Infection, co-locating Microbiologists from across the Colleges of Medical and Dental Sciences, and Life and Environmental Sciences. The Institute places them together at the heart of the campus to create one of the largest bacteriology research centres in the UK. The University

launched the Institute with a successful inaugural symposium in December 2012 which brought together over 250 microbiology researchers from across the globe.

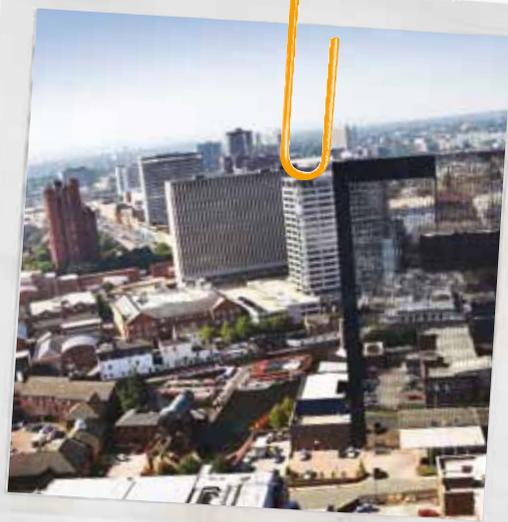
We have a vision for the Institute; to create a community of individuals with complementary expertise that can support each other through collaboration, and that has a sense of purpose and shared goals. We will build on our research strengths in combating tuberculosis, understanding antimicrobial resistance, developing vaccines and elucidating fundamental mechanisms of microbial processes. We will seek to use this knowledge purposefully, to translate this research into national prosperity.

We do not want knowledge created in the Institute to stay in the Institute; we want it to have an impact, a tangible benefit to society. We will create not only a place for world-class research but a scientific home for our postdoctoral fellows and students. We will seek to grow and nurture their talents and to support creative people who want to make a difference. We want our students and post-docs to be ambassadors for Microbiology at Birmingham; when they leave we want them to leave with a positive experience and the conviction that Birmingham is the best place to do Microbiology.

For further details on how you can get involved contact Professor Henderson, Director of the Institute, at i.r.henderson@bham.ac.uk.

The IAS is an important initiative for the University as academics strive to explore and develop solutions for many societal challenges, which require the type of interdisciplinary solutions that are facilitated and encouraged by the IAS'.

Professor John Bryson, Birmingham Business School



Birmingham



Chi

We are also pleased to welcome our first IAS Honorary Fellow. Dr Keith Magee is Honorary Fellow in Race, Religion and Poverty and will be making a series of visits to the University in the coming months.

Keith is Executive Director of The National Public Housing Museum and Center for the Study of Housing and Society in Chicago. He took the appointment after serving as a senior advisor, for religious affairs, with the Obama Campaign and as a senior director at the Museum of African American History in Boston and Nantucket.

His areas of study include psychology, economics, and religion, and Keith is passionate about providing humanitarian aid to children and families, especially in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, Soweto and Johannesburg, South Africa. As part of this aid plan, Peter Drobac M.D., of Partners in Health, commissioned Keith to build an interfaith Chapel and chaplaincy programme for their hospital in rural Rwanda.

Keith will be based in Social Policy and has already begun to build many academic contacts across the University. We will be contacting colleagues to take part in an IAS workshop with Keith in the near future but do contact Sue Gilligan at s.gilligan@bham.ac.uk if you'd like to get in touch with Keith or learn more about opportunities for workshops.

Institute of Advanced Studies

Collaboration in *action*

Sue Gilligan, Deputy Director of the recently launched Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), tells buzz more about the Institute's inaugural themes.

The Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) supports and promotes interdisciplinary research by combining expertise from across the University to address major cross-cutting themes that are important, socially relevant and timely. Birmingham is already among the globe's leading universities and we are determined to help secure and enhance this position.

What's distinctive and exciting about our Institute of Advanced Studies is the breadth. We're not just an IAS that's centred round social sciences and humanities, we cover the full range of activities at the University; very few universities can boast such a strong connected group of academics.

