Much done, more still to do

In just three months, managers and staff at Sussex have identified savings of 3.5 million pounds for the next financial year, while protecting investment in research and teaching. But the University still needs to find another 1.5 million pounds in 2006–07 if it is to steer successfully through its current financial circumstances and continue to invest in new academic posts.

That was the message from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alistair Smith, to staff following the presentation of savings proposals to the University’s main finance committee on 9 March.

The savings proposed from across all schools and administrative and support units involve £2.6 million being found from staffing costs and £1.3 million from non-salary costs. Half a million pounds has been set aside in contingency budgets, i.e. to cover any unexpected changes in income or spending requirements.

Staff savings are being achieved by voluntary redundancy, redeployments and not filling a range of planned posts. Compulsory redundancies have been avoided.

Around 80 administrative and support staff out of 1,400 have applied for voluntary redundancy and they will be discovering the outcomes in the next few days and weeks. Around 60 proposals are expected to be approved.

The capital programme has taken its share of the burden, with the planned new teaching and residences block deferred for two years, providing £1 million a year in savings.

Sussex, unlike some other universities in short-term financial straits, has not proposed the closure of any academic department or the withdrawal of academic programmes. Indeed, proposals include investment this year and next in more academic posts and additional support for staff in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), provided overall savings can be achieved.

However, many staff have been shocked by the scale of savings still left to achieve after the five-year forecasts were revised in light of the latest information from the savings review process. The forecast deficit at Sussex has increased by around £2 million a year, due to more conservative income forecasts and full account of future spending needs.

Peaceful and good-natured rallies by staff and students were held to mark the meetings of the main finance committee and of Senate, at which savings proposals were being discussed. A letter from the campus trade unions to the finance committee called for a robust academic vision and plan to take Sussex safely into the future.

The Students' Union have been given reassurance that services have been protected. Library savings, for example, are based on management restructuring, with an increase in spending on books and the maintenance of existing opening hours. The Students' Union have called for more consultation and involvement in future stages of the savings review.

In an open meeting on Tuesday (15 March) attended by more than 200 staff, the Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that financial planning and controls at Sussex had not been adequate in the past. He accepted personal responsibility for this and said that robust plans and processes were now being put in place.

Having taken a line-by-line savings approach in the first phase, work on savings for 2006–07 will focus on structural and strategic changes, with commitments from the Savings Review Group that staff will be involved and consulted on options in moving forward.

Inside

2 Booze blues
Dora Duka investigates binge drinking and its effect on bingers.

4 Alt fashion
Diversity Week brings colour and alternative fashion to campus.

5 Smiles to £s
Staff and students raise hundreds for Comic Relief.

6 Framework
News on job evaluation, pay and grading, and harmonisation.

7 Gothenburg
Three decades of Swedes at Sussex.
**Binge drinking is worse for women**

Young people who binge drink are more likely to be depressed than their sober counterparts, but women are also more likely to have poor working memory and to be less able to control inappropriate behaviour, according to a new study led by psychologists at Sussex.

Experimental psychologist Professor Theodora Duka interviewed 100 healthy 18-30-year-olds, who were moderate-to-heavy social drinkers, about their alcohol and drug use, as well as their character traits and mood states.

She then asked them to perform verbal IQ, working memory and vigilance tasks. These included a spatial working memory task, which required subjects to register their recent actions (visiting certain places on the computer screen to obtain tokens) and to avoid repeating them (visit the same places) and a vigilance task, which required subjects to withhold an inappropriate response.

Those individuals identified as binge drinkers reported less positive moods than did non-binge drinkers. In addition, female binge drinkers performed worse on the working memory and vigilance tasks than did the female non-binge drinkers.

Dora said: "We know that people will self-medicate with alcohol if suffering from anxiety or depression. We now need to find out whether binge drinking will contribute to anxiety and depression and if the effects of binge drinking and mood add together to impair cognitive performance. We plan to study how such effects of binge drinking on cognition and mood interact with stress."

Future studies will also involve following binge drinkers for several years to see if the behaviour leads to full alcohol dependence, and also observing those who stop binge drinking to see if they show a reversal of the negative effects.

Dora has previously shown that binge drinkers have a more chaotic approach to working out strategies, which suggests damage to the frontal lobe of the brain. She has also found that repeated alcohol withdrawal by alcoholics impairs their ability to recognise the emotions of others.

She said: "We are still trying to work out the extent of the damage caused by binge drinking, but the indications are that it has far-reaching implications for the physical and mental health of individuals."

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**Lottery cash to fund University’s historic house research**

Art historians at Sussex are to share in a grant of more than three million pounds to tell the story of a West Sussex architectural treasure.

Architectural historian and head of the Art History department, Professor Maurice Howard, will supervise a two-year study of Elizabethan Parham House, beginning this summer, when a postdoctoral fellow will be appointed to carry out research.

