



April/May 2015

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Carers' Champion



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood

# Vice-Chancellor's *view*

A few weeks ago I was rung unexpectedly on a Sunday by Sky. In a very agreeable conversation I was told that we had probably the oldest Sky box in the known universe. I was asked whether we wanted to upgrade it and, in the way of these things, I was offered the proverbial 'free upgrade'.

On and off I had been wondering whether or not we should have HD and other facilities that Sky now offers, so I thanked the Sky representative and said

that yes I would very much like to upgrade.

The formalities were duly concluded and, on the following Friday, the new box arrived. Meanwhile, after telling my son proudly that we were upgrading to HD, Jon told me that none of this would probably work because I did not realise that our old plasma TV only had SCART connections. As a result, we had to replace our 12-year-old television as well.

There is now a new world open to us (if only I had time to enjoy it!). On demand facilities, box sets, high definition viewing. All of these are now ours. We are, now, fully high definition digital. I hope I can now escape the jibe of being an analogue Vice-Chancellor in a digital age!

The pace of change in communications technologies and in the way in which we access information and entertainment continues to accelerate. In my Vice-Chancellor's Seminar this year, students from EPS led a discussion on 'whether the internet of things will solve any real world problems'. As so often in my seminars, the presentation was hugely impressive, both in terms of its content and in terms of its style. One of the presenters said that he was wearing three digital devices including something on his wrist which told him that he had received some four messages during his short presentation.

I genuinely do not know why anybody would want this kind of multiple alert. No doubt like many of you reading this piece, my own cultural formation has been in a very different era with very different expectations about the pace and immediacy of communication.

Our students, like many of our children, inhabit a different world where immediacy matters, where friendship is defined around the frequency of virtual conversation, and where they expect to receive and are comfortable with receiving multiple alerts and prompts.

Such is the rapidity of change in the ways in which different generations are defining and redefining themselves. The simple categories of the young, the middle aged, and the more elderly no longer hold. In a recent analysis whilst 32% of 25–34-year-olds watched television, the

number of 18–24-year-olds who watch television was down to 13%. This younger generation was using other devices, notably their smartphones and tablets, to watch television as well as to gather other information and entertainment. This is a generation which virtually never would choose a newspaper as its medium of choice, and for whom the smartphone is the most valued of mobile devices.

Of course habits and fashions change, and one piece of research does not by any means give us the whole picture. My point, though, is that the habits and communication preferences of our students are different not only from those who teach them but from those who are barely a few years older.

This poses very interesting challenges for a university and a university community. At one level it is critically important that we embrace the new. Thus we flood the campus with broadband, while we ensure that the spaces for social learning, for working whilst drinking coffee, and for picking up study-related information whilst on the move are, as near as we can make them, best in class.

Similarly, from September, we are moving to make as many of our lectures as possible available to students through audio capture so that they can revisit their teaching and reshape their learning.

Canvas continues to be a huge success, and students frequently attest to me that the quality and confidence of their learning has been greatly enhanced by the effectiveness of our virtual learning environment.

In order to respond to these kinds of communications and cultural changes, we will need to continue to rethink the way in which we teach and the way in which our students can move between real and virtual learning environments.

None of this, of course, means that we do not have to invest in the physical infrastructure of the University. The Collaborative Teaching Laboratory (CTL) is a very strong statement of the importance of formal learning spaces, and the way in which we can use major capital projects to reconfigure the way we teach, offer

## YOUR BUZZ

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Contact us  
[university-buzz@bham.ac.uk](mailto:university-buzz@bham.ac.uk)

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Edited by Rebecca Vowles  
[r.m.vowles@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.vowles@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. All submissions may be subject to editing. The Editor's decision is final.

**Front cover image:** Saul Becker, Professor of Social Policy and Social Work, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Sciences

feedback, and enable students to explore and learn. A similar discussion is now underway around a new building which will be adjacent to the library where we will incorporate similar kinds of teaching facilities and spaces for the humanities and social sciences.

Despite the transformation of pedagogy, the learning environment, and teaching spaces, it is important that universities are not simply places enslaved to new technologies. Learning and teaching is a two-way process. As well as teachers adapting to new student expectations, students need to continue to recognise that university learning and research is different, demands a range of complementary skills, and requires them to study and reflect in different ways.

One of the most serious challenges is the sustained immersion that higher education will always demand. In a world where communication becomes increasingly fragmented, and in a world where knowledge is frequently packaged in bite-sized portions, the kind of understanding that will always be required in serious universities will demand that students blend their preference for new technologies of communication with an immersion in more traditional means of study and reflection.

Even in the new CTL, lab classes will require time, preparation, and the acquisition of new skills and understanding. In many disciplines books will continue to matter, and the ability to sustain engagement with long and complex texts is a skill which anyone seeking to grapple with complex issues must acquire and hone.

So there is much that should excite in the way in which communications are being transformed, and universities will become still more animated places. The learning, and thus the teaching experience should be richer than ever. But, as with those Sky Box Sets, sometimes deep immersion is required, sometimes there are no short-cuts, and always what we do not know is much greater than what we do.

*Vice-Chancellor,  
Professor Sir David Eastwood*



To commemorate LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) History Month in February the University's staff and students held events across campus, including a launch evening at the Guild of Students. Pictured at the launch event are Ben Goodwin, Convenor of the Staff Rainbow Network and Samantha Bull, LGBTQ Students Officer, with colleagues and students marking the occasion with a celebratory rainbow cake.



## Institute of Advanced Studies goes from strength to strength

Professor Mike Hannon, Professor of Chemical Biology in the School of Chemistry, has been appointed Director of the Institute of



Advanced Studies (IAS) in succession to Professor Malcolm Press. He will take on the role from early April, and will work with Malcolm to ensure the succession is seamless.

