Students share the silverware

The Environmental Society swept the board at the Cheers awards for its work in highlighting concerns about development on the campus' slopes. The annual event, held in Mandela Hall, rewards the successes of non-sporting clubs and societies.

Geography student Dan Glass and Environmental Science student Miriam Rose, both of the Environmental Society, won 'outstanding achievement' awards, while the group itself won an 'outstanding society' award. The Save our Slope party, which saw students stage a peaceful occupation of the East Slope car park building site, won 'event of the year'.

"I grew up on an organic farm and from a young age went with my dad to protest on environmental issues," said Miriam. "Since coming to Sussex I have tried to encourage the University to become a forward-thinking, sustainably run place in tune with its surroundings. Staff and students alike have been very supportive of these campaigns, which I have found extremely rewarding."

The group's most recent action was to "help" the reseeding of the East Slope hillside, currently in progress, by planting a variety of bright and bold flowers.

The Cuban Arts Aid Society won three awards including 'innovation of the year' for the CD it produced that is being sold to raise money to buy musical instruments for Cuban schools. Other big winners included the Dirty Weekenders and the African, Caribbean and Asian Society, which won three awards apiece.

The night highlighted some of the more niche societies on campus, with awards going to the Sound and Lighting Technicians Society and the Sushi Society. Meanwhile Gavin Baker of University Radio Falmer (URF) must have kept the books of the campus radio station in mint condition, as he walked off with perhaps one of the more obscure awards: 'treasurer of the year'.

More sporting-minded students got their chance to applaud one another on 6 May at the annual Sports Ball.

Who to choose as 'team of the year' proved somewhat of a challenge, however: "We usually give team of the year to the team that does best in the BUSA (British University Sports Association) league tables," explained CJ Lee, Activities Centre Manager, "but this year three teams did equally well." The award, therefore, went jointly to Men's Football, Women's Basketball and Men's Squash.

The black-tie event, held at the Hilton Metropole hotel, also recognised the success of those sporting societies that don't compete, with Ski and Snowboard gaining 'club of the year'.

The University is appointing an Acting Registrar & Secretary to lead the Administration until a permanent appointment is made next year.

Dr Philip Harvey, currently Deputy Registrar and Academic Secretary at the University of Exeter, will come to Sussex on secondment from 1 July for a nine-month period.

Dr Harvey has been at Exeter, where his responsibilities include heading up its Academic Office, since 1997. Before that he worked at Warwick for nine years, including a two-year spell as Secretary of its Graduate School.

The previous Registrar & Secretary, Neil Gershon, left Sussex in December 2004. The post of Registrar & Secretary will be advertised in the near future, with the aim of making a permanent appointment from April 2006.

Dr Harvey's brief will be to take work forward on key priority areas, not just to hold the fort pending a permanent appointment. So he will play a key role in progressing the work of the University on a number of issues including:

- strategic planning
- process improvement in administration, both central and Schools
- the use of IT in the management of the University

He will also take on the statutory and regulatory roles of a Registrar & Secretary and will co-ordinate the day-to-day work of the Administration.

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One historian and his occupation

A new book on occupied France during the Second World War honours a Sussex historian who is renowned for his academic work on Vichy France, the liberation and particularly the resistance to Nazi Germany.

Two former students have edited a diverse collection of essays in honour of Professor Rod Edeward, who, they say, "did so much to shape the British perception of France during his forty years of teaching and researching at the University of Sussex".

Dr Hanna Diamond’s doctoral thesis on women and the Second World War in France was inspired and co-supervised by Rod during the late 1980s. Dr Simon Kitson completed a thesis on the Marseilles police under Rod’s supervision in 1995.

Both editors benefited, they say, “from the superb educational environment offered at Sussex”. In the book they write: “The postgraduate community in that institution is undoubtedly amongst the very best in the country”.

The book, Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New perspectives on wartime France (Berg, £50), includes contributions by another four of Rod’s former research students at Sussex: Dr Karen Adler, Dr David Berry, Dr Jackie Clarke and Dr John Home. There is also a chapter from Professor Siân Reynolds, now at Stirling but for many years a colleague of Rod’s at Sussex. All of the chapters reflect his work in some way and encompass themes close to his interests.

Fittingly, as Rod’s use of oral history has been a central characteristic of his work, the volume also includes an interview with him by fellow historian Martin Evans. In the interview Rod recalls what it was like to work at Sussex in the 1960s when it was “fashionable and young”, as well as “intellectually very radical”. He also describes the excitement of visiting Paris several times during the heady days of 1968, when students and other French people rose up in a cultural and political revolt against authority.

Almost 40 years on, Rod is still researching and writing, and has a new book coming out this July. It seems the man himself may yet be able to offer more new perspectives on wartime France.