The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the ‘England’s Past for Everyone’ project. The five-year scheme will be run by local history research centre the Victoria County History (VCH) to provide paperback and online local history materials for ten specific locations all over England, including picturesque Parham House.

The University team will conduct the academic research into family papers, original deeds and records associated with the 16th-century manor house and its estate. This will underpin material for online resources for schools and an illustrated paperback history of the house. A comprehensive photographic record of the building and grounds will also be produced.

Parham House dates back to Medieval times, but the original manor was incorporated into the Elizabethan design in 1577. It was also the subject of careful renovation by its 20th-century owners, the Pearson family.

Maurice, who has researched other local historic houses, such as Laughton Place, says: "This house is one of the great late 16th-century houses to be found at the foot of the Downs. It can tell us a lot about the agricultural, political and social history of the area."
Film premiere highlights plight of indigenous peoples

A film by a Sussex academic commemorating the uprising that changed the face of colonial rule in India will be premiered at a conference on campus.

_Hul Sengei: The Spirit of the Santal Revolution_ tells the story of the Hul (revolution) led by the Santal community in India against the East India Company in 1855–56. The anti-colonial rebellion had a significant impact on the way colonialists governed India, although some of the so-called ‘rebel leaders’ were executed.

Made to mark the 150th anniversary of the Santal Hul, the documentary was shot on location in 2004 in Jharkhand State and New Delhi by Dr Daniel Pycroft, in collaboration with the Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

Scheduled for broadcast on Indian television later this year, the film unites protests past and present, carried out by communities battling for survival against the forces of industrialisation, globalisation, social prejudice and poverty. It features rare footage of an interview with the descendants of the leaders of the Santal uprising and scenes of a recent protest against the Indian government in New Delhi.

The film is one of the highlights of a three-day conference, ‘Reinterpreting Adavasi Movements in South Asia’, to be hosted by the University’s Centre for World Environmental History next week (21–23 March). Its aim is to draw attention to the struggles faced by the 100 million people who make up South Asia’s oppressed ethnic and indigenous people, known collectively as Adavasi.

Daniel says: “Many of the regional governments in India have lost sight of both traditional and modern Adavasi rights. For many poor Adavasis, development means oppression, displacement and further poverty.

“Making this film was very exciting, I think that it is important for viewers to learn about the historical and social significance of the Santal revolution as it possesses a strong message for ongoing movements against injustice.”

Dr Vinita Damodaran, director of the Centre for World Environmental History, says: “The capitalist elites in India’s industrial heartland are using traditional caste privileges to push the Adavasis to the edges of a nation that they themselves have fought so strongly for.”

Firms struggle to protect their most important asset

Businesses are struggling to protect their most important asset – their intellectual property (IP), or ‘know-how’ – say researchers at Sussex.

Given that up to 80% of the value of many firms is now formed by their IP, which includes patents, copyright, trademarks and designs, this dramatic finding by SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research raises serious risk-management challenges for firms, investors and clients.

The study, jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Ministry of Defence, warns that these difficulties are particularly relevant when firms are involved in collaborative projects.

The increasing complexity of products such as telecoms networks, aircraft and ships means that firms need to collaborate more, as each firm cannot provide all of the skills and knowledge needed to deliver. Firms involved in collaboration increasingly use information and communication technologies to share designs and information about components, design techniques, and manufacturing processes.

Dr Puay Tang, one of the authors of the report, says: “Companies must ensure that their intellectual property is protected throughout. A key problem is that four groups of professionals within firms – IP professionals, engineers, commercial staff and IT managers – rarely work together to protect intellectual property.”

Firms face particular risks when working across national boundaries, as is so often the case in such large projects. In the defence sector, export control and technology transfer regulations are especially important, and vary in the different legal and regulatory contexts in different countries.

Dr Jordi Molas-Gallart, the report’s other author, adds: “Much is already known about how to manage IP in collaborative environments, but the application of this knowledge is lagging. There are technologies for tagging and tracking the use of IP in collaborative projects, so it is not inevitable that such collaboration brings problems.

“This is a matter of culture within organisations. Senior managers need to start taking seriously their responsibility to protect IP, and they need to bang heads together to make it happen.”

Why open economies tend to grow faster

A workshop at Sussex this month showed there is some evidence at the micro level that more open economies are likely to experience higher productivity.

Research focusing on firms indicates that successful firms tend to be younger and larger, tend to export more, have newer machinery, and face less protection in their domestic market.

There is also some evidence suggesting that increases in productivity come not only from firms becoming more efficient, but through more efficient firms either entering the market or increasing their share of the market.

These general conclusions emerged from the workshop on ‘Trade liberalisation, firm level structural adjustment and poverty in the Middle East and North Africa’ on 4–5 March, organised by Dr Michael Gasorek of the Economics department. Much of it focussed on the impact on individual firms of liberalising trade, and on research using relatively new firm-level data sets.

