Recycling trial a huge success

Staff in Estates and Facilities Management have declared the two-month recycling trial that began in June "a huge success".

During the trial, all staff were encouraged to separate out recyclable material and dispose of it in large recycling bins outside each building. Twice a week a dustcart has been collecting all recyclable material and taking it to a new recycling depot near Falmer Sports Complex. The material is then sorted and sold directly by the University, providing an income to help pay for the service.

During the eight-week trial period the dustcart collected 10.6 tonnes of white paper, newspaper and magazines as well as 5.5 tonnes of cardboard.

As anticipated, this 16 tonnes of material for recycling provided the University with a small income, rather than incurring the costs of sending the material to landfill. With rises in landfill tax and disposal costs year on year, the overall aim will be to negate future costs of recycling by diverting as much waste as possible from landfill.

In their regular bin audits, Estates and Facilities Management did note some contamination caused by the wrong materials being placed in bins. As a result, from now on all types of paper (newspapers, magazines, glossy leaflets, flyers, junk mail, catalogues and white office paper) will be collected together in one bin. Cardboard will still be collected separately.

The tin-can collection on campus produced only a tiny amount of material for recycling as plastic bottles are in greater use than cans. Andrew Jupp, Head of Facilities Management, said: "The collection of cans will need more thought and liaison with the various retail outlets on campus to maximise opportunities for recycling." Further information will be available once a decision has been made.

As anticipated, the trial highlighted a number of issues that will need to be addressed if further success is to be achieved. For example, there is a clear need to make collection points in buildings more sophisticated and to develop the correct infrastructure to support the University's needs.

Again, updates and information on this and on planned building waste/recycling audits will be issued over the coming months. The approach will be to liaise with building managers in order to facilitate local requirements.

Andrew thanked all staff who have taken part in the trial: "Many thanks for the personal efforts that you have made in supporting this initiative," he said.

If you have any comments, email efmfeedback@sussex.ac.uk.

Funding boost for medical school research

Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) is one of eight across the UK to benefit from additional government funding.

The NHS partners of each of the eight schools will receive an extra £1.5 million. The money will enable the schools to establish state-of-the-art research facilities, attract world-class researchers, and carry out research in crucial areas such as genetics, diabetes and cancer for the benefit of NHS patients both locally and nationally.

Professor Jon Cohen, Dean of Brighton and Sussex Medical School, said: "BSMS is already committed to developing a strong, integrated research agenda and we are keen to expand our collaborations with colleagues in the NHS to build upon this good early start.

"The additional funding will not only enable us to compete successfully, but also provide a formidable research-active setting in which to study."
Sussex ranked among top universities in the world

The University’s global reputation for excellence continues to grow, as shown by a new league table that ranks Sussex among the top 150 universities in the world.

The survey, by the Institute of Education at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, also places Sussex in the top 60 of European universities and in the top 15 of the UK.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Alice Smaith says: “This is excellent news. I am delighted that the high quality of teaching and research at Sussex has been recognised by this objective international study, which confirms the basis of our strong international reputation.”

Researchers produced the resultsafter looking at 1,000 institutions worldwide. The top 500 universities were ranked according to the quality of education, the quality of faculty and their research output.

Chinese visitors establish links with Sussex

The Sussex Language Institute is hosting a group of 33 teachers from Xiamen University – the first of a number of links that Sussex and the Chinese university hope to establish.

The group, academics from a number of different disciplines, are following a six-week course designed to hone their English-language communication skills and acquaint them with aspects of British life and culture.

In addition, each member of the group is working on a research project in English in their own specialist area and they are also receiving input on teaching methodology, focusing on English teaching through the medium of English.

Lisa Yu, a spokesperson for the group, said: “The classroom teaching, social programmes and homestay experiences all benefit us a lot. Having easy access to internet and Library and Language Learning Centre resources, our teachers are very much enjoying the favourable learning environment here. I believe this programme will turn out to be a very rewarding experience for our teachers.”