Psychologist proposes model to reduce prejudice

From anti-Semitism to Islamophobia, from the fear of terrorism to hostility towards asylum seekers, conflict between different cultural groups continues to be an alarming feature of the 21st century.

While governments and policy makers struggle to address these issues, a Sussex social psychologist has revisited 20 years of research on intergroup relationships and produced an effective positive model of how to reduce prejudice.

Professor Rupert Brown, together with Professor Miles Hewstone of the University of Oxford, argues that to bring about a change in the attitudes of conflicting groups, members of those groups need to be brought together in a way that makes them appreciate each other’s different social identities.

“Some policy approaches might make a point of not drawing attention to ethnicity or other group differences,” says Rupert. “But we believe that a crucial part of successful intergroup contact is helping individuals to maintain them.”

They have tested their theory with experiments and field studies in settings as wide-ranging as Catholic-Protestant relations in Northern Ireland; attitudes between different nationalities in Europe; Muslims and Hindus in Bangladesh; and young children’s attitudes towards peers with disabilities and other stigmatised groups.

In a very recent study with primary school pupils in Kent, conducted with Lindsey Cameron and Adam Rutland (from the University of Kent), groups of children were presented with different types of stories involving an English child and a refugee child, working together on various projects.

In some of the stories, only the characters’ names and individual characteristics were given; in others, the emphasis was continually on the fact that they belonged to the same school; in a third group, more detail was given about the characters’ different cultural backgrounds in their common school setting. After six weeks, the researchers found that the stories that contained the cultural references brought about the most positive change in the children’s attitude towards refugees.

Rupert explains: “In multi-ethnic schools, where conflicts can sometimes arise, it is beneficial to integrate the students and to get them working collaboratively. They then begin to regard each other not just as individuals, but also as people who are Afro-Caribbean, Asian or white. What needs to happen is that they are reminded about each other’s cultural background, so that they can make a connection between the peers they have met and all others from similar backgrounds.”

He adds: “These types of beneficial intergroup contact cannot resolve all the issues of intergroup conflict, but can make a real contribution to its reduction.”

An academic paper by the two professors that pulls together their 20 years’ work on intergroup contact has won the 2005 Gordon Allport Prize, awarded by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues for the best paper on intergroup relations. It is published in Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 2005.

God and the military

CND founder Bruce Kent suggested in a seminar on campus this month that the Church should be “demilitarised”.

He criticised the focus of the Church, which sends chaplains to the armed services, but not to sex workers, for example. “We are called to be irascible”, he said of Christians, challenging the status quo that legitimises violence with ritual and ceremony.

Mr Kent was speaking at a day seminar on ‘God and the military: Christian clerics at war’ in the Meeting House on 4 May.

In a lively panel discussion, Canon Paul Oestriecher (former chair of Amnesty International and now the Quaker chaplain at Sussex) insisted that chaplains must have the liberty to be prophetic in their ministry, calling into question the justice of military actions.

A wide range of speakers from the Church, the Ministry of Defence, the peace movement and academia joined the two well-known clerics in debating this and other key themes of war and violence within the Christian faith.

The seminar, fourth in a series on ‘Religion and extremism’, was organized by Father Rob Estdale (Catholic chaplain at Sussex), Chana Moshenska and Stella Rock.
Vice-Chancellor’s open meetings

At the open meetings for staff this month, the Vice-Chancellor started a campus conversation about the future academic shape of the University. “I am committed to a university that is strong in science as well as the humanities and social sciences,” said Professor Alasdair Smith. “But the shape of science has already changed and will continue to do so: the balance between the biological and physical sciences has already shifted in recent years.” He reassured science faculty that developments would build on restructuring work already under way, such as the development of a new science curriculum.

Asked whether Sussex should be so swift to react to what might be short-term changes in demand in the undergraduate ‘market’, Alasdair pointed out that this had not been the approach at Sussex, where departments such as Chemistry and Physics have been explicitly supported through their ongoing student-recruitment difficulties. “You have to have a picture of things that you value,” he emphasised. But he acknowledged that, “there has to be a balance between what you ideally want to do and what you can do in practice.” The current projected takes for next year for Chemistry, for example, would not be sustainable in the long run.

He described the financial position as “still uncomfortably tight” and announced that small working groups reporting to the Senior Management Group (SMG) will lead on planning for 2006–07, which will in part look at cross-campus structures and processes. The Savings Review Group (SRG) that worked in 2005–06 will be stood down having completed its work, with Deans and heads of units managing work within their agreed budgets.

One of the outcomes of the savings review for 2005–06 is a planned reduction in the spend on associate tutors as needs reduced after a temporary bulge in demand due to curriculum change. A member of staff expressed concern about this decision. While recognising that the changes were not welcome news to individual associate tutors, the Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the University is not planning to dispense with them altogether. The reduced spend will focus on Sussex postgraduates: “It is right to give priority to our own graduate students as much as possible,” he said, to give them both financial support and early career development. He also gave reassurances that the University is not in any sense abandoning the objectives of the ‘Kedward report’, which made a series of recommendations to bring about better working conditions for associate tutors.