“To better understand the transmission mechanisms leading to higher levels of growth, it is important to focus on the impact of trade liberalisation at the firm level,” says Michael. “How do firms adjust to trade liberalisation and under what circumstances is it more likely that productivity would rise? An improved understanding of these transmission mechanisms should enable policy makers to target aid more directly and thus to increase the effectiveness of aid.”

The workshop was one part of a research study, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), that Michael is directing on the economic impact of dismantling tariffs in the Middle East.

Participants included representatives from the World Bank, DFID and the European Commission as well as leading academics in the field.
Diversity Week unfurled on campus

As soon as the email arrived in journalists’ inboxes we were inundated with interview requests. Philip obliged by talking to Southern FM (21 February), the Argus (22 February), BBC TV South East and Meridian TV News (23 February), while his doctoral student John Board went on BBC Southern Counties Radio (23 February).

Health scares of a different nature led to SPRU’s Dr Erik Millstone being heard across the media. His knowledge and views on the Sudan 1 food additive were sought by BBC Radio 5 Live, Radio 4’s ‘PM’ programme, IRN and the Guardian (all 19 February).

Binge drinking is another topic rarely off news agendas, which is why Professor Theodora Duka’s latest findings on the damage caused by binge drinking (it’s worse for women), created global interest. The British Forces Broadcasting Service joined the Daily Mail, the Independent, IRN, New Scientist and the Argus in wanting to know more.

We can understand people’s normal fears, but what leads to chronic and pathological worrying? Professor Graham Davey explained the processes that contribute to it on Radio 4’s ‘All in the Mind’ (2 March), while Professor Laura Marcus was called upon to discuss ideas of utopia with Melyvn Bragg for the station’s ‘In Our Time’ programme (10 March).

Not one to shy away from the limelight, Professor David Allan Mellor (recently revered in print by Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller), was the subject of a Guardian Education profile (1 March). It gave David the opportunity to describe his student years at Sussex under the tutelage of Quentin Bell and Asa Briggs.

Flags of many nations and peoples sprung up over campus last week as students and staff celebrated the diversity of Sussex.

The flags, of countries as diverse as Malawi and England, were painted by students and then hung from every available railing and tree. Each flag also revealed a little about that nations’ students at Sussex. Of the 17 Iranian students at Sussex, for instance, six are undergraduates and 11 are postgraduates. The hand-made flags were one of the most colourful symbols of the Diversity Week celebration organised by the Equalities Unit and the Students’ Union.

Students organised an alternative fashion show in Mandela Hall in aid of organisation TRAID (Textile Recycling for Aid and International Development). The packed show, which featured Sussex students in a variety of pre-used garb, highlighted that fashionable clothing needn’t be new.

“I have been a model myself for four years and I find it a very exploitative business,” said anthropology student and organiser Renske Leunk. “By buying high-street clothing you help sustain the unfair clothing market. Cotton farmers get paid hardly anything, 25% of pesticide used worldwide is for cotton and many clothes comes from China, which has a bad human-rights record. By doing this fashion show I wanted to eliminate that exploitative side.”

The organisers of the first ever Sussex lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff social said they felt the night was “a really useful and entertaining evening”. Benedict Brook and Sally Hill said: “Around 40 staff attended, discussed LGBT issues on campus, competed in a gay pub quiz, won a selection of top pound-shop prizes and enjoyed some free credits – what more could anyone ask for?! (If any staff are interested in joining the mailing list, email Benedict on b.j.brook@sussex.ac.uk – confidentiality is assured.)

Equalities Officer Liz Burchett attended a talk entitled ‘The Daughters of Abraham’, which explored the perspectives of women and equality within religion. “It was both a moving and thought-provoking session,” said Liz, “which emphasised the real significance of women and their importance within the Christian, Muslim and Jewish beliefs.”

Other events included a series of talks exploring subjects such as diversifying the curriculum and translating diversity policy into practice. There was also the annual African, Caribbean and Asian Society’s Culture Festival at the Gardner Arts Centre, and the Hindu Holi festival. Marking the coming of summer, the Holi festival is a riot of colour and many a Hindu (and non-Hindu) student celebrated it by chucking powdered paint over each other.

Andrew Wilkey from the Equalities Unit said of the week of events: ‘Diversity Week was a great success. People got the chance to explore what diversity meant for them and to celebrate our increasingly diverse University population.”
Hot rocks and silly wigs for Red Nose Day

Dusty drawers were opened and wardrobes rummaged through last week as staff and students dug out their finest red clothing to look the part for Comic Relief.

Across campus a diverse range of fundraising events took place on Red Nose Day (Friday 11 March), from walking on fire to more traditional stunts, such as waving a bucket and looking really silly.