IAS has established itself as a dynamic and creative part of the University's research landscape; Mike and the team will continue to build on the enthusiasm of colleagues for interdisciplinary research. There will be further news on programmes and opportunities in the near future.

More on IAS at:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/ias](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/ias)

## New discovery in the archives

Two ancient copies of the Bible in Greek have been discovered in the Cadbury Research Library (CRL) by visiting scholars from Brigham Young University, Utah, USA. One copy of a verse from the Acts of the Apostles seems to have been an amulet, a biblical text written on a folded piece of papyrus and used as a charm. The handwriting suggests that it was copied around the fourth century. The other is a small fragment from Psalms, and is even older, possibly dating from the third century. Examining and comparing handwritten copies is our primary source for studying all ancient texts, and staff at the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing (ITSEE) were able to share in the excitement of the discoveries.

More information:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/itsee](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/itsee)



Professor Lincoln Blumell, Brigham Young University discusses a papyrus fragment with ITSEE staff.



## ENGAGING WITH EU BUSINESS

Business Engagement and Research and Innovation Services organised an event on behalf of the European Commission in the Bramall Music Building on 18 February. Over 200 guests heard about how industry and academia can work together to access European funding to boost innovation and accelerate their business. The event was hosted by Professor Malcolm Press, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer, lay member of the University Council Malcolm Harbour CBE and Dr Angela Maxwell OBE, Director of Acuwomen.

One delegate commented: *'The case studies presented were very interesting and extremely useful for learning how academia can support business.'*

If you are a researcher and would like to find out more about how you can access funding to support your work with business, contact the Business Engagement team at [businesssteam@bham.ac.uk](mailto:businesssteam@bham.ac.uk).

## Mini opportunities can make a massive impact

Did you know that we have a community of over 180,000 alumni – and many are keen to give their time back to the University?

To give them mini opportunities to make a big impact, DABE (Development Alumni and Business Engagement) is launching Alumni Micro Volunteering – a range of bite-sized tasks to benefit the University, which take our alumni just ten minutes or less to complete.

If you think this could help you, we would really like to include the opportunity on our Micro Volunteering site – you might be looking for research project participants, people to give views on how your website looks or want to put your students in touch with contacts for market research. Whatever

the task, there is a whole community of graduates that might be able to help.

Find out more  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/microvolunteering](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/microvolunteering)

Laura Martin: 0121 415 8437/  
[l.j.martin@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.martin@bham.ac.uk)



## 24/7 Library

From Monday 9 March to Friday 5 June 2015, with the exception of the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, the Main Library will be open 24/7. This offers students and staff more hours in which to use library resources and

facilities and a secure, safe place to study, night or day.

More information:  
[intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/index.aspx](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/index.aspx)

## CAMPUS CURIOSIT?ES

### What is it?

An ornamental ostrich egg

### Where is it?

Research and Cultural Collections  
Study Centre, 32 Pritchatts Road

This ornamental ostrich egg is part of the Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts. Originally from North Ghana, the egg's leather decoration and simplistic style suggests that it was fashioned for the tourist trade.

Throughout history ostrich eggs have been a commodity across Africa. However, of the four subspecies, only the North African Ostrich is found in West Africa. Their rarity has led to the use of their eggs

as ornamental objects that signify status. Ostrich eggs have been used for centuries in a number of ways to reflect societal standing; they can be highly decorated in their natural form or crafted into a new object. In the Kalahari they are made into 'Bushman's Beads', strings of ostrich shell disks which are thought to be the oldest currency in the world.

This particular egg was collected by the missionary Sister Evelyn Bellamy and presented to the University in 1968.

### Learn More

Please see <http://rcc-redmarely.tumblr.com> for an expanded blog post. You can also visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/rcc](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/rcc) to find out more about the Danford Collection.



UoB GLOBAL

# CHINA

## CHINA: A CENTRE FOR COLLABORATION

The University's international strategy in China includes initiatives such as the Guangzhou Centre, a novel partnership with the municipal government in Guangzhou and a permanent presence in Shanghai. The Guangzhou Centre, which opened in September 2011, is enabling us to develop mutually beneficial joint research and education projects with Chinese partners. Situated in the Pearl River Delta, Guangzhou is the third largest mainland city in China. It has been a sister city of Birmingham since 2006, and we have a long history of collaborating with the city in various areas.

The Guangzhou Centre provides a springboard for wider collaboration across southern China, such as focused partnerships with leading universities, including Sun Yat-Sen University in medical sciences, South China University of Technology in mechanical and automotive engineering, and a flying faculty MBA programme with Jinan University.

Birmingham is one of the most popular UK universities among Chinese students and scholars. We welcomed over 1,300 new students in 2014 from China, a 20% increase from 2013 and there are currently 76 staff members from China.

The University is ranked third in the UK by the Research Councils UK (RCUK) for joint publications with Chinese academics; highlighting the breadth and depth of our research partnerships with colleagues in China. Many of our top academic staff work on projects with partners across China, several of which are of major international significance.

The University also works with approximately 20 Chinese universities to provide teaching collaboration in subjects such as engineering, computer sciences, mathematics, chemistry, biosciences, economics and law.

### Recent Research – Chirpy Dragon Study

Childhood obesity is a growing problem worldwide, and China is no exception. The rate of increase in childhood obesity in urban areas in China over the last two decades surpasses those seen in Western societies. This increase is particularly marked in boys, and younger children of primary school age. Several factors, including the single child policy, the influence of grandparents, who have lived through periods of hardship, as important carers, rapid westernisation and a focus on academic rather than physical achievement have combined to contribute to the problem.

Following on from some developmental work undertaken by one of our PhD students from China, the Chirpy Dragon Study will examine whether a programme of activities delivered through Chinese primary schools could be effective in preventing the increase in childhood obesity and will initially be tested within three primary schools.