Because of the current financial situation, the University is making modest investment in academic posts for 2005–06, and then more substantial investment for 2006–07. Asked if this was a risky tactic as far as the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is concerned, the Vice-Chancellor pointed out that there had been substantial and successful investment in recruitment in 2003 and 2004, which would bring benefits in the RAE. He is talking to Deans this term about their plans for academic recruitment in 2005 and 2006.

There has also been progress on plans for the Administration. The Vice-Chancellor announced that he hopes to appoint an Acting Registrar & Secretary to start work in July. He was asked if this meant that work on restructuring the Administration could move forward more quickly. And if restructuring releases posts, should they be used for generating income? Alasdair confirmed that Sussex spends a relatively high proportion of its income on support costs and that the University should look to apply its resources to things it wants to do more of, such as income generation.

One way in which the University has been balancing its books in recent years had been by selling some of its off-campus properties. Asked whether this amounts to selling off the ‘family silver’, the Vice-Chancellor pointed out that the student houses in Brighton and Hove had explicitly been bought in the first place as an investment, for a “rainy day”. With the University’s financial difficulties and with those investments having generated significant financial gains, that rainy day has now come. But it needed to be handled prudently and the sell-off clearly could not continue indefinitely; hence the wisdom of the current savings process.

Sussex alumni re-elected

Two Sussex alumni standing for re-election as Members of Parliament lost their seats as British voters went to the polls on Thursday 5 May.

Sitting Labour MP Peter Bradley narrowly lost his seat in The Wrekin to the Conservatives, who overturned the 2001 result with a majority of 942. The outcome was even closer in Gravesham, where the Tories beat Labour’s Chris Pond by just 654 votes.

The other seven Labour MPs who had studied at Sussex were re-elected, although all of them saw their percentage of the vote tumble. They are Hilary Benn (Leeds Central, -6.9%); Roger Berry (Kingswood, -7.9%); Ben Bradshaw (Exeter, -8.7%); Peter Hain (Neath, -8.1%); David Lepper (Brighton Pavilion, -13.3%); Dan Norris (Wansdyke, -6.2%); and Martin Salter (Reading West, -8.1%).

Hilary Benn, who has been Secretary of State for International Development since 2003, retained his post in the Cabinet reshuffle on 6 May. Peter Hain added responsibility for Northern Ireland to his brief as Secretary of State for Wales.

Two Sussex graduates, Tony Baldry (Banbury) and Michael Fabricant (Lichfield), successfully stood for re-election as Conservative MPs. In St Ives, Liberal Democrat Andrew George also held his seat.

There was disappointment for some new candidates with Sussex connections who had entered the fray. David Lepper’s opponents in Brighton Pavilion included a fellow Sussex graduate, Keith Jago, who won 42 votes as an independent.

Dr Richard Black, a current member of academic faculty, came third for Labour in Lewes, with exactly 9% of the vote. Marina Pepper, who recently completed an MA in Dramatic Writing at Sussex, was third for the Liberal Democrats in Brighton Kemptown, where she took 18.5% of the vote.

FIRST CLASS

Dr Gordon Finlayson, Lecturer in Philosophy, has been voted onto the executive committee of the British Philosophical Association.

Professor CAleostus Juma, who studied for a doctorate in SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research from 1983–86, has been elected a Foreign Associate of the US National Academy of Sciences. His election brings the total number of foreign associates to only 360. Caleostus is Professor of the Practice of International Development at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

For the second time, the British Association for American Studies has awarded its annual Arthur Miller Prize to Professor Peter Nicholls for the best published article in American Studies. And it’s the second year in a row for Sussex: last year Dr Clive Webb won the same prize.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Iraqi government, Hoshyar Zebari, was a Sussex graduate (MA Sociology, 1980).
Young entrepreneurs learn vital business skills

Budding tycoons of the future learnt how to turn business ideas into reality during the annual ‘Entrepreneurs for Tomorrow’ competition, which reached its climax this month.

The competition was launched in January, when 270 Year 10 students from across Sussex spent a day on campus to inspire them and help them think about how to plan a new business.

Following talks on entrepreneurship and practical business planning as well as a tour of the Sussex Innovation Centre, the students participated in team-building exercises, raced artificially intelligent robots and produced a newscast in one of the campus television studios.

Eighteen local secondary schools entered the competition, to create a business plan for an innovative idea. Each school group was linked to a local business mentor and to a University student mentor.

Five schools were short-listed as finalists and invited to present their plans to an audience of friends and family in Bramber House this month. A panel of judges acted as venture capitalists, with the difficult task of choosing which plan they felt would have the most investment potential.