Ellie Goddard, Emma Ransley and Roisin Ball, who all work in Human Resources, amused the staff of Sussex House by dressing up in outfits from their favourite decades. Ellie, one of the organiser’s, said her team had scoured the depths of their relatives’ wardrobes: “I raided an old aunty’s closet for some sixty’s clothes while Emma’s mum had a 1980’s business suit.”

It was the first time Emma and co had raised cash for Comic Relief, but they said they would definitely do it again: “We had a very positive reaction and we all had a bit of a giggle.” Between them the trio and other HR staff raised £118.

The Research and Regional Development Office held a Comic Relief tea party, with homemade treats including a huge red nose cake baked by Business Broker Angela Rabone. The event, which also served to get a fair few staff over to Ashdown House for probably the first time ever, raised £50.

Meanwhile, Angi Drew donned red apparel (and some very interesting winter boots) and traipsed around campus with colleagues from the Media Services Unit (by way of the Research and Regional Development tea party for refreshments), managing to raise £90 on the way.

However, the award for most spectacular method of raising money goes to students from the Raise and Give (RAG) society, who raised over £1,000 doing a fire walk. Students volunteering to risk their soles for pounds took part in a two-hour session with professionals to motivate and psyche them up to the point where the smouldering coals would have no effect.

However, it wasn’t just the coals that benefited from the motivational workout – the students’ academic work did, too. “The next day loads of those who’d taken part said they felt really motivated to get all their essays done as well,” said RAG chair, Jo Walters, “Maybe the University should use fire walking as an educational tool?” she suggested.

Hundreds crowd CDEC Jobsday

More than 800 students braved the snow on 6 March to attend Jobsday, the recruitment fair organised by the Career Development & Employment Centre (CDEC). They were greeted by a mix of local and national companies offering a wide range of part-time and vacation opportunities.

Students also had the chance to speak to a range of organisations with opportunities to volunteer overseas. Portslade-based Concordia spoke to students who were “focused and motivated”, while ATD Fourth World were inundated with students interested in volunteering to work with families living in poverty.

Local employers with part-time vacancies also enjoyed a successful day, among them East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust, Babel Media and Brighton Pier, while vacation work was promoted by a diverse range of employers including Bourne Leisure and Lloyds TSB.

Students wishing to continue their academic study at Sussex were also well catered for. Representatives from the School of Education, Sussex Law School and Sussex Language Institute all reported good attendance figures.

One of the most popular stands was the local Inland Revenue office, who were there to give advice to the many students who already have jobs. A representative reported that a high number of students were incorrectly paying income tax and they were able to give them positive, practical advice to resolve this.

Organiser Andrea Wall of CDEC reported that student feedback on the event was also positive. “It consistently attracts high numbers of students and has become a regular event in the CDEC calendar. We’re straight into organising the next events: Jobsday on 19 October and GradFair & LawFair on 2 November.”

Seven marathons in seven continents for Sussex grad

Sussex graduate Kate Charles has become the first British woman to complete a marathon on all seven continents (Africa, South America, Europe, North America, Oceania, Asia and Antarctica).

And there could hardly have been a greater contrast between the first and last of the seven marathons.

The first, in June 2002, involved running at an altitude of 5,500ft on dirt roads through an African game reserve, in the company of rhinos, elephants, zebras, giraffes and big cats.

The last came on 26 February this year on King George Island off the Peninsula of Antarctica, where Kate ran up glaciers and along snowy trails in summer temperatures that hovered just above freezing.

"The weather was fine," she reports, "just above zero and no headwinds as we had been expecting. It was really hard though, the toughest one yet. Lots of the research station workers were out to cheer us on."

Kate, 31, started running in 2002 as a way of keeping fit. A Hove resident, she trained for her first marathon on the South Downs but then gave up her job as a finance officer to complete the challenge. She aims to raise £10,000 for Demelza House, a hospice for sick children, and now hopes to publish a book about her adventures.

Seven marathons on seven continents

Kenya Safaricom Marathon: June 2002
Costa Pacifico Marathon: Chile, December 2002
Midnight Sun Marathon: Norway, June 2003
Furnace Creek Death Valley Marathon: USA, February 2004
Blakemore's Sydney Marathon: Australia, September 2004
Bangkok International Marathon: Thailand, November 2004
Antarctica Marathon: Antarctica, February 2005
Update on Framework Agreement

Job evaluation

Approximately 50 support staff in the five academic schools are to be interviewed as part of the first phase of job evaluation, which is a process of measuring and evaluating jobs relative to one another.

The clerical and technical staff taking part in the interview process have been notified through briefing sessions for them and their managers. Interviews began on 16 March and will take about five weeks to complete.

The job evaluation working group has identified SPRI, the Library and Estates as the areas to be looked at when the phase in the schools is complete. Staff in these areas can expect to hear more detail at the end of April.

The working group has agreed documentation for use during the project: see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/framework/. Kelly Lewis, the job evaluation project manager, is happy to answer any staff queries.

