Celebrating Innovation and Business Collaboration

The high value placed on innovation and enterprise by the University has been recognised at an awards evening celebrating the success of its academics working with partner businesses and organisations. The Innovation Awards 2014 ceremony saw prizes being presented in four award categories by the University’s Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow.

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Celebrating Innovation and Business Collaboration (cont)

Held at the Innovation Centre at the University’s Canterbury campus, the event was attended by staff and guests representing partner businesses and organisations. The Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Heather Taylor, and the Chair of the University’s Council, John Simmonds were also present.

The Impact Through Knowledge Exchange Award went to Oracle Inc and Professor Michael Kölling, School of Computing. The impact from their collaboration has been significant with over half a million students worldwide learning programming through a product called Greenfoot. This has had an impact on a number of stakeholders including pupils, teachers and those involved in national curriculum development. Greenfoot is one of very few systems, internationally, to have this level of impact on programming education.

Dr Nick Gore of the University’s Tizard Centre won the Early Career Researcher – Enterprise Award for his work with The Challenging Behaviour Foundation supporting people who display behaviours that challenge those who care for them. The ethos of the project is pioneering in the field of learning disability and the work is grounded in a philosophy of early prevention for challenging behaviour.

The ICE (Innovation, Creativity & Enterprise) Award went to Laura Spear of Dstl and Dr Tim Hopthrow from the School of Psychology. The relationship with Dstl established an entirely new way for Dstl to engage with higher education and, has not only generated funding for the partnership to work together, but created other benefits such as a Dstl researcher seconded into the University for 2 years as an honorary research fellow and a postdoctoral research associate seconded into Dstl for one year.

The Innovation Award went to Dr Jane Reeves and Professor David Shemmings from the Centre for Child Protection. The panel agreed the Centre was truly innovative in delivering child protection training. Innovation is being delivered into the curriculum, opportunities are arising for new research and the outcomes of the programme are being commercialised.

Carole Barron, the University’s Director of Innovation and Enterprise, said: ‘Our annual Innovation Awards continue to go from strength to strength. The standard of entries this year was the highest we’ve seen and reflect the focus on innovation within all areas of University activity. The impact from our collaboration with businesses is significant, clearly demonstrating the University’s continued contribution to economic growth.’

1 Dr Jane Reeves with Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow
2 Simon Thompson and Iris Lanny, Oracle
3 Laura Spear, Dstl and Dr Tim Hopthrow
4 Dr Nick Gore with Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow
Supporting economic growth

University sponsors Business of the Year and Entrepreneur awards

The University of Kent was proud to sponsor two prestigious awards at the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce’s Annual Business Awards Dinner on Wednesday 26th March 2014.

The University sponsored the Business of the Year award, which was presented to winners Sleeping Giant Media at the ceremony held at the Canterbury Cathedral Lodge.

Kent Innovation & Enterprise (KIE), the University’s dedicated business engagement department, sponsored the Entrepreneur of the Year Award which was presented to Giedre Brandao of AbBaltis.

Speaking at the Awards Ceremony, Carole Barron, Director of Innovation & Enterprise said ‘The University is proud to sponsor two important categories within the awards. Business growth and entrepreneurship lie at the heart of economic growth. The University is committed to supporting, and collaborating with, businesses of all sizes and sectors’.

Kent comment: Universities’ role as growth catalyst

The director of the University of Kent’s enterprise unit says a new report into the economic role of universities in society shows that they are a real ‘catalyst’ for growth.

Commenting on the recent report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which suggests that universities see a sixfold return on investing in exchanging knowledge with companies and organisations, Carole Barron, Director of Innovation & Enterprise, said the report highlights the value of higher education as an engine of innovation and economic growth.

Carole Barron said: ‘This report says universities are ‘anchors’ of the economy and society but I would go further and say they are catalysts for growth. It provides a fascinating analysis of higher education’s role in growth, particularly in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises, something we are committed to here at Kent.

‘Our recent Innovation Awards highlighted perfectly how we are working with SMEs to stimulate growth via a range of exciting projects. We place high value on innovation and enterprise and our academics have great success working with partner businesses and organisations.