At a special award ceremony, Professor Rose Luckin presented five students from Ringmer Community College with handheld digital organisers for their prize-winning idea: a personal interactive computer-screen trainer allowing people to exercise in the privacy of their own homes.

Meanwhile, Sybil Oldfield’s new book Afterwords: Letters on the death of Virginia Woolf gained some good press attention, with pieces appearing in the Guardian Online (7 May), BBC Online (6 May), the Glasgow Herald (7 May) and the Argus (9 May). Sybil was also interviewed by BBC Southern Counties Radio (5 May).

Back to animals: Dr David Hill’s new device for tracking rare bats caught the attention of BBC Online (25 April), Electronics Weekly (4 May) and the Argus.

Elsewhere, our VC Professor Alasdair Smith was quoted in the THES (13 May) talking about the pros and cons of ‘post qualification applications’ for prospective students; Dr Tim Bale spoke to Scotland on Sunday (1 May) about the prospect of Labour winning the election with a small majority; and Dr Vivian Vignoles talked about his research on ‘subjective identity structures’ in a piece in the Herald (2 May) on identity crises.

A large article in the Independent (12 May) about the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s new initiative to get doctoral students out of ivory towers referred to a Sussex doctorate on international baroque being offered in association with the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The biggest mention by far for Sussex recently, however, was on ITN News (13 May) when, to illustrate the alarming news of a nationwide mumps epidemic, students were filmed receiving mumps vaccinations at the University’s Health Centre. We don’t have a major problem here, by the way, but the report did bring a lump to my throat.

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_articles/bulletin
Cheers and beers at student dash

The cheers could be heard way before you saw the runners at this year’s dissertation dash. As the five o’clock deadline neared on Monday (16 May), final-year students began hurtling across Library Square, clutching wads of white paper, pink slips and green treasury tags, in a desperate bid to submit their coursework on time.

Meanwhile, their slightly smugger (and slightly more inebriated) fellow students, who’d managed to beat the deadline by several hours, lined the path to Falmer House cheering them on.

The Students’ Union decided to coincide the dash with an awareness-raising drive for the Make Poverty History campaign. White banners detailing the plight of the third world hung from fences and trees, while a mini bouncy castle was available for students who needed an outlet for their pre-exam angst.

However, the best-laid plans never go the way you expect and, as five approached, so did the rain. Usually students sprawl all over the grass, pint in hand, watching the runners from a respectable distance. The soggy ground put paid to this, though, so instead everyone crowded onto the path, making the final run a slightly more intimate and slower affair than in other years.

As the seconds counted down, the crowd got what they were waiting for and one last student dived out of Arts A and ran, hell-for-leather, towards Falmer House. The crowd went mad, the deadline passed and a rite-of-passage for final-year students was over.

How coursework became art

Students have turned what started out as coursework into an art exhibition. The idea for 'Collage', which ran from 4–6 May in Falmer House, came after several English courses began accepting poetry, paintings, sculpture and other forms of art as coursework.

These were then assessed and counted towards students’ second-year marks. But for English student Sophie Flax this didn’t seem enough: “When we got our work back it was a bit of an anti-climax,” says Sophie, “so we said to ourselves, ‘Let’s make an exhibition, we could have an opening soirée and wine and things.’ We kind of joked about it at first, but we went to see some tutors and Lindsay Smith, the head of English, and proposed this idea and it went from there.”

Originally only English students were involved but, as word spread, the number of exhibitors grew until every school was represented: “We had people from physics, biology, media, geography, history—everything, really. It really surprised us.” Fellow English student Eli Grace and Economics student Gavin Chuaahin were also involved in organising the show.

Exhibits included a photographic portrait of Berlin by Media and Film student Sandra Teitge, and a painting of Marilyn Monroe by fellow Media student Helen Varley. Sophie hopes to make the art show a regular fixture in the University calendar: “So many people spend so much time creating in their own time but there isn’t the facility to display this creativity on campus,” says Sophie. “That’s why I think it’s important to do this every term.”

Skydiving medics

Sixteen students from Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) are planning a tandem skydive for charity this summer.

On 5 July they will each be strapped to a highly trained Red Devil, who will hurl himself (and panic-stricken passenger) out of a plane at 13,000 feet.

Team organiser and second-year student, Natalie Hogg, says she didn’t realise at first the full implications of what she had agreed to do. “It’s only when I woke with a start from a nightmare recently that it started to sink in.”

Now she can’t wait to make the jump: “It’s quite scary but it will be a great release, especially for the second years, who are due to split up for work placements in year 3.”

The courageous students will be raising money for the Rockinghorse Appeal, which purchases specialist medical equipment for the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Sick Children in Brighton, the Trevor Mann Baby Unit at Brighton’s Royal Sussex County Hospital, and the Children and Baby Unit at the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath.