Pay and grading

The University will introduce a single pay spine for all staff and a new grading structure. The pay and grading working group has looked at how a single pay spine and a number of possible alternative grade structures would impact on staff at Sussex.

Barbara Bush, Director of Human Resources, says: "This work will continue alongside that on job evaluation, to ensure that the new grading structure does not build in any existing inequalities. So it is important to evaluate a wide range of roles to help design the best grading structure for Sussex.”

Although most jobs will transfer across to the new system with similar pay to their current one, it is possible in a small number of cases that the new grade will be at a higher or lower level. To take account of these cases, the pay and grading group is working on a pay protection policy, which will protect salary for between two and four years and provide staff development and support to staff whose grade goes down. It will also give clear guidance on what happens if the grade goes up.

Harmonisation

The harmonisation working group is looking at proposals to harmonise hours by 1 August 2005 and, if possible, other benefits such as annual leave, to make Sussex a more attractive employer in the region. The group has undertaken a regional survey of other employers to help ensure the University is competitive in areas such as leave entitlement, pensions and maternity leave.

* The Framework Agreement commits Sussex and other universities to reaching agreement with trade unions on new pay and grading structures, based on the principle of equal pay for equal work. General information is available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/framework/. If you have any questions, email frameworkagreement@sussex.ac.uk.

How to save on your childcare costs

It sounds too good to be true, but for once it isn’t: a voucher scheme available from April will help working parents at Sussex to pay for childcare.

What’s more, the vouchers can be used to pay for the care of children right up to the age of 16 and for all types of registered or approved childcare.

Childcarepass, run on the University’s behalf by a company called Sodexo Pass, is a scheme that gives Sussex employees the option of taking part of their salary (up to a limit of £50 per week) in the form of childcare vouchers.

By doing this you can save money, as you do not pay tax or National Insurance (NI) on the part of the salary you take. The amount you save depends on the level of tax and NI you pay.

For detailed information, see www.sodedhopass.co.uk, www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing or www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk. If you have any enquiries, email info@sodedhopass.co.uk.

To join the Childcarepass voucher scheme, complete the form available from your personnel officer in Human Resources. This form alters the terms and conditions of your employment, allowing the University to pay part of your salary in vouchers.

Full of ideas?

Are you delayed in doing your job because you have to wait for work to come from others, because of interruptions, or for other reasons? Are you hampered by not having the right equipment or systems for the job? Or do you have examples of good practice that you want to share with colleagues?

Derek Trevitt is looking at how the University can improve its processes in various areas in order to deliver a first-class service to Sussex students and enable staff to do things more efficiently and with less strain.

A form available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/processimprovement/ gives you the opportunity to express some views on problems you might encounter doing your job and to come up with ideas that could help to improve University processes. If you wish to remain anonymous you can print the form and send it through the internal mail.

Derek has also been conducting one-to-one interviews with individual members of staff. Over the next two months he will collate the information obtained from the interviews and completed forms. Together with the findings of other reviews presently being undertaken, this information will be used in identifying possible improvements.

For more information, call ext. 6593 or email d.trevitt@sussex.ac.uk.

FIRST CLASS

Charles Hendry, Conservative MP for Wealden (which includes Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield) and a member of the University’s Court, has been appointed Shadow Minister for Higher Education.

Sussex faculty have scooped both of the Political Studies Association’s 2005 Bernard Crick Awards for Outstanding Teaching, Dr Dan Hough, Lecturer in Politics, wins the New Entrant Prize for his "commitment to teaching innovation and quality of delivery, reflected in genuine student enthusiasm for his courses". Dr Aleks Szczepanik, Senior Lecturer in Contemporary European Studies, wins the Main Prize for "first rate organisation of teaching materials, very impressive evaluations from students and willingness to innovate in presentational styles".

Dr Richard Savage, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Astronomy Centre, was selected to present a poster on his research at a House of Commons reception for “Britain’s top younger scientists, engineers and technologists” on 14 March.
Strengthening links in East Asia

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, visited China and Japan this month with representatives from the International & Study Abroad Office to help strengthen Sussex’s contacts with alumni, universities, recruitment representatives and organisations such as the British Council.

Meeting alumni was an important feature of the trip. In Beijing, Shanghai and Tokyo, Alasdair hosted receptions at which alumni spoke about their time at Sussex and its influence on their careers.

In the Chinese capital, Zhang Xin (BA Economics, 1988–1991), who is co-founder of a major property development company, spoke about her surprise when arriving at Sussex in finding it more socialist than the archetypal socialist country.

In Tokyo, Alasdair presented the first University of Sussex Alumni Award to Sachiko Okumura (right) (MA Gender & Development, 1990–1991), who has been president of the Sussex Alumni Association in Japan since 1997. A smaller meeting with alumni was also held in Osaka.

The visit also included several meetings at universities to strengthen relations with Sussex or to explore closer collaboration.