Carole Barron also welcomed the latest Universities UK (UUK) report on the impact of the higher education sector on the UK economy, and in particular the South East of England.

According to the report, which is based on a study conducted by Viewforth Consulting Ltd using data for 2011-12, UK universities now generate £73 billion in output - up (24%) from £59 billion when the last study was published in 2009.

For the South East, UUK reports that in 2011-12 universities provided 45,882 full-time equivalent jobs across a range of occupations and skill levels.

The University of Kent’s most recent individual impact report, also conducted by Viewforth Consulting Ltd in 2009, estimated that nearly 6,800 jobs in the South East are directly supported or generated by the University. The report also estimated that the University’s economic contribution to the region was £0.6 billion, with its students contributing £211 million to that total.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact Kent Innovation & Enterprise. Contact details can be found on the back of the newsletter.
Spotlight on SMEs

SME Special Interest Group

Almost three-quarters of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the UK have worked with a university or higher education institution (HEI), according to research published in 2011. The University has a long history of working in partnership with SMEs drawing on expertise and resources from across the University.

As every SME has different needs and objectives, we tailor our services and approach accordingly. The University is a skilled talent pool for work placements and internships, graduate and postgraduate employment - including getting students to work on live business projects as part of their degree programme.

We are committed to supporting businesses of all sizes and sectors, however, we recognise that it can be particularly challenging for SMEs to engage with universities, not knowing who to talk to, or what help is available. Kent Innovation & Enterprise, the University’s central entry point for business engagement, has launched an external SME Special Interest Group (SIG) to enable SMEs to express an interest in a specific area appropriate to their sector or business need.

A number of workshops will be running throughout the year ranging from accessing funding to collaborate with the University to focused sector events.

Environmental Innovation Grows in Kent

Is your SME working in the low carbon and environment sector, or do you need expert advice to improve the environmental profile and carbon footprint of your SME?

The University of Kent is one of three universities in the South East to receive funding to set up an Environmental Innovation Network (iNet).

The Environmental iNet will help support innovation and growth in the SME low carbon and environmental goods and services sector. The newly appointed Environmental iNet Project Manager is looking to forge new partnerships between SMEs and the University to share knowledge, expertise and know-how in the low carbon and environmental fields.

The project opens up opportunities for developing collaborative teamwork between SMEs and the University in this growing sector. SMEs will be able to access funding available through Kent Innovation & Enterprise, the University’s dedicated business engagement centre, to help fund project work.

The Environmental iNet project will also enable the University to build on its strengths in this area which stretch across the Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences and cover a broad range of environmental activities.

Attract new talent and skills into your business with the Santander Universities Internship Programme

The University of Kent is pleased to announce its continued collaboration in Santander Universities SME Internship Programme. The programme will help fund 500 new internship opportunities for graduate students within local businesses.

Internships are a low-risk way to attract new talent and skills into your business, often with a view to turning those internships into long-term employment. By offering graduate internships, you can gain access to an ambitious workforce that is well-prepared for work. In this way, internships can give you an advantage over your competitors by helping you make better use of time, reduce your costs and be more profitable.

Heather Nowak, Director, Nova IT Solutions Ltd. commenting on their internship said: ‘Working together with the University of Kent, we interviewed and recruited a qualified and experienced intern who has since become a full time member of staff. Having an intern straight from the University brought in new ideas and added enthusiasm to our team which has added value to our business. I would recommend this scheme to anyone thinking of recruiting an intern into their business.’

‘The Programme gives SMEs the opportunity to work with talented students and graduates who in turn are able to gain valuable work experience in a range of different industries.’ Philippa Jones, Relationship Coordinator, Santander Universities Global Division.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact Kent Innovation & Enterprise. Contact details can be found on the back of the newsletter.
Funding opportunities

Your next strategic challenge solved!

Would you benefit from skills, knowledge and capacity to tackle a strategic issue? If so, we would like to hear from you.

Funding is available to support partnership projects capable of delivering real change, technology and innovation.

The University of Kent has worked with a range of companies and organisations to deliver successful commercial outcomes with projects tailored to address business need.