IAS grew from an idea that in order to fully explore this strength and breadth there was a need for more effective collaboration across the University.

Under the directorship of Professor Malcolm Press, IAS's mission is to facilitate research collaboration that is driven by ideas from our academic community. To achieve this requires a shared theme, resources and effective relationships.

Colleagues from every school as well as academics from other universities from Europe, North and South America and external stakeholders have attended the 45 IAS workshops that have been held here on campus since last May. From those idea generating events IAS received 11 proposals for the inaugural themes.

The two IAS Inaugural Themes Regeneration Economies, and Saving Humans, were launched on 10 April in the Bramall Elgar Concert Hall, and perfectly encapsulate this interdisciplinary approach to research.



Regeneration Economies: *Transforming People, Place and Production*

This theme is led by a cross college team; Professor John Bryson, of the Birmingham Business School; Dr Lauren Andres, of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences; Professor Kamel Hawwash, of the School of Civil Engineering; and Professor Duc Pham of the School of Mechanical Engineering.

The ambition of Regeneration Economies is to develop a distinctive interdisciplinary Birmingham and Chicago school approach to understanding regional economies. Sister cities Birmingham and Chicago have experienced waves of restructuring that have stripped out manufacturing employment and led to significant economic challenges.

The existing approaches to understanding regional problems are no longer useful for understanding cities that are experiencing an on-going process of economic regeneration. This theme will develop new ways of conceptualising regional economies by making a comparative analysis of two city regions – Birmingham and Chicago.

US partners working with the Birmingham team are Professor Jennifer Clark, Associate Professor of Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Professor Geoff Hewings, Professor of Geography and Economics, at the University of Illinois.

The team are very excited to be working together on this trans-Atlantic holistic approach to understanding regional economies. The theme is truly interdisciplinary and includes input from colleagues from social sciences, engineering, education, arts, and law.

How are Colleges getting involved?

Capturing the IAS goal of combining expertise from across the University, colleagues from all five Colleges are getting involved with Regeneration Economies.

- The theme fits well with ongoing research in the **College of Social Sciences** on understanding local economic development.
- **The College of Engineering and Physical Sciences** is leading on the University's STEM educational activities.
- **The College of Life and Environmental Sciences** has recently invested in an initiative focusing on understanding the resilience of urban areas.
- **The College of Arts and Law** has stressed the importance of regional engagement through the development of the Heritage and Cultural Learning Hub.
- **The College of Medicine and Dental Sciences** consider health as one of the key dimensions of regeneration economies.

Saving Humans: *Risk, Intervention, Survival*

The intention to save and make secure human lives might seem to be a simple and obvious aim – and one which is wholly commendable – however it is not simple. How and what 'saving humans' involves raises complex ethical, political, and practical questions. Questions such as who is responsible for doing and financing the 'saving' and what 'basic saving' involves are not simple to answer, nor are questions of responsibility about intervention and its consequences. 'Saving Humans' considers these questions in many contexts and across a broad spectrum of threats to human survival as, despite the great variety of threats, similar questions face those attempting to intervene and act to save and improve human lives.

The Saving Humans theme will bring together researchers from across the University and beyond to investigate these and other pertinent questions. It will consider a number of possible threats:

- **Health**, for instance, from infectious disease and pandemics, from failure to protect current health public goods (such as antibiotic resistance) or from

technological development.

- **Environmental**, for instance, from climate change, from resource scarcity, from earthquakes and floods and from manmade environmental threats, such as industrial pollution and desertification.
- **Security**, for instance, war, conflict and terrorism, including weapons of mass destruction (from nuclear to chemical to biological) and of all scales of conflict, as well as its consequences, including increased numbers of refugees and displaced persons, migration and trafficking, and increased risks to individual security, which make rape, violence and other forms of exploitation more likely.