In Shanghai a framework Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the East China University of Science and Technology, and discussions were held at the Shanghai Second Polytechnic University, both of which will enable students from these institutions to enter the second year of Bachelor’s degree programmes at Sussex. At the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences a number of areas of potential research collaboration were identified, especially in the area of social development and European studies.

In Japan, Alasdair visited Tokyo’s International Christian University (ICU), commemorating the 30th anniversary of the exchange partnership between the two institutions. Another visit was made to the Tokyo Foundation, where Sussex has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund, through which a number of students are supported to study at Sussex each year.

Commenting on the visit, Alasdair said: “Sussex enjoys a high reputation abroad, to which our alumni are a major contributory factor because of the positions they occupy and the direct involvement several of them have in promoting the University.”

A walk on the wild side

Last month, we introduced Dunocks: small, dull-plumed birds that switch from a retiring lifestyle to hyperactivity every spring.

David Harper
Life Sciences

David Streeter
Life Sciences

The females have become territorial, each vigorously defending part of campus from other hens. Wherever food (tiny seeds and insects collected from seed heads) is common – for example, in Square Copse opposite the Mantell Building – each female defends a small area. But where food is scarce, as in the car parks, each female needs a larger area.

Once the females started dividing campus between them, the males in turn established their own territories, overlapping those of females. Where females have small territories, a male can often defend two or three female ranges. But where female territories are large, each male can manage to defend only part of one female’s range (there are more males than females). So some females ‘live with’ several males and others have to ‘share’ one male. You can probably see where this story is going, but it gets more complicated as the year continues!

Several readers have recently spotted us lurking with our equipment under bushes. We are training campus birds to weigh themselves, so that we can study their weight changes with as little interruption to their lives as possible. One of ‘our’ bushes is between the main Library and Meeting House: a Black Mulberry, presented to the University by our first vice-chancellor, Lord Fulton.

Although undoubtedly an Asian native, the Black Mulberry has been cultivated for so long that its precise origins are lost in the mists of history and it is no longer known anywhere in the wild. Surprisingly, the mulberries were at one time placed in the same family as the Stinging Nettle and, like its more familiar relative, it thrives especially well in rich fertile soils.

Indeed, there is an incipient nettle bed developing under the Library mulberry at the moment in consort with a number of other plants usually associated with disturbed and enriched conditions. These include a kind of under-storey or young thicket of Elder, notoriously indicative of such places, and suggests that the local rabbit population may also have discovered the spot and might have something to do with its increased fertility.

Another nutrient-demanding plant under the mulberry is Goosegrass or Cleavers, a familiar plant of hedgegrows and arable fields with its bristy stems and fruits that get spread around on animal fur. It has the distinction of possessing one of the longest lists of local vernacular names of any British plant, including the delightfully apt ‘sticky willy’. An annual, it is now sprouting up in all the shrubberries around campus.

As its name suggests, it was indeed fed to geese, a 15th-century medical tract describing it as “an erb that is called clyyers that yonge gese eaten”. This explains our favourite name, the East Anglian ‘goosling scratch’!
Electronic newsletter on e-learning launched
The Learning Technologies Group has recently launched a monthly e-bulletin for academic and support staff, with news and updates on what is happening locally and nationally on e-learning. To subscribe (or unsubscribe), visit http://mail.sussex.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo/elearningatsussex and fill in your details.

Approved hotels and guest houses
Did you know that you can get preferential rates for hotels and guest houses in Brighton and Hove? Rates can be as low as 50% of published prices for Sussex staff and students making bookings for campus visitors or for their private use. See www.sussex.ac.uk/about/offices for details of the list of University approved hotels and guest houses. Ensure you mention ‘University of Sussex’ when you make any reservation; depending on how many University bookings it receives in the course of a year, each establishment will reduce the rates further.

Crèche fundraising
Staff and parents at the University Crèche raised £300 for the Children of Sumatra appeal with their recent sale. They also raised £145 for the Leo House Hospice through Christmas orders to the Webb Ivory catalogue.

Golf Society
The University Gold Society will be playing against the following clubs during the summer term: Pitltown, 20 April, 4pm; Ham Manor, 4 May, 3pm; Hollingbury, 19 May, 4pm; The Dyke, 27 May, 4pm; Lewes, 8 June, 4pm. There will also be a club championship in early July. If you interested in playing in any of these, email Professor James Hirschfeld on jwph@sussex.ac.uk.

The most influential ambassador in Pretoria
Sussex graduate Ann Grant left South Africa this month after just over four years as British High Commissioner. According to The Star, “She was regarded as probably the most influential ambassador in Pretoria.” The South African newspaper goes on to describe Ms Grant as “a champion of SA over since she and Thabo Mbeki were undergraduates together at Sussex”.