A recently qualified graduate or post graduate would work full time, as a member of your staff, with support from a team of academics. A London based company, Erlang Solutions Limited, has recently completed a fourth partnership project with the University.

In this case, the aim was to design and take to market a software package to accelerate the adoption of Erlang as a technology used in embedded systems.

Torben Hoffmann, Chief Technical Officer said: ‘The project will lead to a broadening of the use of Erlang in the embedded and wider development communities, plus result in a corresponding increase in commercial projects.’

Partnership projects can cover a range of technical, scientific and wider business related areas.

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European funding stream actively supports SMEs innovation

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever created with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020). Seen as a means to drive economic growth and create jobs, Horizon 2020 has the political backing of Europe’s leaders and the Members of the European Parliament. SME (Small and medium enterprises) and innovation investment is at the heart of the EU’s blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.

Is European funding accessible to SMEs?

Yes, SMEs are actively encouraged to participate across the whole Horizon 2020 programme. Businesses can engage in collaborative projects as part of a consortium as well as through a new dedicated SME stream designed specifically for highly innovative smaller companies.

Is Horizon 2020 only available to SMEs?

No, Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time so participants can focus on what is really important. This approach makes sure new projects get off the ground quickly – and achieve results faster.

How can the University help?

We have a dedicated team within Kent Innovation & Enterprise to support collaborative funding opportunities. We will shortly be organising a free SME information day on Horizon 2020 which will provide an overview of the new EU funding work programme and SME opportunities.

For more information on Horizon 2020 visit www.kent.ac.uk/enterprise/practical-partnering/horizon2020/index.html

Funding to grow your business

Building on the success of the University of Kent’s Innovation Voucher Scheme we are pleased to announce the launch of the new funding for 2014/2015.

The University of Kent is offering more businesses funding opportunities with a new round of Innovation Vouchers. Aimed at supporting smaller project collaborations between SMEs and the University, the voucher can provide a 50%* contribution towards the cost of a project (excluding VAT).

Funding can be used for a range of projects and recent projects have included:

- Market research and software development; initial scoping and research for product development
- Use of scientific facilities and other resources.

All projects are subject to availability and eligibility. Further information can be found online www.kent.ac.uk/enterprise/innovationvouchers.html OR if you would like to discuss a potential project, please contact Kent Innovation & Enterprise, contact details on the back page of this newsletter.

*First time engagement only
Focus on health and social care

Study uncovers new approach to autism

Kent research has revealed that autistic children who take part in drama and performance-based activities may demonstrate improved communication levels and interpersonal interaction.

The ‘Imagining Autism’ research project involved children with autism engaging in a series of interactive sensory environments such as ‘outer space’, ‘under the sea’ and ‘the Arctic’.

Each environment was designed for them to encounter a range of stimuli and respond to triggers created through lighting, sound, physical action and puppetry.

Using trained performers in each of the environments, the work is aimed to promote communication, socialisation, playful interaction, and creative engagement, encouraging the children involved to find new ways of connecting with the world around them.

The research found changes in children’s behaviour, including changes in several areas identified as deficits in autism, such as social interaction and emotion recognition. The severity of autistic symptoms displayed by the children, which were rated by their parents and teaching staff, were also found to decrease significantly.

All of the children who took part in the research showed at least some improvements on at least one of the measures used to monitor change during the research, with over three quarters of them showing changes to more than one.

Furthermore, just under one third of children who took part in the project showed significant changes on a measure of social interaction. Substantial changes in children’s behaviour at home were also reported by some families.

The research was conducted in special needs schools across Kent, including one residential school run by the National Autistic Society (NAS).

The practical methods used in the project are currently being trialled at all NAS schools across the UK and are also being developed into training programmes for teachers, care workers, families, arts practitioners, and health professionals.

Principal Investigator Professor Nicola Shaughnessy of the School of Arts, said: ‘Imagining Autism has been an extremely exciting collaboration producing a number of really interesting outcomes and new discussions between arts and science research. We are delighted that the extremely positive responses to the work from all involved with the project have been endorsed by statistical results.’