Saving Humans will consider such threats and how life can be protected and 'flourishing' promoted. In particular it will consider intervention by:

- states
- international community of states
- international organisations and/or non-governmental organisations
- individuals

Birmingham is exceptionally well placed to take this forward as it has international experts working across these themes and the success of the initial IAS workshop in June 2012 clearly showed University-wide and external interest in this theme. Work will commence in September 2013 with a team led by Professors Paul Jackson, Heather Widdows and Nick Wheeler. The cross-cutting goals of Saving Humans will enable the IAS to bring together a diverse and multidisciplinary community of researchers and visiting Fellows under a coherent and intellectually exciting programme.

How can you get involved?

We are currently planning 18 months of activity for IAS themes and there will be opportunities for colleagues from across the University to collaborate with teams. If you'd like to contribute to the work on Regeneration Economies or Saving Humans please contact the theme leaders. We are particularly keen to hear from our PGR students, so if you would like to be involved or have a good idea for an IAS workshop please contact Sue Gilligan at s.gilligan@bham.ac.uk.

A relationship for *life*

Almost 1,500 of the University's staff members were former students. **Amy Cory** finds out from three alumni staff what it's like to cross the student-staff divide.



Phil Addy

(BA Ancient and Medieval History, 2008) Major Gift Manager, Development, Alumni and Business Engagement

Even before he graduated, Major Gift Manager Phil Addy was working for the University in a variety of roles. *'I've always been passionate about the University,'* he says. *'My roles have all involved promoting the University as a student ambassador and a student caller and now I get to do that full-time, which is great.'*

Phil has been part of Development, Alumni and Business Engagement for more than four years and is committed to securing major gifts of more than £20,000 for the University's Circles of Influence campaign. He says the best thing about his job is meeting fellow alumni.

'My job is quite unique; it's all about relationship-building and it's a pleasure to get to meet interesting individuals and find out how they achieved their success. It's always a special moment to bring donors back to campus for them to see the impact of their gift,' he explains.

'During my student calling days, I once had a conversation with a Vice-President of JP Morgan whilst he was taking a bath which was a bit surreal but we had a great chat about his time at Birmingham!'



Dr Richenda Roberts

(BA History of Art, 2007; MPhil History of Art, 2009) Postgraduate Teaching Assistant, History of Art and External Curator, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

It was the quality of the paintings at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts which first attracted Dr Richenda Roberts to the University as an undergraduate, postgraduate and staff member.

'The Barber is a hidden gem which I have found inspirational throughout my time here. As a student, I really enjoyed the atmosphere of the place and how committed the staff were to their subject and this hasn't changed as a staff member,' she explains.

'Working at the Barber means I am doing something I have always wanted to do – research my area of interest and share my knowledge with students.' Richenda will be curating an exhibition next year celebrating the work of British artist C.R.W. Nevinson, best known for his work on the impact of the First World War. *'the exhibition aims to engage visitors as part of the region's First World War centenary commemorations.'* Rebel Visions opens in October 2014 and was inspired by the Barber's acquisition of a Nevinson print 'Returning to the Trenches' in 2009.

Professor Chris Bunce

(BSc Biological Sciences, 1981; PhD Immunology, 1986) Professor of Experimental Haematological Oncology, School of Biosciences

For more than 35 years, Professor Chris Bunce has been a member of the University's community as a student, alumnus and staff member and his research into Africa's most common childhood cancer, Burkitt's Lymphoma is saving lives.

'We are really pleased with the results of our first clinical trial. Nearly every single child we have treated has had a positive response with their tumour halting growth and even shrinking. Next we will explore a different drug combination and if this is successful, will combine the two to hopefully create the most effective treatment of the disease.'

The aggressive form of cancer is 50 times more common in Sub-Saharan Africa than the Western world. *'It is a fascinating disease and we have learnt a lot from studying it, however the benefits have not yet translated to new treatments and I wanted to do something about that,'* he explains. *'In my opinion, there is no better place than Birmingham to do this research.'*

To find out more about our outstanding alumni, please visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni

CONNECTING OUR GRADUATES TO THEIR

FUTURE

Jessica Holloway Swift tells buzz more about the wide range of support offered by the Careers Network.

