Innovative new campus set for Crawley, not Horsham

The University's governing body has given senior managers the go-ahead to pursue the possibility of establishing a new research-led campus in West Sussex, which will complement the existing Falmer campus. Council decided at its meeting on 2 July that any further work should focus on a site in Crawley, rather than one in Horsham that had originally been considered.

The vision for the new campus is based on a mix of world-class science, technology and business, with research and teaching focused on the needs of business and industry.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: "This is an innovative and exciting opportunity, in keeping with Sussex's radical tradition of developing new approaches to higher education. There is still a long way to go to make this a reality. But by working together with business and the wider community, Sussex can make a real contribution to the future success of the region."

An initial study by business advisors KPMG has shown a gap in higher-education provision in the area, as well as exciting opportunities to offer research, teaching and business development to meet local and regional business needs and strengthen the region's economy and international status.

Based on the region's growing economy, the areas for teaching and research could include automotive and aviation engineering, pharma/biosciences, computing and information technology, and business and management.

The development would incorporate business-incubation facilities drawing on the growing reputation of the Sussex Innovation Centre and would be a centrepiece of the 'Gatwick Diamond', launched on 8 July by the West Sussex and Surrey Economic Partnerships.

The campus would offer undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, but would seek to deliver teaching in innovative ways. This could include 'fast-track' degree courses (completed in two years rather than three), modular learning to meet the needs of continuing professional development, and e-learning opportunities.

The plans, which are still at the evaluation stage, identify a 150-acre site that would accommodate up to 4,000 students and 800 members of staff, drawn from both the region and internationally. Research and business facilities would also be accommodated on the site, which is formerly managed woodland adjacent to Tilgate Park.

The land has been identified as an area for a significant development benefiting the Crawley area and would be carefully developed in keeping with the University’s experience of managing environmentally sensitive sites. It is a preferred choice because of its development potential, first-class transport and communication links and centrality to the region’s population and economy.

The feasibility study also suggests that the proposals would have the support of local and regional organisations, who would view it as an opportunity to enhance the region's skills base and economic potential.

Crawley businessman John Peel, director of the West Sussex Economic Partnership and an independent member of the University's Council, said: "A collaborative approach which attracts world-class research, supports new business development and strengthens the skills of the workforce is a fantastic opportunity for the region."

Support for the educational element of the estimated £300 million development costs would have to come from funding bodies including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), but the bulk of the total funding would be drawn from the private sector.

Sussex student named employee of the year

The award, from the National Association of Student Employment Services – a voluntary organisation that supports practitioners in the sector – recognises Ali’s success in combining part-time work with her demanding studies.

Ali beat six other regional finalists to win the award, which was presented at the Association’s annual dinner last week (7 July). Ali, 23, has just completed the second year of a Multimedia and Digital Systems degree. She was looking for vacation work through the University’s Career Development and Employment Centre (CDEC) during her first year when she spotted an advertisement for a computer-games tester at Babel Media, whose staff test up to 100 new interactive games a day. "I'd never played any computer games," Ali says. "I got my gaming friends to help me, but I got motion sickness watching the screen." She impressed at the interview, however, and found that there was far more to the job than clocking up a top score with a joystick. "They wanted people with English-language and observational skills," she recalls.

Ali was rapidly promoted to lead tester, then quality assurance co-ordinator, responsible for the input of more than 20 people working in five languages. "Working at Babel has helped me get more out of my course," she says.

Once she has finished her first degree, Ali hopes to either take a DPhil in computer graphics or pursue a career with Babel, which nominated her for the award.

"We're all absolutely thrilled for Ali," says CDEC employer liaison manager Andrea Wall. "She is a shining example of how a student can combine academic work with beneficial and worthwhile part-time employment."

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Exhibition offers rare glimpse of revolutionary Paris

An exhibition in Lewes provides a unique view of the 1871 Paris Commune, told through books, posters, satirical cartoons and rare artefacts from the University's Eugene W. Schulkind Commune Collection.

The exhibition has been curated by Dorothy Sheridan, head of Special Collections, and Rod Hedward, Emeritus Professor of History. "This has been a great opportunity to display one of our really valuable and rare collections," says Dorothy.

The collection is the most important of its kind in the UK and one of only four in the world. It was built up by the late Eugene Schulkind, formerly of the School of European Studies.

The exhibits help to tell the story of the Commune, when Parisian citizens and soldiers (Communards) stood up to the invading Prussians and attempted to establish patriotic rule based on secular democracy and social justice.

After just two months, however, the Commune was brutally crushed by the French republican government. Its members were massacred, imprisoned or shipped to the colonies. Items featured in the exhibition include the official Commune embossing date stamp, poignantly stopped at 27 May 1871, when the Commune collapsed.

The episode inspired the likes of Karl Marx, however, and is seen as a precursor to socialism. It even inspired that anthem of revolutionary ideals, the Internationale.