To support the students, email n.m.hogg@bsms.ac.uk – no amount is too small. “We want to raise as much money as possible as a team,” says Natalie.
Obituary

Ken Pike

Ken Pike, the first glassblower at the University, died on 5 May, aged 75.

He came from Northern Polytechnic (now part of London Metropolitan University) in 1963 and set up shop in a corner of Pevensey 1, when that building and Falmer House were the only ones on the site. He made equipment for scientists, especially chemists, until he retired in September 1994.

His work never failed because of poor workmanship, but he patiently came round the laboratories to repair glassware broken by ham-fisted researchers. The cheerful banter of the glassblowing shop was enjoyed by all, including the Duke of Edinburgh on one occasion.

Nobel Prize winner Professor Sir Harry Kroto comments: "Ken underpinned all our work by his skill and charm and more than anything else by his understanding of how to work with research students."

I have known a lot of glassblowers and Ken was the best."

Through his enthusiasm for sport, especially badminton and tennis, Ken had a wide circle of friends throughout the University.

Update on job evaluation

The process of job evaluation at Sussex is well underway and should be complete by August/September of this year.

Job evaluation involves analysing roles and then presenting that analysis in a consistent way so that they can be compared to each other. The idea is that this then enables ‘equal pay for work of equal value’.

As it is not realistic to evaluate every single role, approximately 15% of roles of each unit on campus are being selected as representative ‘benchmarks’, against which others can be compared. Interviews have been taking place with clerical and technical benchmark staff in the schools and the majority (approximately 50%) are now complete.

Kelly Lewis, project manager, thanked the many members of staff who have been interviewed, as well as the line managers who have put in a lot of time to make sure the process goes smoothly. "We really want to get this right," she said, "and a large number of staff are helping to make it possible."

Feedback from role holders who have been interviewed has so far been positive. At the end of the first phase, all data from feedback forms will be collated to provide an overall picture of how they perceive the process.

All staff who have been interviewed will receive feedback on their interview in the form of a written and diagrammatical profile. They should receive these profiles near the end of the summer term.

The next phase of interviews will be taking place in the Library and Estates. To finish the project by August/September as planned, these will be followed by a large number of interviews in the rest of the University.

The trade unions have agreed and signed off an appeals procedure for use by any staff who wish to appeal against the pay and grade that is assigned to their post following the job-evaluation process. This is now available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/framework.

Reunion lunch

A reunion lunch this month brought together on campus the former staff who made up the Vice-Chancellor’s Office at Sussex in 1970.

"Asa Briggs gathered together a team of creative young people as his advisers," recalls Geoff Lockwood, Planning Officer until 1973 and then Registrar & Secretary until his retirement in 1996. "Such officers became the norm a decade or so later but Sussex set the pattern, and it was the most professional."

Geoff is on the far right of the reunion photo. Next to him is Elly Pettigrew (née Milburn), Asa’s Personal Assistant and Office Co-ordinator. After leaving Sussex she spent the remainder of her career in central administration at the Open University.

Behind Elly is Sir Michael Thompson, who was Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Sussex; he went on to be the Vice-Chancellor at East Anglia and then Birmingham.

Next to the current Vice-Chancellor, Professor Aledair Smith, is Lord (Asa) Briggs. He was the University’s second Vice-Chancellor, from 1967–76, when he was appointed Provost of Worcester College, Oxford.

On the far left of the photo is Fred Newman, who now runs his own publishing company in London but in 1970 was the Information Officer, responsible for media relations.

Unfortunately, two members of the Vice-Chancellor’s Office from 1970 were unable to attend the reunion lunch. Asa’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor was Roger Elin-Stoyle, appointed to Sussex in 1962 as Professor of Physics; the Research/Development Officer was Hywel Jones, who joined the European Commission in 1973.
Farewell

Staff in IT Services held a leaving party to recognise the contributions of two long-serving members of staff who are taking early retirement.

Leila Burrell-Davis started at Sussex in 1983 as a Statistical Advisor and Senior Programmer. She became expert in many early computer systems such as the BBC, Atari, Amstrad and Apricot and subsequently IBM-compatible PCs. In addition, she was the University’s first word processing expert.

Until 1998 she was involved in supporting IT users, particularly in Arts; she has the rare ability to find technical solutions that are genuinely useful to non-technical users.

As Desktop Systems Manager she has contributed to and overseen the restructuring of IT Services and, in particular, the change from Desktop Systems to Workstation Services.

Simon Barnes was appointed as a trainee computer operator in 1978, a time when computers were large machines in air-conditioned rooms, serviced at all hours, often round the clock, by dedicated attendants.

Over the years, he moved on to programming and systems administration posts and was the first person at Sussex to use the Joint Academic Network (JANET) when it was created in 1984.

With the growth in PC use and the increasing provision of PC clusters for student use in the early 1990s, Simon moved across to support the PC NetWare servers, qualifying as a certified Novell engineer, and subsequently becoming a founder member of the Desktop Systems Group.