Graduation is a day that can bring mixed feelings; there is the elation of having triumphed and completed a degree but also some fear and uncertainty. As Greta, one of our student team graduating this year, puts it *'the uncertainty is exciting because you have so many possibilities in front of you, but it's also a lot like being on a runaway train that's about to drive off a cliff'*.

In addition to providing our usual services, Careers Network provides special support for graduating students. We especially reach out to those who might not have engaged with us throughout their time at Birmingham, and run a series of activities aimed at enhancing the success of graduates in employment and further study. Working closely with last year's graduating cohort we have identified three perceived barriers to success; lack of work experience, getting a lower degree classification than expected, and lack of confidence in the job market. We're aiming to break these barriers through a variety of online resources and activities to help raise awareness amongst graduating students.

GRADUATE CAREERS INTENSIVE – 13 JUNE 2013

An interactive one day course aimed at helping graduating students identify and secure their career choice. Highlights of the course include:

- attend workshops run by recruitment professionals on getting motivated, gaining work experience and staying inspired
- learn more about job hunting techniques, gaining credibility and realising potential

- work with Careers Network staff and recruitment specialists to develop personal careers action plans

Graduates who attended last year found it very useful and reported a significant increase in careers knowledge and confidence. For further details visit birmingham.ac.uk/graduatecareers/intensive or speak to your College Careers Network team.

GRADUATE INTERNSHIPS

Our internship officers regularly source graduate internships, which are great for boosting students' work experience. Over 100 graduate internships have been sourced this year, including many bespoke for Birmingham. Our award-winning work experience team, provide drop-in sessions or bookable appointments during term time and vacations to help find students the best opportunities.

'I would highly recommend a work placement – it was a fantastic learning experience and one which I know will help me to fulfil my ambition.' Tonia, Sport and Exercise Science graduate

VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT FAIR

Giving our graduating students the chance to apply for current employment opportunities and internships, search recruitment agencies, chat online to recruitment experts and receive careers advice and information from the comfort of their own home (or indeed the library), last year the Virtual Fair was a great success. Students can pre-register; it will open on 28 May until 14 June.



The Careers Network celebrated a double win at the RateMyPlacement National Placement and Internship Awards 2013. The awards were presented for 'Best University Careers Service', where the University was praised for the breadth and depth of its work experience offering, its College-tailored approach, high profile Global Challenge Internships, and Alumni Leadership Mentoring Programme. Internship Officer, Andy Newnham, was also awarded 'Outstanding Contribution to Work Experience' for his dedicated and innovative approach to promoting work experience to students.

WEBSITE

Designed especially for our graduates birmingham.ac.uk/graduatecareers has articles on career choices, networking, staying motivated, and job hunting strategies specifically aimed at graduating students.

CAREERS ROADSHOW

Careers Network staff will be out and about on campus, sometimes in their big blue gazebo or in the food court, offering drop in support and advice to graduating students.

GET GUIDE

Look out for the Graduate Employability Tips pocket guide offering practical advice on careers inspiration, staying motivated, networking, getting experience and support on offer. These will be going out in graduation packs but if any members of staff would like some copies please contact careers@contact.bham.ac.uk or ask your College Careers Network team.

news+views



Our regular feature gives buzz readers a quick tour of the latest University news hitting the headlines and how you can add your views via our online community.

in the news...

Many articles about UoB research and expertise appear in local, national and international press every day, here are just a few examples of our recent news highlights.

Bill Chaplin's, Yvonne Elsworth's and Andrea Miglio's research (EPS) into a distant solar system was featured across BBC News, Sky News, and the national print media. Yvonne Elsworth was interviewed for BBC radio World Service and BBC Radio 4 as well as a number of local radio stations.

The launch of the University's new Centre for Research in Race and Education, opened by Doreen Lawrence, was featured widely across national print media. Professor David Gillborn and Dr Nicola Rollock (CoSS) were interviewed by BBC Radio 4 at the event.