The programme, supported by the Guangzhou Centre for Disease Control and the Education Department, has four inter-related components:

- Interactive learning sessions, quizzes and challenges targeting parents, grandparents and children, aimed at improving health knowledge
- Working with school kitchen staff to improve the quality of school meals
- Encouraging parents and children to engage in active family games outside of school, through practising and demonstrating games in school, and setting homework assignments
- Working with school PE staff to improve the provision of a compulsory requirement to deliver one hour of physical activity to pupils each day



### Chinese New Year celebrations

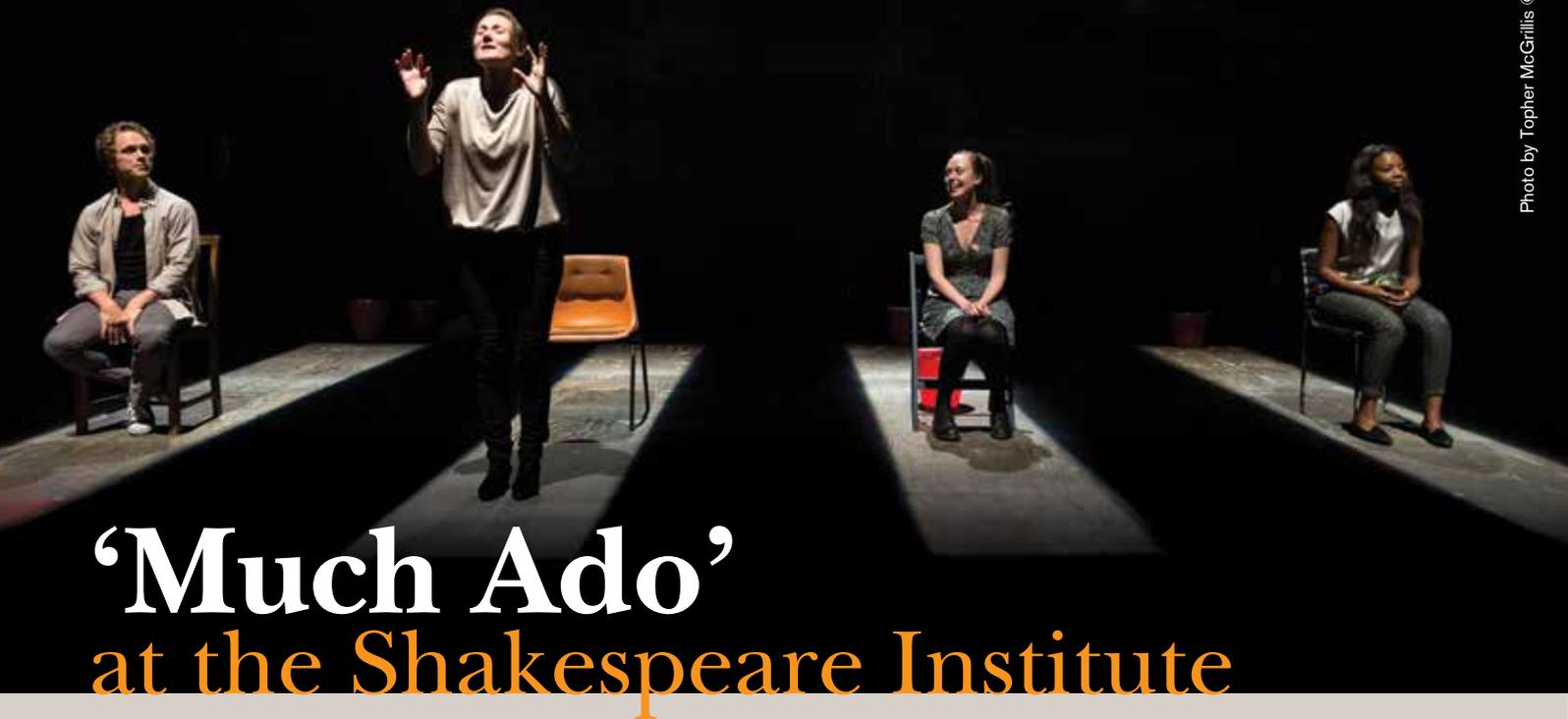
The China Institute organised an event to celebrate the Chinese New Year on 20 February 2015. The event included a poster display to showcase the University's engagement with China, a concert performed by three world-class Chinese musicians, pianist Di Xiao, cellist Jiaxin Lloyd Webber and guitarist Xuefei Yang, and a buffet lunch for networking. Participants included staff, students, partners and members of the Chinese community from across the West Midlands and beyond.

*'The Year of the Sheep symbolises peace, harmony and collaboration, and I am sure our relations with China will embrace all of these great elements in the new year of 2015.'*

Professor Richard Williams, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Head of College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Chair of the China Institute.

Further information on the University's China Institute:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/global-engagement/china-institute/index.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/global-engagement/china-institute/index.aspx)



# 'Much Ado' at the Shakespeare Institute

Dr Abigail Rokison, a Lecturer in Shakespeare and Theatre at the University's Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon, tells *Buzz* about the busy year ahead...

This year promises to be an exciting time at the Shakespeare Institute. The University has recently announced a five-year collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) – the fruits of many meetings and discussions that have taken place over the past few years.

This pioneering project will see the reinstatement of the iconic studio theatre, *The Other Place*, opening in 2016. The collaboration is rooted in the vision of the theatre as a centre for creative and academic exchange.