Founded in 1921, Xiamen University is located at the coastal city of Xiamen in the south east of China and is one of the country’s leading institutions, with about 25,000 full-time students. It takes a global perspective to education and is very keen on exploring international co-operation and exchange.

The official contact between the two universities was initiated by the mutual visits of Professor Wu Shihong, Vice-President of Xiamen, and Professor Tony Moore, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Sussex.

These came about through the Sino-UK Leadership Development Network Project, which is aimed at contributing to the development of higher education in the UK and China by learning from each other’s experience, strengthening links and facilitating collaboration.

“We sincerely hope that the group’s English training programme will further enhance the relationship between our two universities,” said Lisa. “We are looking forward to more contacts, exchanges and co-operation in various fields and of diverse models.”

Both Tony and Dr Philip Baker, Head of the International & Study Abroad Office, will be making visits to Xiamen in the autumn to sign a framework agreement and to continue discussions on closer co-operation, including exploring ways for Xiamen students to continue their studies at Sussex.
We approach the new academic year with reasons to be optimistic. For the second successive year, our undergraduate admissions have been so strong that the University has not gone into ‘clearing’, except for foundation-year programmes.

This is very good news in a number of significant ways. It testifies to the growing attractiveness of the University to students and the success of the changes that have taken place over the past few years. It gives us more control over the academic shape of the University. Students are coming here because of a positive wish to be at Sussex, not because we were the best option available in the rush of clearing. Stronger competition for places means rising academic standards.

The picture is not uniform. In some of the strongest areas of student demand, notably English and medicine, significantly more students than planned have been admitted, but we can cope with this. Some areas, such as American studies, have been affected by national changes in demand. Recruitment has been strong in biological sciences and psychology, less strong in some other sciences. But the overall pattern is one that provides us with a strong base for further progress.

One significant factor affecting the reputation of the University is our position in the published league tables. I am a long-time sceptic about the reliability of these tables and it is better for us to focus on what we consider to be excellence in teaching and research than to be too much influenced by what counts in the league tables. Many of the UK league tables are flawed by the weight they give to QAA assessment scores, which are hopelessly outdated and were a pretty unrelaible guide to teaching excellence in the first place.

That all having been said, it is a pleasure to see Sussex scoring so well in the Shanghai ranking (see page 2 of this Bulletin).

As I have written on several occasions in this column, the process of institutional change has not been easy. The start of last academic year was a particularly trying time, with the coincidence of curriculum change, structural change and relocations. The result was stressful both for many staff and for many incoming first-year students.

Last year’s changes are still not complete: the new School structures are still bedding in, some significant changes have been made to the pattern of elective course in BA programmes, and there have been some further relocations during this summer. Many of our second-year students will be moving into the second year of new degree programmes.

The quality of the student experience at the start of the year sets the tone for the rest of the year. I am sure that we will all be making every effort to ensure that for both new and returning students the start of the new academic year runs as smoothly as possible and confirms their expectations of the University of Sussex as a welcoming, excellent, exciting and innovative place to study.

Members of the Association for University & Industry Links (AURIL) have elected Peter Brooks, director of the Research and Regional Development Division, to serve on its council for two years. AURIL is the leading UK professional body for knowledge-transfer staff and the largest in Europe. It has three main roles: to represent its members' views to government, industry and other stakeholders; to provide a forum for the exchange of views, especially with industry; and to provide continuing professional development.

Sussex academics will be carrying out two of just 25 funded projects in the Economic and Social Research Council’s ‘Identities and Social Action’ programme, which attracted a record 335 applications. Professor Rupert Brown has been awarded £250,000 to examine changes in the identity of immigrant children and Dr Ben Rogaly (Geography/Sussex Centre for Migration Research) receives £128,000 to explore how social policy and identities have interacted to affect daily life on three council estates in Norwich, from 1940 to the present day.