Dr Pamela Robinson (CoSS) became the go-to person for comment on the horsemeat scandal, talking across the major broadcast news networks about supply chain issues and the future impact on consumerism.

Professor Scott Lucas' (CAL) comments on Iran's resistance economy appeared across the international media from India and Singapore to the US and Canada in outlets such as NBC, CNBC, Thomson Reuters, Abu Dhabi National and Yahoo!

If you would like to work with the press office, or find out more about how they can help you promote your research, email pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk or call 0121 414 6029



Ginevra Castellano's research (EPS) into empathetic robots being developed and used in classrooms was profiled across the national press including a half-page feature in the Sunday Times.

Professor Laura Piddock and Professor Chris Thomas (MDS) gave back-to-back interviews in early March following the Department of Health press conference by Chief Medical Officer (and Birmingham alumna) Dame Sally Davies, calling for urgent action to combat the potentially catastrophic effects of increasing antibiotic resistance. Interviews included Reuters, BBC, The Times, International Business Times, and Sky News.



feeling social...

Our Social Media feeds have been brimming with fantastic content since the last buzz update, not least from the Birmingham Cancer Research UK Centre. On 13 March staff and students from the Centre tweeted photos showing 'a day in their lives', highlighting daily activities that take place in Edgbaston in the fight against cancer. Using the hashtag #bhamcancerday some of the images collated during the day were put into a fantastic video by Beckie Port, CRUK-funded PhD student in the School of Cancer Sciences. You can view it on our official YouTube channel, youtube.com/unibirmingham

The initiative was a fitting prelude to the Birmingham Cancer Showcase, which took place on 10 April in the Medical School, allowing visitors to go behind the scenes at the Birmingham Cancer Research Centre UK and understand more about how discoveries are being taken from the lab into treatments to benefit cancer patients.

Elsewhere, we've launched our new weekly Social Media feature – the University of Birmingham Time Warp. Each Wednesday we post a picture of campus from years gone by and challenge you to guess the year! Get involved now on our official Facebook and Twitter pages.

Join the UoB online community

Follow us on Twitter at [@unibirmingham](https://twitter.com/unibirmingham) or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unibirmingham

If you use Social Media at work and feel you would like to increase your visibility across campus, do get in touch with our Digital Marketing and Communications Team via k.connolly@bham.ac.uk

These are some highlights of the events coming up across the University, to find out more visit birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus.index.aspx



Free fun for all the family! Come along to the University's Community Day, where you can enjoy a wide range of events and activities throughout the day. Activities will include bungee-trampoline, build a rocket, create a dinosaur, give-golf-a-go, gold panning and much more! Stay up to date by visiting birmingham.ac.uk/community/communityday/index.aspx where a full programme for the day will shortly be available.

Hay Festival 2013

Date: 23 May – 2 June

The Hay Festival brings together writers from around the world to debate and share stories, celebrating great writing from poets and scientists, lyricists and comedians, novelists and environmentalists, and the power of great ideas to transform our way of thinking. For its second year, the College of Arts Law will be hosting a series of talks showcasing our top academics and the breadth of arts and humanities subjects studied by our students. This year the College will be partnered by the new Library of Birmingham, set to open in September 2013. For further information visit birmingham.ac.uk/hayfestival



Hay Fever by Noel Coward

Date: Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 June, 7pm

Venue: Winterbourne House and Garden

Winterbourne are once again welcoming University drama students for another great period production. This year the play of choice is Hay Fever by Noel Coward; a comedy set in an English country house. Performed on the lawn in Winterbourne's beautiful garden, there is no better way to spend a June evening. This outdoor event is always popular so book early to avoid disappointment. Call 0121 414 43832 for details. Tickets go on sale at the end of May.