Of course, this marks the culmination of joint activities with the RSC that have already been taking place, informing the teaching and research of the Institute. I recently participated as lead academic in a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on *Much Ado About Nothing*, which coincided with the current RSC production *Love's Labour's Won*, and was produced jointly between the RSC, the Institute and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

I am currently involved, along with Professor Michael Dobson and Dr Erin Sullivan, in a partnership between the Institute and key partners in Birmingham, including the BBC and the Library of Birmingham on a Shakespeare TouchTable for 2016. The project will give some of our students the opportunity to work with BBC archives and the Library to produce an interactive public learning tool packed

with facts, pictures and video footage about Shakespeare and his world.

A further project that epitomises the Institute's close working relationship with the professional theatre is Arden Performance Editions. Michael Dobson and I, along with actor Simon Russell Beale CBE, have recently been appointed series editors for new Arden Performance editions of Shakespeare's plays, designed for use in the rehearsal room. For me, this marks a culmination of my work going back to my first monograph, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* – a way of opening up the Shakespearean text to actors so that they can make informed decisions about metrical or textual cruxes. We have been researching the sorts of things that actors want from a rehearsal text – short facing-page definitions of words; a well spaced text; reduced punctuation; easily accessible information about key textual variants; and notes on pronunciation of difficult words, lineation and ambiguous metrical structures. I will be editing *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the series.

A book on theatre director Nicholas Hytner for the Bloomsbury and Arden *Shakespeare in the Theatre* series is also in the pipeline. I have met a number of times with Hytner to discuss his productions and his ideas about Shakespeare, as well as talking to those actors who have worked closely with him over the years. It is truly fascinating



The Courtyard Theatre, which will be transformed into *The Other Place*



Abigail meets Nicholas Hytner

to be able to trace the work of a director from their school and university days, through productions at the RSC and on Broadway, to the artistic directorship of the National Theatre, and I hope that the book will provide an insight, not only into individual productions, but into a developing sense of how Shakespeare works in the contemporary theatre.

With the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016, the Institute can certainly expect to be involved in more media, outreach and research projects.

# Congratulations to the 2015 BUAFTA Winners!

On Friday 27 February, the eighth annual Birmingham University Awards for Tremendous Achievement (BUAFTA) event was held. The Winter Wonderland themed evening celebrated the outstanding work undertaken by our Professional Services staff.

The awards recognise people who work tirelessly to realise the values of our founders: excellence in all we do, distinctiveness in our offering, impact on our community and pride in ourselves. This year there were 852 BUAFTA nominations from across all areas of the University. The quality of these nominations was exceptional, giving the judging panel an extremely difficult task selecting the winners.

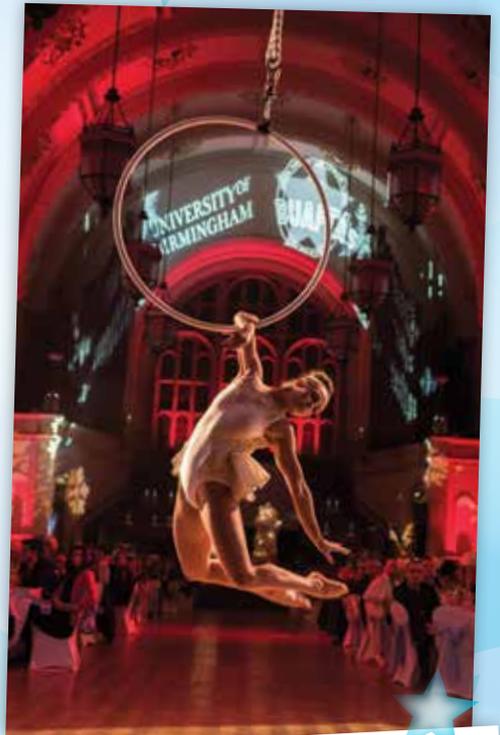
The host for the evening was Celina Hinchcliffe, an alumna of the University, graduating in 1997, with a BA in English and Drama. She is now one of the television's most talented female broadcasters.

Entertainment for the night was provided by Birmingham-based company Circus Mash who provided winter themed magical sparkle in the form of stilt walkers, aerial hoop and aerial silk displays. Their breathtaking displays of gymnastics, strength and agility were simply stunning to watch.

*'The BUAFTAs ceremony was simply stunning. The Great Hall looked fantastic with the Winter Wonderland theme, and the meal, entertainment, (and the wine!) was all fabulous. It was such a lovely evening and great recognition for all the work that the Professional Services staff do.'* Lora Morris, winner of the Team Player of the Year award.

The BUAFTA's chosen charity for 2015 was the Birmingham Children's Hospital Magnolia House Appeal. The total amount raised via proceeds and raffle money was £5,437, the most money raised at a BUAFTA event so far.

**Further details:** <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/university/BUAFTAS/index.aspx>



# Winners 2015

## Idea of the Year

Recognising an individual or team involved in an innovation, change or project, which has been successfully implemented and has had a significant impact on an individual area of the University.

**WINNER**

**A Level Results Day – personalised video**  
Thomas Straw and the Marketing Team, External Relations

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**#hellobrum**  
Corrina Kimberley and the Marketing Team, External Relations



## Best Newcomer

Recognising those who have been proactive in implementing better practice, or who have had a positive effect within a department, generating effective results in a relatively short time.

**WINNER**

**Christopher Campbell-Kelly**,  
Governance Support Administrator,  
Vice-Chancellor's Office

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**Claire Ford**, Cognitive Behaviour  
Therapy Programme Administrator,  
School of Psychology

## Change Leader of the Year

This award recognises an individual who has led or significantly contributed to the successful implementation of change at the University, whether the introduction of something new or the overhaul of an existing activity.

**WINNER**

**Erin Withers**, Project Manager for the University of Birmingham School, Planning Office

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**Fiona Gilyead**, Operations Manager, School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies



## Best Support for Research

To celebrate the achievements of an individual or team whose work supports attracting, delivering or promoting high-quality research or research impact.