News in brief

Arts events

PERFORMANCE
Tue 22 March
8pm Mareva von Stockert & Titled Company – More Grin(min) Desires
A dance theatre sextet dives into the bittersweet world of fairy tales. Gardiner Arts Centre (GAC).
Fri 4 April 7pm
Sat 9 April 12 noon, 4pm
Woe Stories – Treasure Island
A cast of two play all the roles in Robert Louis Stevenson’s bloody tale of adventure and suspense on the high seas. For children aged 8+.

FILM
Sun 20 March
8pm Uncovered: The War onIraq (PG)
8pm Enduring Love (15)
Tue 29 March
8pm The Incredibles (PG)
Sat 2 April
8pm Look at Me (Comme une Image) (12A)
Sun 3 April
8pm Vanity Fair (15)
8pm Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? (12A)

Small ads

Free: Ex Ricardo A0 drawing board, surplus to requirements. Ext. 8573.

To let: 1-bed 6th-floor Kemp Town flat. £560pwm + bills, from 1 Apr-30 June. E cd.shechter@sussex.ac.uk or Ext. 8018.

For sale: Learn Latin by Peter Jones. Beginners’ set text. £5. E c.k.jane@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: 1960s retro handkerchief bowls: 3 for £15. 1 large red and white polka dot (small chip), 1 small red and white polka dot, 1 small striped black and white (label: Chance Glass). E b.k.bjomholt@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 2017.

For sale: 250-watt computer power supply, incl. connectors. £10 ono. Ext. 7104. E t.j.hulston@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Room in 5-bed house, Fives area, Suit student. Available now. £70 pw. T Ms Williams 665487 or Sue 494919.

Wanted: Typist to type 60p bibilography for PhD thesis. E Rogeruthern@tinylworld.co.uk or T 705111.

Child minding: Available in B&H afternoons, poss. weekends, from Brazilian wife of Sussex lecturer. Ext. 8574. E lps@is.sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Furnished single bedroom in 2-bed flat nr 7 Dials. Share with DPhil student. Suit female PGr/professional. £390 pcm + share gas/elec. T 07887 543490, E glidso20@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Furnished studio flat in Newhaven. DG, GH. Suit staff, PGs or mature UGs. £105 pw + elec. T 612705, E boulds@claudie.freee.co.uk.

Wanted: Printer for Apple Mac OS9 with USB connection. E s.goodwin@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: House contents, various items inc. kitchen white goods. T 077162 899599.

Academic event

MON 21 MAR
4pm Informatics seminar: Luca Cardelli (Microsoft Labs, Cambridge), Pevensey 1A6.

EASTER VACATION OPENING TIMES

Vacation: Sat 19
Mar-Sun 17 Apr incl.
Closure days: Thu 24
Mar-Tue 29 Apr incl.
All locations are closed on these days and weekends unless otherwise stated
CATERNING OUTLETS
Baguette Express, Brambre House: 8am–4pm
Bothbole, Library: 9am–4pm
Coffee Shop, Brambre House: 8.30am–4.30pm
East Slope bar: Open every day, including closure, at normal pub hours
Falmer bar, Park Village Lounge, Hotloose: Closed 19 Mar-17 Apr inclusive
Grapevine bar, Brambre House: Closed except Wed 30 Mar–Fri 15 Apr, 5pm–11pm weekdays
IDS bar: 12noon–3pm, 5.15pm–10.30pm.
IDS restaurant: 8am–3pm, 3.30pm–4.45pm
Laines restaurant, Brambre House: 12noon–2pm
SCHOOL CAFES
Bridge, Pevensey: 9am–2.15pm
Chichester I: 8.30am–4pm
Dhaka, Arts C: 9am–3.30pm
Doctor’s Orders, Medical School: 8.30am–2.30pm
EDB, Pathway, Engg I: Closed
Hums, Arts A: 9am–4.15pm
Life Sciences, JMS: 9am–4pm
Pevensey I: 9am–4pm Mon, Wed, Fri; 9am–2pm Tue; 9am–1.30pm Thu
Sussex Institute, Sussex House: 8.30am–4pm
CAMPUS SHOPS
Mace supermarket, Brambre House: 8.30am–6pm weekdays except Wed 9am–6pm. Closed Good Friday 25 Mar–Easter Monday 28 Mar only
Newsagents, Brambre House: 8am–2pm
Students’ Union shop, Falmer House: 9am–3.30pm except Wed 23 March 9am–1pm. From 6–8 April stationery section unavailable due to maintenance
Students’ Union stores, York House: 8am–7pm weekdays, 8am–5pm weekends.
Closed Easter Sun 27–Easter Mon 28 Mar only
University Bookshop: 9am–5pm weekdays

SERVICES
CDEX: 10am–5pm weekdays (closed for lunch 1pm–2pm), advisers available 2pm–4pm
ITS central services, Chichester I: Normal hours except closure days
ITS PC clusters: Chichester I, John Maynard Smith, Pevensey I and York House 24-hour computer clusters will remain open during closure days
Library: 9am–8pm Mon–Thu, 9am–6pm Fri, 11.30am–6.30pm weekends
Sports Centre, Falmer Sports Complex: Normal hours except closure days

The bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Benedict Brook, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie Clune and Rob Reid. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from the staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 8 April, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 1 April. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.
This month we look at two new collaborations, report on a master class and discuss the usefulness of patents to researchers.