Summer language courses

Date: 6 May – 14 June

Join a Summer Language Course and experience a new culture. Languages for All is offering short, six week courses in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish

- Beginner, Near Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels
- Fee £80.00
- No set textbook to buy

Enrol online at: birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cml/summer/index.aspx



NEW ART WEST MIDLANDS

Date: Until 19 May

Venue: Barber Institute

New Art West Midlands is a new collaborative venture in partnership with Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Grand Union, Birmingham, and funded by the Arts Council for England. This split-site, exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Barber Institute profiles the best, critically-engaged work by recent graduates from the West Midlands' university art schools. It aims to help provide a crucial bridge for young artists between training and the first steps in a professional career.

Image courtesy of Rafal Zar, Altar 17, HUU, When you love him you pray for him, when you hate him you curse him, 2012.

Dr Berny Sèbe, Lecturer in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies... in my own words



© Alexander Morrison

‘The richness and diversity of personal and intellectual itineraries which lead to academia are an endless cause of fascination to me. Sharing knowledge, questions and enthusiasm to shape enquiring minds is all the more rewarding as it often taps into varied personal experiences – and the University of Birmingham is very good at valuing these diverse routes into academia.

I never went to school until my university years. I spent my childhood juggling between regular long-haul expeditions to the Sahara, being involved with my father in the preparation of his photographic books, and doing homework for the purpose of my distance-learning education. This allowed me to hone a variety of skills such as independence and self-discipline, and permitted me to discover not only the simple elegance of the bare geological features displayed by the most beautiful desert on earth, but also to learn about the geography, history and socio-political realities of such diverse countries as Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco or Tunisia.

My research specialism in colonial and postcolonial studies stems directly from this childhood experience. The multi-faceted legacies of European imperialisms are still vivid in these countries, and this fuelled my interest in the French imperial past, and its consequences on modern-day European countries and the post-colonial states which replaced them overseas. The sheer extent of the British Empire made it a natural point of comparison, and this shaped my doctoral research project on the making of British and French colonial heroes in the context of the waves of ‘popular imperialism’ which swept the two countries in the late nineteenth century. My forthcoming, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa* (June 2013) explores how the concomitance of ‘New Journalism’ and ‘New Imperialism’ shaped the figure of the ‘imperial hero’.

Since then, I have developed a variety of related projects, some of which have brought me back to my passion for deserts. As the principal investigator of a new AHRC-funded project, I am following in the footsteps of Beau Geste, looking at the strategic significance of fortresses in arid and semi-arid environments. In partnership with a historian of Central Asia (Dr Alexander Morrison, from the University of Liverpool), I am conducting fieldwork in Kazakhstan and Algeria, looking at the nineteenth-century power

struggles of the Russian and the French with nomadic populations in the Steppe and the Sahara. I have also published research on independence processes in Saharan territories, as well as their postcolonial fate – including the underlying phenomena which explain the current situation in Mali.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the media have become highly interested in those regions which, until recently, were often seen as relatively insignificant as long as they contributed their share of oil and gas at the best possible price. From January 2011 onwards, I have had to combine an already busy academic life with a rollercoaster of demands from the media (masterfully managed by the Press Office), commenting on TV and radio, and for newspapers, the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the rest of the Arab world, and explaining the situation that prevailed in northern Mali under the iron fist of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and then the French-led military intervention which ousted them. Newsnight also sought my views on the situation at the height of the In-Amenas hostage crisis. It was a privilege to offer my views to help the public understand the tectonic forces which toppled decade-long dictators, ripped open political traditions and created a promising but also potentially explosive power vacuum.

Deciphering for a lay audience this complex web of events is a powerful way of demonstrating the relevance of the humanities to today’s world, and we are fortunate that the University supports public engagement. A journalist for the BBC wrote to me *‘this was the biggest story in the world at the time and many of our readers would have had very little understanding of why it was happening... your article was invaluable in helping them’*.

This is all the truer since this activity of dissemination does not distract me from what I see as the core of my remit, which are research and teaching. In my view, these two activities cross-fertilize each other: arguably, they are two sides of the same coin. Students value immensely what they immediately identify as first-hand research experience, and feeling that the learners’ expectations are met is one of the most rewarding sentiments that our profession can bestow on its practitioners. Or, at least, this is what, in all modesty, I believe! ;