**WINNER**

**Institute of Advanced Studies**

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**James Sharp**, Research and Knowledge Transfer Officer, College of Social Sciences



## Best Customer Service

To recognise an individual or team who has gone the extra mile to give their customers a top quality service experience.

**WINNER**

**Michael McEvoy**  
Traffic Officer, Security Services





## 'Unsung Hero' of the Year

This BUAFTA recognises an individual or team whose efforts make the University a better place to work. This includes those who maintain our physical environment, ensure compliance, support others in delivering their roles, or perform other functions whose importance and value may only be widely noticed in their absence.

### WINNER

**Catherine Wardius**, Microbes NG Facility Manager, School of Immunity and Infection

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

**John Campbell**, Distribution Driver, External Relations



## Team Player of the Year

The winner of this award is an individual who has excelled at supporting and encouraging others in their team, going above and beyond to support all staff and students within their department, to ensure that they are happy and motivated in the workplace.

### WINNER

**Lora Morris**, College Head of Human Resources, for Engineering and Physical Sciences, Human Resources

## Team of the Year

To recognise teams that have successfully overcome significant obstacles or have effectively utilised the skills of all members of the team.

### WINNER

**Lapworth Museum Development Team**, College of Life and Environmental Sciences

*'Our Project Team was absolutely thrilled to win the BUAFTA Team of the Year award. Although totally unexpected it was immensely encouraging that all our hard efforts, commitment and enthusiasm to make a success of the Lapworth Museum Redevelopment Project have been recognised'* – Jane Harris, Lapworth Museum Team.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

**Donor Relations Team**, Development, Alumni and Business Engagement



## The Vice-Chancellor's Award

This premier BUAFTA recognises an individual or team whose work has had a significant and lasting impact on the University's reputation and standing. Their work is recognisably 'best in class' and demonstrates major achievement in challenging circumstances.

### WINNER

**Chancellor's Installation Team**



## The Student Experience Award

This award recognises an individual or team whose work helps to create a distinctive, high-quality and enhanced student experience at Birmingham.

### WINNER

**Worklink Team**, Hospitality and Accommodation Services

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

**Disability and Mental Health Support Team**, Academic Services



# transforming OUR campus

‘You can start to imagine how this building will become a vibrant hub of activity’

## Our sports centre reaches the top

Construction of the University's new sports centre has hit new heights with the ‘topping out’ of the building to mark it reaching the uppermost point of construction.

Together with contractors Interserve, the University marked this milestone by filling a time capsule with a selection of memorabilia to illustrate a snapshot of sport at Birmingham in 2015. The capsule, which includes a playing shirt from the current season, a National Badminton League fixture programme, a fitness class brochure and photos of the University's first teams across all sports, will be incorporated into the atrium area of the centre when it is complete.

Now with its frame in place the centre soars 18.5 metres above the Bristol Road

and also reaches a depth of 6.3 metres to house the two metres deep pool, which will be divisible into two smaller pools, and has a moveable floor to alter the depth, for activities such as swimming lessons.

Zena Wooldridge, the University's Director of Sport, said: ‘The topping out ceremony is a very tangible milestone in what is a six-year journey for this project, and marks around a year to its opening. Even those of us who have worked so closely with the design are now appreciating its scale. The gym we're standing in now is 62 metres long, and a central spot to view the 50 metre pool to one side and the rapid growth of the sports halls and squash courts on the other side. You can start to imagine how

*this building will become a vibrant hub of activity for students, University staff and local residents of all ages.’*

Simon Walton, Project Manager at Interserve Construction, said: ‘We are proud to be developing a centre of sporting excellence in collaboration with the University of Birmingham. The centre is important for the future of the university, and also to the city of Birmingham and the West Midlands as a whole, providing much needed facilities that will attract the best in class from around the world.’

The project has been supported by Sport England who are investing £2 million of National Lottery funds into the project as part of its Olympic legacy Iconic Facilities fund.



Chris Hale, Divisional Director, Interserve, Zena Wooldridge OBE, Director of Sport, University of Birmingham, Professor Sir David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor, University of Birmingham at the topping out ceremony



Progress on the sports centre was visible at the topping out ceremony

## University School senior leaders unveiled

The University of Birmingham School has taken a step closer to its September opening by appointing many of the staff that will work there, including the new senior leadership team.

The new senior team were hand-picked by Principal Michael Roden from over 80 applications to lead the pioneering School and embed links with the University into the School's curriculum from day one.

They include Senior Vice-Principal and Director of Character Education Rebecca Tigue, who will join the team in September from Swanshurst School in Kings Heath where she is currently Deputy Headteacher. One unique feature to the School is that all Sixth Formers will follow a programme of character education devised especially for them

by the University's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and Mrs Tigue will head the programme within the School.

In April this year, Frances Child will join Mr Roden and his team as Vice-Principal and Director of Teaching and Learning and Initial Teacher Education. She is currently Deputy Head Teacher and Director of Initial Teacher Training at the King Edward's Consortium.

As the first secondary University Training School in the country, the School will have a higher than average teacher to student ratio. Following the model of teaching hospitals, trainee teachers will work closely alongside experienced, highly qualified and outstanding practitioners to learn their craft and increase the resources available

to support students. Ms Child will work in close consultation with the University of Birmingham's School of Education to embed this programme into the School.

And also joining the School in September will be Kate Campbell, Assistant Vice-Principal – Progress and Delivery and SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-ordinator). Ms Campbell is currently the SENCO at New College in Worcester which is an 11–19 residential specialist school for pupils with visual impairment.

Mr Roden said: *'I am delighted with the appointments we have made, and look forward to working with this exceptional senior leadership team to deliver the distinctive vision of our pioneering School for the children of Birmingham.'*

## Rethinking STEM teaching – the Collaborative Teaching Laboratory

Plans are being developed for a new £40 million laboratory teaching facility that will totally transform the way science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects are taught at the University.