The Paris Commune 1871 exhibition is at the Barbican House Museum in Lewes High Street until 9 August. Opening times are 10am–5.30pm, Tues–Sat; and 11am–5.30pm, Sun and Mon.

Exhibition pins down a past of poignant memories

Stories of life, love, passion and loss down the centuries, from Civil War Cavaliers to Mods and Rockers, are revealed in a collection of badges, medals and jewellery on display at the Library.

The collection, entitled 'Read Me', is drawn from collections of 'exonumia'—small, decorative objects other than money—from the Brighton and Hove Museum Service and put together by a museum volunteer.

Dorothy Sheridan, Head of Special Collections at the Library, says: "I am delighted to host this exhibition in the Library and am keen to ensure that this will be the first of many collaborations between the University and the Museum Service. Each of these small badges, brooches and medals has a personal story behind it."

Visitors can add to the collection by donating a badge on a special pinboard, and attaching a personal note with the item.
VC's Voice

The Higher Education Bill has now completed its passage through Parliament and become the Higher Education Act. At the beginning of July, the Council of the University accepted my recommendation that we set our full-time home undergraduate fee from 2006 onwards at the £3,000 maximum level permitted by the Act.

There is still much work to do on determining other fees and on developing our strategies for bursaries and scholarships. There is also much work to do on reminding potential students that, after 2006, fees are received by the universities immediately but are paid by students only after they graduate and have a decent income. But the impact of the Act on the funding of teaching at universities will be significant and welcome.

There is also good news on the funding of research. On Monday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the results of the latest Spending Review and the government published its ten-year strategy for science and innovation. The results were in line with the optimistic expectations I described last month (see Bulletin 18 June). The planned rate of growth of research funding is high and the government seems genuinely convinced of the social value of increased public spending on research.

Of course, the money does not come without strings. Research funding comes through the 'dual support' system: partly from the funding council and partly from the research councils, charities and other funders. In recent years, the two streams of funding together have failed to cover the true costs of research in universities. The government now aims at 'sustainability' and the plan is that the additional money should provide full funding of the existing volume of research rather than generate an under-funded increase in that volume.

The downside of this for us is that we will be required to put resources into improving our internal accounting processes; and individual researchers will be required to do substantial effort into recording their own allocation of time. These burdens may not be welcome, but they are the counterpart of a significant increase in research funding and therefore very worthwhile.

These increases in publicly planned funding for research and research may represent a turning point in the recent history of higher education funding. That is good news, but should not lead us to be complacent about future prospects. Compared with similar research-led universities, Sussex is unusually dependent on government funding, and we need to be less reliant on the benevolence of politicians.

There are other important implications of the science and innovation review. The government is keen to expand the teaching of science and mathematics in schools, and therefore to expand teacher training in areas in which we already have a strong presence. And there is a heavy emphasis on building links between universities and business, where we have been making major efforts in recent years.

Elsewhere in this Bulletin there is information about the possibility of a new University development near Gatwick. The strong focus of such a development would be on links between higher education and the economy, and the new campus could be a pathfinder in the development of the government's science and innovation strategy.

The 'Gatwick research campus' would house commercial research and development activities, innovation and incubator facilities, and a conference centre, as well as new higher education programmes. The subject mix and the structure of educational provision would reflect the wish to build strong links with the regional, national and international economy.

These plans, which are still at a very early stage, are not a diversion from our core mission. On the contrary, they offer us an opportunity to strengthen the financial base of the University and to broaden our sources of funding, in line with other research-led universities. And they offer a very exciting opportunity to take a big new step in the development of higher education in this country.

Letters

Geoff Hemstedt

I was shocked and saddened to read of the sudden death of Dr Geoff Hemstedt. Geoff was one of the most wonderful people I had ever met. My dealings with him in the Bookshop over many years were always a pleasure.

Geoff was a very kind and thoughtful person. I particularly remember his wit and humour, but most of all I remember how Geoff was always ready to help other people and I can recall numerous times when I had every reason to be thankful for his help.

I shall miss him terribly, for behind that great humanity and urbane wit was a heart of gold and a very serious person who truly cared about people; alas we will never see his equal again.

James Procter (ex Bookshop)

Recycling on campus

I'm surprised that such a green campus hasn't had a recycling scheme like the present one sooner; the institution really has no excuse not to take responsibility for the waste it produces.

The University can cut down on unnecessary waste and make a 'green' difference with regards to the internal use of envelopes, too. We can all encourage re-use of envelopes by keeping addresses neat, with previous addresses clearly struck out, and sticky tape resealing the contents.

A little University-wide co-operation will help cut down on waste and augment the drive towards a more eco-friendly campus.

Alan Owen, Web Team

Thank you friends, comrades and colleagues

I have been overwhelmed with the gifts, party, cards, flowers and messages full of good wishes on my election as president of UNISON. Thank you so much for all your kindness.