Lottery go-ahead for Gardner restoration plan

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £46,200 to look at ways of restoring and upgrading the Gardner Arts Centre, one of eight listed buildings on the Sussex campus designed by the British modernist architect Sir Basil Spence.

In partnership with the University, the Gardner Arts Centre will consult architects and other specialists to draw up a blueprint for restoration, renovation and repair, making full use of the technological advances in building techniques and technology of the intervening 35 years to secure its future as a working, accessible, useable building.

The Gardner made history when it opened in 1969 as the first campus-based arts centre. Spence’s vision was an architecture designed to appeal to the intelligent mind, which recognised the architectural past, while proposing new forms for a new age. He also aimed to complement the rural environment of the South Downs so, while the Gardner is monumental and experimental, it was also built to respect and reflect the surrounding countryside.

Restoration of the building’s 35-year-old fabric is now urgently needed. The building no longer meets modern needs in terms of disabled access, theatrical presentation and the needs of audiences and artists. Unsympathetic alterations and additions need to be replaced and original features restored, to do justice to Spence’s vision.

Professor Mary Stuart, Sussex Pro-Vice-Chancellor, said: “The success of the bid will enable the University and the Gardner Arts Centre to move forward together to provide an accessible and exciting arts facility on our campus.”

A walk on the wild side

In one of our recent but infrequent visits to "the corridor of power" we were hailed in unusually enthusiastic tones. The reason, it transpired, was that a colleague had been attempting to establish the identity of a particularly striking tree and, having been unsuccessful in finding anyone to oblige, had turned to the top floor for advice.

Thus challenged, the enquirer had been assured that they knew just the people who would know and that there would be no problem in supplying the elusive information! Accordingly we were escorted to the entrance to Sussex House to confront a specimen of said tree. Much to our relief, the arborescent puzzle turned out to be the Whitebeam that grows by the bus stop, so honour was satisfied all round.

Whitebeam, Sorbus aria, is certainly a stunning tree at this time of year, as the underside of the young leaves are covered by a dense felt of white down. It is a true native and as a wild plant it is characteristic of the chalk and limestones of southern England, although it is strangely infrequent on the South Downs. The specimens planted on campus are mostly the cultivar 'Lutescens', developed at the end of the 19th century. The bunches of white flowers produce bright red berries in the autumn, although the plant seldom crops very heavily and in any case the fruit are rapidly eaten by birds.

In The Odyssey, Telemachus wonders whether the missing Odysseus is really his father: "It is a wise child that knows his own father." Shakespeare neatly reversed Homer's proverb in The Merchant of Venice when Launcelot insensitively taunts his blind father, Old Gobbo: "It is a wise father that knows his own child." Similar problems about paternity apply to one of our dullest-looking birds, the Dunnock.

We have previously described how some Dunnocks share their territory with more than one mate: the territory in the Science Car Park now contains three males and three females!

Each female builds her own nest, in which she incubates three to six bright blue eggs. Once the nest is built, all the local males try to mate with her. Nick Davies, working in the Cambridge Botanic Garden, discovered that males do not simply fight each other: they also peck at the female's genital tract for up to two minutes before mating, often causing her to eject a mass of sperm from other males. DNA finger-printing revealed that the brood is often fathered by several males (and that dominant males gain little advantage).

Every male that has copulated with the female helps her to feed the chicks; the more helpers a female has, the more chicks she will survive. Males who fail to copulate do not help; worse, they try to puncture the eggs, and force the poor female to start all over again.

Beauty and the bus:

Whitebeam, a stunning tree at this time of year, grows by the bus stop outside Sussex House.
Academic events

THU 26 MAY
1pm IDS seminar: José Gratario da Silva (Campinas), The challenge of poverty in Brazil: An evaluation of the Zero Hunger Program. IDS 221.
4pm History seminar: Frank Boesch (Bochum), Arts A155.
FRI 27 MAY
2.15pm SPRU-CENTRIM seminar: Harry Scarbrough (Warwick) and Jackie Swan (Warwick), Project work as a locus of learning: The journey through practice. Freeman Centre GD4/25.
4.30pm Philosophy Society: Paul Faulkner (Sheffield), What is wrong with lying? Arts C233.
TUE 31 MAY
2.15pm SEI seminar: Helen Drake (Loughborough), The French referendum on the EU Constitution. Arts A5.
4pm COGS seminar: Igor Aleksander (Sussex), Implications of the five axioms of consciousness. Pevlis A11.

Small ads

For sale: Complete Chipendale kitchen. White/chrome units, integrated NEFF fridge/freezer, STOVE double oven & ceramic hob, extractor hood with light, built-in downlighters, 1.5 sink, worktops. £1,500. Buyer collects. T 507610, 07780 662319 or ext. 2762, E g.hemenes@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: 2 Britax front-facing child car seats (suit approx. 1-4 yrs) £7.50 each. Roof bars for Renault Megane. £10. E a.j.sinclair@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: 1-6th summer let for visiting faculty, 24 June to 25 July. Nr train or bus route prof. E gilby@sussex.ac.uk or T ext. 2717.