Professor Alan Lehmann, chairman of the Genome Damage and Stability Centre, has been elected to the Academy of Medical Sciences. The 43 new Fellows were selected by a rigorous process of peer review.

Norman Vance, Professor of English, has taken over as chair of the Higher Education Committee of the English Association.

Website gets a make-over

The University website has been given a make-over in recent weeks – but the changes aren’t merely cosmetic.

The roll-out of the University’s new visual identity has continued with a fresh look for the website. ‘The web pages follow the same design principles and approaches as have already been established for the overall new design,’ explains Rob Read, Director of Communications.

The new look is being progressively implemented across the entire site and should be up and running by the start of term in October.

The previous design was introduced three and a half years ago. Web technologies have moved on since then, so staff in the Web Team have taken the opportunity to update various aspects of the site in addition to giving it a new look.

For example, the site is now much more accessible for users with visual impairments, who can easily resize text to meet their needs. Downloads are also faster and the site works better on different screen sizes and resolutions.

Meanwhile, more space has been devoted to current news, events and features, making the site more attractive. And this enhanced news and events system allows all users to post information, not just a few authorised individuals.

The home page has an increased number of direct links through to underpinning material (for international students, for example, or to schools and departments), meaning that key audiences are now just one click away from relevant material. And the flexible structure means that if a particular item becomes very important it can find a regular place on the home page.

The old ‘intranet’ page has been replaced with dedicated ‘information for’ pages for both staff and students, giving more space for up-to-date news and information.

Getting around the site is easier, too. There are now ‘universal navigation’ features (home button, search, A-Z and people) on all pages, so it’s easier for users to find their way around.

‘All these changes mean that the site is easier to navigate and easier to use,’ says Rob. ‘Bringing it in to line with the new visual identity was obviously important – but the content is much more dynamic and flexible as well.’

See the fresh new website at www.sussex.ac.uk.
LETTERS

Paths where you need to walk
I am rather unnerved by some of the new pathways around the campus.
A path by Library Square is a handy short-cut across to the walkway to the station. Another has appeared at the top of campus, starting at the drop-off layby and leading down into the science car park – exactly where I need to walk in the morning. Another short path provides access at a convenient point through the row of trees in the centre of the car park.

Somebody somewhere is riding roughshod over the Sussex tradition of having paths everywhere except where you need to walk. It is nothing short of cultural vandalism.

Dave Stupple, Centre for Environmental Research

Recycling journals
Being an avid ‘skip-squirrel’ I dive into a large one behind Arts D, only to find it 10% full of British Educational Research Journals.

Has no one in that department the wit or wisdom to:
1. send them all to Oxfam, who distribute used academic journals to colleges and schools in the developing world;
2. take them to an Oxfam bookshop where they will be resold; or
3. even put them in the much-hyped Sussex recycling containers?

I expected more from colleagues in the groves of academe...

Geoffrey Mead, CCE/Sussex Institute

Update on Women’s Staff Network

Since the launch of the Women’s Staff Network in March, a steering group has been working on what form it should take. It has drafted terms of reference for the network and will be seeking ratification of them from senior management.

The steering group has also been discussing how the network should communicate. It is setting up a web site, which will contain the terms of reference, information about members of the steering committee, the minutes of its meetings, and links to other useful sites. It is in discussion with IT Services to set up a ‘chat room’ style communication forum, where female staff can debate issues of interest.

Two members of the network will be part of the new University-wide Equalities Forum, which starts in November. The network would also like to take an active role in the annual campus Diversity Week next March.

The idea of the network is to support women across all categories of staff in terms of career development, peer support and mentoring services, with the aims of identifying priorities for positive action and meeting the University’s agreed targets for women. If you are a female member of staff who would like to join, email Paula Rich on p.j.rich@sussex.ac.uk.