The Collaborative Teaching Laboratory (CTL) is being developed in two phases. Phase one will see the creation of a Heavy Engineering Lab through the complete refurbishment of part of the current Mechanical and Civil Engineering Building. The second phase will deliver an entirely new building situated between the Learning Centre and Biosciences Building, accommodating a wet lab, dry lab and e-lab. It will also incorporate a visually stimulating and interactive space to provide an attractive and flexible environment for outreach

activities, business engagement, open days and applicant visit days.

The vision for the CTL is to reinvent entirely the way that practical laboratory classes are taught through the use of cutting-edge technologies, state-of-the-art equipment and increased opportunities for collaborative working. Students that graduate from STEM subjects at Birmingham will possess the interdisciplinary team-working skills that employers demand, putting our graduates ahead of the game.

Professor Jon Binner, who is leading the project, said: *'This project will rethink completely the way our STEM subjects across the whole University are taught. We know that employers want to see students graduating from University with the ability to go straight into the*

*workplace and work effectively with colleagues across different disciplines. This new, dynamic space will give students the opportunity to gain that type of experience.*

*'We are currently seeking the views of all staff to inform the design of the new building's laboratory spaces, as well as the open interactive space. We want to ensure that the CTL meets the needs of everyone who will use it. We are keen to hear from staff who have ideas about how the space can be utilised in an exciting, innovative and collaborative way so please do get in touch if you have ideas you have not yet expressed.'*

Any member of staff who wants to comment on the plans should email [ctl@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:ctl@contacts.bham.ac.uk).



An artist's impression of how the CTL's heavy engineering lab may look

# SEE INSIDE

Even if you have never been in a hospital you will be aware of the importance of medical imaging. Medical staff can 'look' inside the body to diagnose illness and injury without physically having to touch a patient and potentially cause more harm.

In medical and biological research, MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and CT (computed tomography) also allow us to understand the workings of the human body: how we process food, how we move, even how we fall asleep. But what might surprise you is the importance of these techniques across many other fields of the scientific community.

Until recently, a major limitation of MRI has been the inability to image metals. The changing magnetic field of the MRI generates electrical currents in any nearby metals. The effect of this is swirling eddy currents and loss of detail in the resulting image. As a result, MRI has been used extensively, but generally only to look at 'soft' systems such as the structure of soap foams or the effect of bruising on fruit and vegetables.

Recently, Dr Melanie Britton and her team in the School of Chemistry published some pioneering research that challenges the long held belief that metals are not compatible with MRI. By carefully adjusting the geometry and orientation of metal objects inside the magnetic field, eddy currents can be minimized and detail restored to the image.

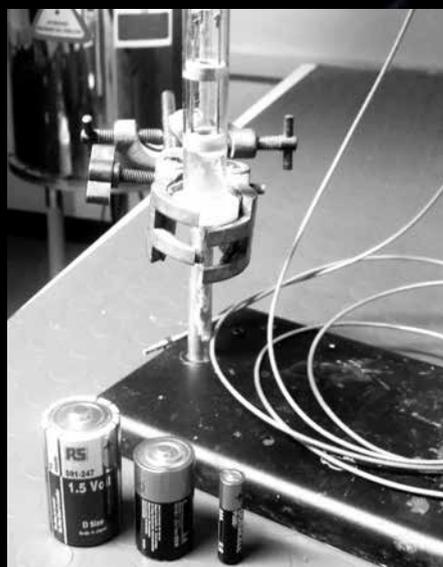
This breakthrough has wide-reaching implications. The Britton group is using this knowledge to study the chemical processes that occur in batteries. By constructing a model battery inside the MRI instrument, the group are able to map the movement of ions within the battery. This is particularly important

for optimising efficiency and lifetime of batteries, but can also be applied to other electrochemical technologies such as corrosion prevention and electroplating.

Another Birmingham group that is leading the way in scientific imaging is led by Professor Alison Davenport in the School of Metallurgy and Materials. Alison and her group use CT, which builds up a three-dimensional image of the inside of an object from a series of two-dimensional X-ray images. Like MRI, CT has the advantage of being non-destructive and so can be used to study changing systems.

The Davenport group, alongside researchers at the Diamond Light Source Synchrotron, have used CT to watch how corrosion sites grow in aluminium air frame alloys under droplets of salt water. This will provide a basis for developing corrosion prediction models that will help aircraft operators decide how often aircraft need to be inspected.

Another important application of predictive models from CT imaging is in storage of intermediate level nuclear waste in stainless steel containers. There are currently no signs of corrosion of the containers in any of the stores, but it is important to understand what storage conditions are required to avoid the risk of corrosion over hundreds of years. Studying the impact of atmospheric corrosion on a metal over 100 years is not possible so the group use more aggressive conditions to understand the pathway of corrosion. This can then be used to build up a model of long-term corrosion effects. As Alison says, *'we need to have an underpinning knowledge of the process so it can be modelled and we can predict what might happen in the future.'*



The glass vial contains the components of a household battery, which is placed in the MRI scanner to see the distribution and transport of ions.



Dr Melanie Britton and Dr Joshua Bray



TA

# Focus on The Teaching Academy

The Teaching Academy (TA) will bring together academics and professional services staff and work with students to enhance our teaching and improve the student experience, while promoting recognition and reward for excellence in teaching.

In recent years there have been major changes in higher education that influence the ways that we teach and how students learn – the student population is more diverse, teaching and learning takes place in a digital world and there are new ways of delivering programmes involving eg, distance learning. Innovations such as the flipped classroom, online assessment and feedback, technology-enhanced learning, collaborative learning and learning analytics are transforming university education. The TA was created to ensure that staff are fully aware of, and can implement, good practice in teaching and learning to optimise the student experience. It will advocate an evidence-based approach to teaching practices and encourage educational research. It will also raise the profile of teaching and promote recognition and reward for excellent teaching, leadership and scholarship. The aim of this exciting new development is to make a step change in our provision of teaching and learning across the institution.