To let: 3 or 4 rooms in shared house in Kemp Town. From 1 July. FT students only. £292 pp pcm + bills. T 608050.

To let: 3-bed semi-detached furnished house + garden in Lewes. Available 1 July (or earlier) to 31 Dec. Suit visiting faculty or PAs. £1,800 pcm. E m.kohlerbach@sussex.ac.uk, T 2102.

Wanted: Ticket(s) for Reading Festival 2005 (Sat only), Angl, ext. 8022.

To let: Room in Trafalgar St flat, share with 2 3rd-year students. Available June & July. £266 pcm. T Sarah Merry on 07768 818937 or E sm60@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Brand-new mountain bike (used once) + mudguards, suit female. £79 ono (was £129). E kps@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 8574.

To let: Large room in shared house, Convenient for campus & central B’ton (on main bus routes). Suit n/s PG/staff. Available now, £300 pcm. E s.heymans@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: Desktop computer: Pentium 300, 184MB RAM, 20GB HD, 17” monitor, CD drive, CD-RW & DVD ROM drive, 5 USB ports, Firewire port, MS Office 2000, Win 2000. £190. E prpa5@sussex.ac.uk, T 70717 690675.

For sale: Private collection of 100+ recent & new German (non-academic) books & novels. Paperback £2, hardbacks £4–List available. E p.jeffs@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Studio flat or flat/house share (pref staff/PG) from late June in central Brighton. £400 pcm max. E m.aldwinckle@sussex.ac.uk, T Nick on ext. 4806.

To let: 1-bed flat in Kemp Town (faculty/mature PG only), from 1 July to 3 Dec. £600 pcm. Furnished or unfurnished. Suit visiting academics. E rcl.golden@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Ladies’ GSR trekking bike (small), £65. New Aug. 2, T 479413.

For sale: 2 dark wood chest of drawers & bedside cabinet from The Pier £200; Inge beech bookcase £25; solid light oak dining table & 6 chairs £80; Sensis v/machine £60. All items 2 yrs old. T 07961 926776.

To sell: Sanyo silver bagless cylinder vacuum cleaner + tools. £20. Call Janet on ext. 8584.

Arts events

PERFORMANCE
Tue 24 May
1pm Organ recital – From the Renaissance to the Baroque
Victor Potter (Music research student) with works by Gabrieli, Pasquini, Scarlatti, Sweelinck and Buxtehude.
Wed 25–Sat 28 May
7.30pm Aurelia’s Oratorio
Music, mime and visual wizardry of a world of illusion and fantasy. Gardner Arts Centre (GAC).

Thu 26 May
7.30 pm Music concert
Sussex music students perform classical, romantic and 20th-century works for ensembles including harp, cello, flute, French horn and piano.

Barber, Callaghan, Casterede, Faure, Janacek, Mozart and others. St Michael and All Angels Church, Victoria Road, Brighton.

E 2 pm 15th Recital
2nd-year Music students Sam Bassett (flute), Miranda Cobb (voice) and Alex Beckett (trumpet).

Meeting House.

EXHIBITIONS
Until Sun 19 June
Nancy Davenport – Campus
Video and photographs presenting the social spaces of a campus.

GAC.

Weekends throughout Brighton Festival
Alexandra Loske (Sussex Language Institute) – Open House
Gold and silver jewellery. The Stable House, 73 Hanover Street, Brighton.

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Benedict Brook, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie Clune and Rob Bad. 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 3 June, with a copy deadline of 1 pm on 27 May. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.
Research funding: all change

The basis on which Research Councils fund universities is changing dramatically this summer.

Historically, Research Councils have not usually paid for many of the costs associated with carrying out their projects, e.g. the time spent by principal investigators. Whilst they still won’t pay all of the full costs incurred on their projects, from 1 September all the UK Research Councils have agreed to fund grants at a higher rate than before. They will do this by paying 80 per cent of the “Full Economic Costs” (FEC) associated with the work.

The shaded parts of Tables 1 and 2 below illustrate how the Research Councils’ old and new funding basis compare. The shaded area is funded, and the unshaded are unfunded. In the vast majority of cases, for the same project, this change will result in significantly more money for the University.

In conjunction with this change in Research Council funding, other sponsors have also agreed to pay a more sustainable price for their research. In particular, the Treasury has advised all other government departments that, in most cases, they should now expect to pay universities 100 per cent of the FEC for their research.