University takes part in UK’s first LGBT jobfair

The University took part this week in the first UK jobfair aimed specifically at the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

The jobfair, at Hove Town Hall on 8 September, recognised the contribution made to the city by the LGBT community and celebrated the recent changes in employment law that now openly recognise the importance of this community for employers.

As well as the University, other leading employers taking part in the job fair included Brighton & Hove City Council, American Express, Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach Company, Sussex Police, and the three NHS trusts.

For sale:

To let:
5 bed furnished house available 1 Oct for 1 yr. Suit 6/8 Pgs, W/M, 2 kitchens, garden. £1,460 pcm. Tel: 068050 (p).

To let:
Room nr station. Available now to 30 Jan. Tel: 2943 5423100.

To let:
Double room in Hanover shared house. £350 pcm + bills. Suit N/S PG or staff. Available end Sept. Tel: 07752 422381, E p.d.taylor@sussex.ac.uk.

To let:
2 bed house in Hanover. Available Sep, suit PG or staff. £680 pcm for min 1 yr lease. Tel: 07959 568691.

For sale:

To let:

To let:
Large room overlooking garden, 1 own bathroom, nr Preston Pk. Ideal PG or staff (N/S). Share kitchen, lounge, garden, etc. £345 pcm (incl. bills & broadband). Tel: 8832048 or nick.jagger@employment-studies.co.uk.

For sale:
Raleigh 10 gear ladies’ mountain bike: £70 ono. Playstation 2 + 2 remote controllers, 2 games (Vice City, Colin McRae): £120 ono. Ext. 3918, E susansu@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale:
Dell laptop. Internet ready, Word, Excel, CD + floppy drive. USB port £250. Tel: Soph on 07973 432413.

Free:
York 2001 Multiglam. 140lb 64.5kg weight range. Collect from Ringmer. E S. balcombe@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale:
Beech-effect bookcase: £20, 2 sofas: £10 each. 4 chairs: £15 each. Computer desk: £15. Swivel chair: £10. Stepper with computer to monitor exercise levels: £20, 1400w vacuum cleaner: £25. Dryer/spinner: £20. 2 pink storage crates: £15 each. 3 wooden wall shelves: £7 each. 2-door cabinet: £5, 2 mirrors: £5 each. Tel: 07708 059098, E susanpenny@hotmail.com.

To let:
Room in house nr The Level, share with 3 others. Suit staff or PG, 27yr+. Garden. Available 20 Sep. £289 pcm + bills. Tel: 600364.

Wanted:
Room for SocSci research student from end Sep for 3 mths. Reasonable rental, nr campus. Contact Ta-mib Nkongho: E linking@nmos.sussex.ac.uk, T 07799 488094.

Wanted:
Room in F/F house for 3 mths, to share with other students. Prefer cycling distance from campus, N/S, 28 yrs old. E clanata@tin.it, T 07748 553809.

For sale:
Unused 02 ‘Pay as you go’ SIM card. Save £5. E aepou@sussex.ac.uk.

To let:
Room from Oct in family house in Hove. £500 pcm incl. E lakemorrion@sussex.ac.uk or T 07970 239085.

For sale:
Canon Startwiter. Offers? E Katy Hiles on k.a.hiles@sussex.ac.uk.

To let:
2 bed UF flat by Lewes station. £650pcm, T 473963, E d.osono@sussex.ac.uk.

Lectures, seminars and colloquia

MON 13 SEP
1.00pm: IDS Special Seminar: Aschutosh Varshney (Michigan). Can civil society moderate ethnic conflict? Hindu-Muslim relations in India and beyond. IDS 120.

FRI 17 SEP

MON 20 SEP
£1m+ extra for research at Sussex

Major changes are happening to the way all universities must cost and price for externally funded research projects.

Following pressure from the HE sector the government has recognised universities should be allowed to charge a higher price for research, which better reflects the true cost of carrying out this work. An extra £120m per annum has been allocated to the UK Research Councils from next year. Sussex share of this additional allocation has been estimated at £1.2m-£2m per annum.