How useful are patents?
Patents are a rich source of scientific and technical information, and can save time and money spent on duplicated research. They can provide researchers with additional information about which organisations are researching and developing in a given discipline.

Patent applications are unpublished for a year after they are received by the Patent Office – though this does not prevent the inventor from publishing articles once the application has been lodged at the Patent Office.

You can search all published applications, worldwide, through various on-line patent databases, and view and download the actual applications. As each patent is classified according to the specific area of technology (through an International Patent Classification System – IPC), you can search for patents filed in specific classifications rather as well as searches against keywords, inventors and companies, amongst others.

For more information about conducting an on-line patent search or anything else related to patents, please email Julia Fallon at j.c.fallon@sussex.ac.uk

University collaborations as a route to profitable technology transfer

This was the major theme of a recent workshop organised by the DTI, which brought together people in technology transfer, technology discovery, licensing and venture funds from both the UK and Texas, USA.

Many factors were identified which can impact the fluency of concluding agreements. But, there was a clear message from the USA/UK participants. Where parties clearly wish to work together in a mutually beneficial manner, many obstacles such as different legal jurisdictions, different institutional positions on warranties and liabilities and different capacities to grant rights to intellectual property could all be overcome. Once overcome, the scientific collaborations often proved immensely successful for all the organisations involved.

In addition to this major theme, Dr. Mike Shaw, CEO of Sussex IP, chaired a session on the valuation of IP that provided insights into how universities may seek to place a value on their technologies.

Subsequent sessions dealt with understanding what industry may want from university technologies, how universities market their technologies and how to add value to technology and IP by accessing translational research funding.

The DTI UK/Texas Bioscience Collaboration was launched by Lord Sainsbury in 2003 to bring together Life Science Researchers from both sides of the Atlantic to explore opportunities for collaboration in both research and commercialisation. More information, as well as the presentations made at the workshop can be found at www.uspartneruk.com
Entrepreneurship Master Class

As part of its Master Class Programme in February, the Science and Technology Policy Research Unit (SPRU), invited Prof. Magnus Klosfsten to speak on “Entrepreneurship Training: Experiences from one of Europe's Top Entrepreneurship Programmes in Sweden”.

Prof. Klosfsten, Director of the Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE) at Linköping University is also a Visiting Fellow in the South East for SEEDA whose research is oriented towards the early growth and development of technology-based firms, financing young ventures and university-industry relations. His aim is to share best practice in both SMEs and universities.

Using the growth and development model detailed left, Prof. Klosfsten discussed the work of the CIE which provides an environment linking entrepreneurship with teaching & research, and which encourages new business growth by offering programs and activities to stimulate and develop the creation of new businesses founded on innovative products and/or services.

The ENP runs over a 4-6 month period and is the first step in the process of achieving the aims of the CIE. Klosfsten believes that once a business has reached the ‘Business Platform’ they have reduced their vulnerability (from being a young, start up company) and should have the resources available to them to enable them to stand on their own two feet.

To achieve this the CIE works with each business, using a entrepreneurial & proactive approach, combined with mentoring services, to allow the companies to develop at their own pace.

The Regional Development Office (RDO) & the Sussex Innovation Centre (SinC) hosted the Master-class on behalf of the Learning & Skills Division of SEEDA.

SEEDA secures major business opportunities in Shanghai

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has achieved an important development in the growing relationship between the South East of England and the People's Republic of China. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed in Shanghai which paves the way for increased economic cooperation and collaboration to improve two-way business competitiveness and to develop information exchange between the two regions.

SEEDA’s Chairman, James Brathwaite CBE and the SEEDA delegation to the city spoke of the important benefits of the long-term, strategic relationship between the two regions. He pointed out that “With a GDP of some £50 billion and annual growth in double figures for more than a decade, Shanghai Municipality is fast approaching the South East’s £150 billion and offers us many opportunities, experiences and business prospects.”

Mr Pan, Chairman of the Shanghai Foreign Investment Commission, said: "This agreement will reinforce our strong relationship with the South East of England and we are happy to develop new opportunities to share best practice and learn from each other."

SEEDA, who opened an office in Shanghai in 2003, is now discussing commercial opportunities with Chinese companies already based in or interested in trading with the South East, deepening links with top Chinese universities, visiting science parks and innovation centres and meeting political bodies and development agencies to broaden understanding of the issues facing both regions and explore ways of working together in future.