I look forward to representing UNISON both nationally and internationally and trust that I will also be a good ambassador for the University and a credit to you all.

Pauline Thorne

Banging the drum

While having sympathy with Dr Andy Medhurst's position on noise and concentration (Bulletin 2 July), my own problem was generated by obese, McDonaldized, living-it-up carnivores pretending to be 'civilised'. Surely this point alone must evolve the discussion beyond stereotyping.

From an anthropomorphic perspective, drums have a story to tell. By letting go and feeling the natural rhythms, awareness of a vibrant, inclusive, and pan-dimensional cosmology arises, whether the thump of the drum is a shamanism or 'real'.

I for one feel honoured to attend an institution that endorses fun and gaiety and I would like to thank the Carnival Collective for their contribution to Brighton's worldwide reputation as a great town... sorry, city. By way of concession to Dr Medhurst's viewpoint I agree that the discharge of bagpipes in a public place is unethical, immoral and inhumane.

David Haddock, Lewes Court

Sparks fly at chemistry camp

Fifty students from schools across the UK discovered how to turn copper into 'gold' at a residential chemistry camp on campus last week (6-9 July).

The 15-year-olds also learned how to produce pure banana oil (without using bananas), investigated chemical clock reactions and discovered the science behind putty and slime. They were able to see chemistry applied in industry by visiting pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline.

The course was supervised by the head of the Chemistry department, Professor Norman Billingham, who said: "This is a fantastic way to get young people enthusiastic about chemistry."

The chemistry camp was one of eight at universities around the country, organised by Salinters', one of London's oldest liveried companies.
Postgraduate applications up

Compared with this time last year, recruitment to postgraduate study at Sussex is up. There has been an overall 9% percent increase in applications and a 10% increase in both offers and acceptances.

The detailed picture, however, is more complicated. Acceptances by home applicants to taught programmes, for example, are down 3% on last year (although that figure is likely to increase now that approval has been given to run a Hardship Bursary scheme for UK applicants).

Acceptances by overseas applicants to taught programmes, however, are up an impressive 27%. Terry O’Donnell from the Postgraduate Office explained that this may be due to new admissions procedures that have led, in this category particularly, to decisions being taken and communicated to applicants far quicker than ever before.

Acceptances by prospective overseas research students are also up, but only by 3% (despite the fact that applications and offers have increased by 17%). This figure was “dis appointing”, said Terry.

The outlook is gloomy with regard to home research students. Changes to ESRC and AHRC funding methodologies have limited the amount of funding for certain categories of student, which has contributed to a 2.4% fall in applications and is likely to have a detrimental impact on the final intake.

“Nonetheless,” said Terry, “if we are able to convert the overall 10% increase in acceptances into registered students we will still be making progress towards meeting revised targets for postgraduate recruitment.”

Staff vacancies ↓

For further details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/vacs or contact staffing services on ext. 8706, fax 877401, recruitment@sussex.ac.uk

APPLY BY 27 JULY

Director, CDEC
(ref 663)

APPLY BY 29 JULY

Secretary, Health, Safety and Environment Office (ref 680)

APPLY BY 30 JULY

Personal Assistant to Director, Estates
(ref 684)

APPLY BY 22 JULY

Secretary, Cancer Research UK Psychosocial Oncology Group (ref 677)

Research Fellow in Biology, LifeSci (ref 678)

Data Monitor, Cancer Research UK Psychosocial Oncology Group (ref 681)

Computer Aided Facilities Management – Technical Assistant, Estates (ref 690)

Wanted: Cheap laptop computer for word processing. Email rezatsu@yahoo.com.

To let: Room in 7 Dials house, suit PG/staff. Available from 1 Sep., for 5 mths. Email nr20@sussex.ac.uk or ludmilla@coretel.net.uk.

For sale: Ladies’ black mountain bike. £25 ono. Email c0p2210@hotmail.com.

Wanted: Flat/house for PG couple in B’ton. 3-yr period. Contact Edgar or Gabriela at eae26@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Furnished room in 2-bed flat nr 7 Dials. Available Aug. Sut PG, young lecturer, NQT, student doctor, etc. £400 pcm incl. Call G. Atten on 735545 or email gtdca20@sussex.ac.uk.


For sale: Skoda Fabia Comfort estate 1.4, Y reg., 29k miles, air con. MoT Jan, tax Sep. £5,450. Contact Nigel on 242043 (work), 07717 302971 (mob).

For sale: 3-bed furnished house, West Dr (overlooking Queens Pk). 2 studies, garden. Available Sep. or Oct. for next academic yr; suit staff or PGs. Email Eileen.yeo@strath.ac.uk, call 682855.

For sale: Packard Bell laptop. Windows XP 1.2GHZ, 256MB RAM, DVD player, carry case. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Endnote, £300. Email d.boot@sussex.ac.uk.