There is already much good practice in teaching and learning across the University but it is not joined up. The TA has set up strands of activity to address this, including a flagship seminar series, the Teaching & Learning Conference, resources and workshops on good practice in teaching,

and enhancement themes – special interest groups of academic, professional services staff and students to focus on key issues related to teaching delivery, assessment and feedback, and developing an inclusive curriculum. This will be underpinned with activities to help staff to undertake educational research, and the recently launched in-house journal for teaching and learning *Education in Practice* will give staff and students opportunities to publish case studies, reviews and original research.

The TA will establish a series of awards for teaching and learning support and will provide one-to-one guidance for staff who are aiming for promotion to Reader or Chair on the teaching route and also for those applying for Senior and Principal Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship and National Teaching Fellowships.

The TA will work with Colleges, Academic Services and the Guild of Students. It has a close partnership with the Centre for Learning and Academic Development and Learning Spaces (CLAD/LS), whose staff contribute to and complement the activities of the TA, and also coordinate and run the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP), Education Enhancement Projects and the University's HEA-accredited professional recognition programme.



Professor Jon Green

## The Team

The TA Management Group chaired by the Director, Professor Jon Green, comprises Dr Vikki Burns (LES), Dr Sharon Buckley (MDS), Professor Mike McLinden (CoSS), Michael Grove (EPS), Dr Elaine Fulton (CAL) and Dr Clare Saunders (CLAD/LS) supported by Pat Nick. The group reports to an Advisory Board chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, Professor Jeff Bale.

## Teaching & Learning Conference

This year's conference on the 23 June has as its theme 'The Student Experience' and will have sessions on student engagement, the inclusive curriculum and personalised learning/learning analytics.

## Developing a strategy for CPD

A major project for the TA is to design, develop and set up CPD programmes for staff on effective teaching, teaching leadership and educational research.



# Student engagement: Vice-Chancellor's Seminar Series

Each year, the Vice-Chancellor chairs an annual series of seminars with a group of outstanding undergraduates from across the University. Fostering academic interchanges across College and disciplinary boundaries, the students debate topical issues and consider the ways in which their academic studies can be practically grounded.

## THIS YEAR'S SEMINARS HAVE CONSIDERED QUESTIONS AS DIVERSE AS:

How should we decide when a clinical treatment is too expensive, or its benefits too uncertain?

**What does a just society look like?**

Will the 'internet of things' solve any real-world problems?

**What do we gain from studying the arts and humanities, and why?**

Do we worry too much about wellbeing?



Fourth-year medical student, Elliot Yates, told *Buzz* about his experience at a recent seminar.

"How should we decide when a clinical treatment is too expensive, or its benefits too uncertain?" was the question asked of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences (MDS). We opted to open up the 2014/15 Vice-Chancellor's Seminar series with a team consisting of a third-year student nurse, Jessica Dennehy, and two fourth-year medical students, George Greenlees and I.

With some trepidation, we began teasing apart the arguments of Professor John Harris' 'Fair Innings approach', Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian rationing and even indulged a little Marx. George opened our offering by outlining these rationing cornerstones and began to consider how we may standardise the benefits or harms provided by a certain treatment. We explored the concept of quality-adjusted life years (QALYS) as a means of economic comparison, illustrating how 'rescuing' a patient from cancer had a stronger emotional appeal

than the epidemiological treatment of millions. Jessica built on this by providing a patient perspective of anti-dementia drugs versus the UK government's healthcare rationing arm, NICE (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence).

Armed with some light pre-reading and fundamental medical ethics, the panel engaged in a lengthy discussion, chaired by Professor Sir David Eastwood. We wrestled with the perennial problem of a finite NHS budget versus the burgeoning complex medical needs of an ageing population, highlighting how "to each according to his need" can only extend as far as public coffers allow. The panel identified the need for exploration away from our borders, with examples of best practice potentially coming from countries with less stringent rationing bodies. After thorough analysis of our allocated topic, I summarised the panel's prominent themes, concluding that difficult topics require yet further discussion!

Above all, despite all panel members coming from different academic backgrounds, everyone had a voice. It was refreshing to hear such differing opinions and engage in debate to justify and challenge our pre-held thoughts on politics, societal structure and health economics. The Vice-Chancellor's Seminar Series provides a forum for motivated students to reflect on major topics of the world today; a unique opportunity and one that all of us from MDS would highly recommend to future invitees.



Students are nominated by their Heads of College for a one-year membership of the series. For further information please contact **Mark Senior, Assistant Registrar:** [m.r.senior@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.r.senior@bham.ac.uk).



# news+views

Our regular feature gives *Buzz* readers a quick tour of the latest University news hitting the headlines and activity among our online community.

## in the news...

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

Dr Andrew Schofield wrote an article for *The Conversation* about #TheDress considering why certain people see colours in different ways and how the brain works out the colours of objects. He also featured in the *Birmingham Mail* discussing how the phenomenon of 'colour constancy' was the most likely reason why people see the dress in different colours. Professor Isabelle Szmigin was interviewed on BBC *Midlands Today* discussing #TheDress.

**Dr Douglas Ward was interviewed by the *Kenya Star* about his research, which suggests that urine tests could be used to identify the level of aggressiveness of bladder cancer in patients.**

University of Birmingham PhD student Maggie Lieu has been chosen as one of the finalists for the Mars One mission. This story was widely reported, with Maggie being featured in a range of national, international and regional media outlets, including: *i* (the sister paper of the *Independent*), *The Times*, the *Independent*, ITV News, Al Jazeera, BBC Radio WM, BBC *Midlands Today*, Sky News, ITV's *Good Morning Britain*, the *Guardian*, *Mail Online*, *The Telegraph*, the *Birmingham Mail*, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Mirror*, Russia Today, CNN (USA), Die Welt (Germany), CCTV China, La Republica (Peru), L'Express (France), Sina (China), and Xinhuanet (China).