Like all good things, there is inevitably a catch! To access these extra funds universities must successfully improve their costing and charging systems. As academic staff costs are the university’s biggest single expense, this means we must get a better understanding about where staff spend their time. All the UK Funding and Research Councils have worked together to agree a common framework for estimating true research costs across the sector. The result of their review was called the “Transparent Approach to Costing” (TRAC or TR for short).

This sets out specific requirements about how all HE institutions must calculate and apportion all their costs.

Early results from the Transparency Review, which was first introduced in 2000, have succeeded in demonstrating the underfunding of research. As a result of this, the latest TR volume published earlier this year was accompanied by the allocation of £120m additional funding. This money is not designed to fund more research, but is intended to fund the same volume at a higher, more sustainable level. The true total cost of work is referred to as its “Full Economic Cost” (FEC).

Before we can bid for work at the higher FEC rates, the University must demonstrate we have properly complied with all the TR rules.

Further details
See www.sussex.ac.uk/about/trac_fec.html for more information about the project, as well as details of the specific activities which academic staff need to apportion their time over. As well as the occasional future Bulletin insert, the website will be updated over the coming months to help keep people informed of progress.

Drop-in Q&A sessions about using the new Academic Time Survey system will be held in Arts C219 on Wednesday 6th October from 11.00am to 1.00pm, and on Monday 11th October from 1.00pm to 3.00pm.

Your feedback
Please send us your feedback about any of the issues raised here. Contact the TR/FEC team:
Mike Townsend, Project Manager, or
Julian Golland, Cost Accountant via
m.j.b.townsend@sussex.ac.uk (extension 3183)
or j.golland@sussex.ac.uk (extension 8984).
Goodbye blue form!

The days of the paper-based, process for costing new research proposals are numbered.

The so-called “blue form” is shortly to be replaced by a new “Project Costing & Pricing Tool”. This system is currently undergoing its final stages of user testing, and will be available through Sussex Direct in January.

The PCPT will be set up to calculate the Full Economic Cost of all projects. It will automatically calculate the appropriate price applicable to the particular type of funder involved. As well as making it much quicker and easier to cost future projects, the new PCPT will also give far greater management information.

Looking further ahead, it is also a first step in moves to link our internal application process with the Research Council’s new electronic submission systems.

Academic Time Survey

Fortunately TRAC does not require detailed timesheets to be kept. It does, however impose the need to survey all academic staff about their work. This survey must establish, over the course of a year, what proportion of time is spent on research, teaching and “other” activities. To meet the timetable set for the sector, our survey was started on 1st July 2004. The first period therefore covers the three summer months ending on 30th September.

To collect this time data, a system is being developed within Sussex Direct for use from the beginning of October. Whilst recognising the exercise will be an extra commitment on already busy staff, the system is being designed to be as flexible and easy as possible. For example the system will integrate with the Research Projects ledger. After the initial period, data can be entered on either a monthly or weekly basis.

More details and guidance about exactly how to use the new system will be publicised and available over the next few weeks. People will be pleased to learn that, fortunately, this exercise is not a permanent commitment. Providing everyone participates, once the current survey ends next September, we simply need to review it annually, and refresh it every three years.

Timetable and key milestones

- **1st July**: Start date of Academic Time Survey.
- **October 2004**: System for recording academic time available in Sussex Direct.
- **January 2005**: The new Project Costing & Pricing Tool is rolled out.
- **July 2005**: University gets audited for compliance with TRAC rules in order to charge FEC rates from September.
- **September 2005**: All applications to Research Councils made on a FEC basis.

Stop press

More good news! The Treasury’s latest report on investment in research, published in July, announced an additional £80m per annum would be given to UK Research Councils from 2007/8. At the same time as this, HEFCE’s total block research grant to universities (called “QR”) would be increased by £90m to recognise charities won’t pay the full economic cost of research.