Table 1: Research Councils’ old funding basis – applications pre August 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full economic cost</th>
<th>Indirect costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Eligible” staff costs only (e.g. research assistants, dedicated support staff)</td>
<td>Research Council contribution to indirect costs = fixed 46 per cent of eligible direct staff costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other eligible costs (e.g. new equipment, consumables)</td>
<td>The institution must find the rest from other sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible costs (e.g. salary of the principal investigator, cost of existing equipment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: New funding basis – applications submitted after 1 September 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full economic cost</th>
<th>Indirect costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct costs</td>
<td>Indirect costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Councils pay 80 per cent of full costs</td>
<td>The institution must find the rest (20 per cent of FEC) from other sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New project costing tool

As part of wider efforts to improve our administration of external research, as well as supporting better cost recovery on projects, the Research Services division has been working with ITS over the last year to develop an automated Project Costing & Pricing Tool (PCPT). This new tool will replace the current “Blue Form” and will be delivered through Sussex Direct to all academic staff.

The PCPT system is designed to accommodate the new FEC rules and help give principal investigators more flexibility and better control over costing new project proposals. The PCPT has recently started pilot testing and is due to be released in the summer before the Research Council funding rules change on 1 September. Details and training on this will be rolled out by Research Services over the coming months. If you would like to be involved in pilot testing the new PCPT, please contact Garry Lewis in Research Services (extension 3567).
**Basis of new FEC overhead rates**

One of the main changes under FEC is simply in how overheads are calculated and applied to grants. Rather than adding a percentage mark-up based on salary costs, under FEC the overhead is based on an amount per full-time equivalent staff working on the grant. For example, a grant simply made up of one dedicated researcher plus a principal investigator working half-time on it would attract an FEC overhead of one and a half times the relevant £/FTE overhead rate.

From this August, in common with most other universities, Sussex will apply FEC overhead rates on the following basis:

- **Estates overheads**: There will be two different estates rates, one to use for costing all lab-based research work and one for costing all non-lab research.

- **All other (non-estates) overheads**: This will be a single rate, the same for all departments and Schools. It will be set at an average level to recover all the departmental, School and central overheads associated with carrying out research (including the cost of any academic time on supporting research). **Note**: The basis for setting BSMS research overhead rates are still under discussion.

**Academic time survey – update**

Since last autumn, academic staff across the University have been completing the current academic time survey. This exercise is a crucial requirement before we can calculate and charge the new FEC research overhead rates.

Whilst we are currently on course to comply, the default rates that will be applied to any universities not implementing Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) properly were recently announced. This makes clear there would be severe financial consequences if we do not comply:

- The Research Councils would not allow us to recover any estates overheads, and
- would require us to charge a rate for other overheads fixed at only two-thirds of our peer group benchmark average.

In a recent memo to all academic colleagues, the chair of the TRAC/FEC Project Board, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Tony Moore, thanked people for their help in our achieving a response rate of over 80 per cent so far.

He also highlighted the importance of academic staff making sure they correctly understood what sort of work should be included as "support" to research or "support" to teaching, rather than direct. The definitions of what represents "support" work are set nationally, and if they are not used then our new overhead rates may not be consistent with the rest of the sector. Guidance on this is available on-line within the time survey system in Sussex Direct, on the TRAC/FEC website (www.sussex.ac.uk/about/trac_fec.html) or by phoning the TRAC/FEC team on extension 8984 or extension 3183.

**£1.5m research lump-sum**

Recognising that current research grants are funded at lower rates than grants awarded after 1 September 2005, UK Research Councils are distributing a single one-off lump sum to each higher education institution in July. Sussex has been advised that its share of this income will be a fraction over £1.5m, which clearly shows how the new FEC rules represent a very welcome and real increase in research funding.

The real ongoing benefit to universities from the introduction of FEC rules should be even greater than this once other sponsors, such as central government departments, also start paying a more sustainable price for their research.

**Countdown to FEC**

31 July: new FEC overhead rates calculated and audited. Last date for submitting grant applications to Research Councils using old (46 per cent overhead) costing basis.

August: no grant applications will be accepted by Research Councils during August to enable them to change over their systems to FEC. The new Project Costing & Pricing Tool is rolled out across campus.

1 September: Research Councils start accepting applications priced at 80 per cent of FEC. Applications to all research sponsors must have the FEC calculated to enable School management to understand any shortfall compared to the price.

**Further details and feedback**

See [www.sussex.ac.uk/about/trac_fec.html](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/trac_fec.html) for more information about the project.

Please send any feedback, questions or queries to the TRAC/FEC team: [Mike Townsend](mailto:m.j.b.townsend@sussex.ac.uk?subject=MJBT%20Feedback), Project Manager, or [Julian Golland](mailto:j.golland@sussex.ac.uk?subject=JG%20Feedback), Cost Accountant, via [m.j.b.townsend@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.b.townsend@sussex.ac.uk) (extension 3183) or [j.golland@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:j.golland@sussex.ac.uk) (extension 8984).
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