**Professor Sir David Eastwood was featured in the *Birmingham Mail* concerning the University's collaboration with the RSC to re-open The Other Place theatre. The story also featured on BBC News Online.**

Professor Roy Harrison was interviewed by the *Mail Online* and the *Guardian* about research into e-cigarettes and if they fuel addiction in young people. This story was picked up internationally, including in *The Times of India*.

**Professor Laura Piddock was featured in an article in *The Telegraph* concerning the University's discovery that a strain of Salmonella was able to develop resistance to ciprofloxacin, an antibiotic.**

Professor David Dunn featured in an *Independent* article about a legal loophole that allows drones to fly over the royal residence Balmoral.

## feeling social...



### Love is in the air

During February 2015 we asked our staff, students and alumni to get involved in #UoBlovestory. We asked couples to let us know if they met at Birmingham. There were some lovely stories shared, and some even carried on the tradition with their children attending the University!

### Did you know?

Over 660 of the University's alumni are married to another member of the alumni community

#### Emily Heath

@unibirmingham me and @AdamHeath4 met at #maplebank in 2008. Took me back there to propose in 2013. Got married last August. #UoBlovestory

#### Tickettyboo

@unibirmingham Yes! My husband and I met in 1988 in our final year, 1st born now at UoB studying geography #UoBlovestory

#### dayakie

@birminghamalum @unibirmingham I met my husband whilst we were both working at the uni – been married 12 years this year <3 #UoBlovestory

#### Lisa Hickley-Mason

@unibirmingham I met my other half last year at Guild Awards and we've been inseparable ever since! #UoBlovestory

## Join the UoB online community

Follow us on Twitter at @unibirmingham. If you use social media at work and would like to increase your visibility, find out more at: [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/socialmediaguidelines](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/socialmediaguidelines)

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](mailto:pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or call 0121 414 6029.

## Saul Becker ...in my own words



Saul Becker is a Professor of Social Policy and Social Work, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Sciences.

I joined the University for the second time in August 2014; my first stint here being from 2004 until 2006 as Chair of Social Care and Health. In the interim I was at the University of Nottingham as Assistant Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Internationalisation and Director of Research for the Faculty of Social Sciences, after being a Head of School there for five years.

In addition to my academic background I am a qualified social worker and spent six years working in Nottingham with children and families. That experience helped shape my understanding of the realities of everyday life for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society, and it helped to inform my future research interests, styles of working with people, and how I 'get things done'.

My research expertise is around young carers, ie, children with care-giving roles for other family members, usually parents, who are ill, disabled, have mental health difficulties, addiction or other needs and problems. I began that programme of research in 1992 and I have written hundreds of publications and conference papers on this topic, many of which have helped to inform understanding and policy for this group of children and young people in the UK and internationally. It is important to me that my research has a real impact on policy and practice, and I am proud of my record on 'making a difference'.

I've recently completed research on young adult carers, aged 18–24, which is currently informing the development of government policy. Birmingham is one of a handful of universities that contributed to a new Carers Trust publication, *Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities (Ideas and Practice for Universities to Help Support Carers Access and Succeed in Higher Education)*, that will assist universities to identify and support students who are also carers. I would expect there to be more than 1,000 student carers at a university the size of Birmingham. They may have care and supervision responsibilities in the evenings, weekends, holidays and have to combine these with regular phone calls to check on disabled parents or family members. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has in the last month encouraged all universities to consider the services they provide to support young adult carers, and this support can count as part of our access agreement spend.

Developing our research excellence and impact is a central priority for CoSS. As a college we are focusing on REF2020 (Research Excellence Framework) and most importantly on increasing our 4\* publications and

impact case studies. To foster this we have launched 'CoSS Essentials', a programme of learning opportunities taking place once a month with themes such as 'What does a 4\* publication look like?' and 'How to maximise your impact'. They've been well received with very high attendance. To maintain the momentum we're converting the sessions into a series of condensed online videos, 'CoSS Essentials Re-loaded'. This innovative programme is a fantastic way to communicate high priority areas to all our academics and professional services colleagues.

Facilitating a renewed sense of academic ambition and collegiality, in which colleagues have a shared sense of vision, purpose and drive to do the best social science that we can, is at the heart of my project for the college. Of course I am also committed to enhancing the student experience, providing a positive space for students to learn and develop their skills. I see my role as leading and enabling staff and students to do their best work, and to be recognised for their contributions and attainments.

As Pro-Vice-Chancellor my portfolio also includes University-wide civic engagement, an important role for academics, particularly for those in social sciences where engagement with the 'real world' is critical. I am keen to promote events like TEDx, which deliver inspirational ideas in the form of a short talk, as they provide an accessible means for communicating our research and ideas to diverse audiences. I took part recently in a 'Café Culture!' event, organised by Liberal Arts & Sciences, which involved discussing my research with 50 people in a bar over a drink! I'm a big advocate of events such as these that encourage open conversation and take research outcomes outside of an academic setting.

Along with local civic groups and other academics here, I am working to set up a UoB Academic Birmingham Citizens Group. This will be one more vehicle for the University to cultivate new connections with civic society and will give colleagues and students an opportunity to engage locally and work with diverse communities and networks.

If I had taken a different path in life I may have ended up with a career as an illustrator or graphic designer. Alternatively I would like to have been a pianist; my 'unfinished business' is to play piano in a jazz trio in the style of Dave Brubeck, with a double bassist and a drummer. But that's another story... ]

@profsaulbecker