Unlike previous drama-based interventions, the study employed a variety of assessment techniques, undertaken by psychologists of the University’s Tizard Centre and School of Psychology. These included both formal, psychological research tools, such as the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale, alongside feedback from teachers and families whose children took part in the project.

The methods used were developed by Professor Shaughnessy and co-investigator Dr Melissa Trimingham (School of Arts) – a drama and puppetry specialist who also designed the environments used in the project. The evaluation of the intervention was led by Dr Julie Beadle-Brown (Tizard Centre) and Dr David Wilkinson (School of Psychology).

Kent’s Respiratory Clinic to support GB Boxing

The University of Kent’s dedicated Respiratory Clinic has been selected to screen the entire GB Boxing team.

Following the success of work undertaken by Dr John Dickinson from the University’s School of Sport and Exercise Sciences in advance of the 2012 Olympic Games, the latest project will involve in-depth analysis and screening of GB Boxers for exercise induced asthma (EIA).

The research will provide information to athletes and the team’s coaches to help reduce respiratory issues they are reporting during their training and competition.

The University of Kent’s Respiratory Clinic, which has a permanent base within Medway Park’s sports facilities, conducts research and consultancy around the prevalence, diagnosis and treatment of EIA and dysfunctional breathing problems during exercise.

The latest screening activity with GB Boxing took place throughout March at the English Institute of Sport, Sheffield. It is likely to extend to support the athletes throughout 2014 and into the run up to the Rio Olympic Games in 2016.

Dr Dickinson, Respiratory Physiologist at the Respiratory Clinic and the University’s School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, said: ‘We’re delighted to be working with GB Boxing to provide athletes and their coaches with important information to assist with improving their performance, both when training and in competitions. The prospect of assisting GB Boxers in the build-up to Rio 2016 is an exciting one.’

Dr Dickinson has been leading testing of Britain’s elite athletes in this area of expertise since 2003. His experience includes testing over 1,000 elite athletes, spanning all Olympic and many professional sports, such as rugby and Premier League football, as well as celebrities for Sport Relief.

The School of Sport and Exercise Sciences is based at the University’s Medway campus.
University of Kent congratulates graduates for Gravity Oscar success

The University of Kent has offered its congratulations to a number of its graduates who contributed to the work which helped secure a ‘Best Visual Effects’ Oscar for the film Gravity.

The graduates, who studied at the University’s School of Engineering and Digital Arts (EDA) for degrees in Multimedia, Technology and Design, all work for London-based visual effects company, Framestore, which produced almost 80% of what appears on screen during the film.

Liam Russell, Christopher Johnston, Steve Hardy, El Suliman, Adam Ward and Mark Millena all contributed to the ground-breaking post-production work, including realistically inserting Sandra Bullock and George Clooney faces into the ‘universe’ – which in most scenes are the only elements not computer generated.

Liam Russell, as Lead Animator, oversaw aspects of character and technical animation, whilst Bernard Wicksteed worked in the tracking team. Christopher Johnston was Technical Director working on layout and motion capture data, while Mark Millena was a Paint and Roto artist, which involved three month’s work ‘cutting out’ Sandra Bullock’s body to use in other sections of the film.

The graduates also helped create computer-generated interior scenes and floating props, whilst the characters’ motions, right down to the subtle finger movements as they work on the Hubble Telescope, were all painstakingly hand-animated.

Les Walczowski, Senior Lecturer in Electronic Engineering who taught the students, said: ‘Our courses use the latest technology and are taught in an environment that is intended to model a professional studio’s working practices. This helps our graduates secure jobs at the best film production companies.’

Blockbuster success for Kent graduates

Computer Animation and Digital Visual Effects Master’s graduates from the University of Kent have showcased their world-class expertise by working on major Hollywood films, including the latest James Bond blockbuster, Skyfall, and Les Miserables.

Robin Walsh, Amz Rattan and James Rustad, all former Kent students of the MSc in Digital Visual Effects, have contributed to one of the most talked about James Bond films of all time.

The graduates were involved in arguably one of the longest opening sequences in an action movie, working on special effects, including modelling, animation, texturing, motion capture, lighting, rendering and composting, all taught during the course.

Walsh and Rattan, now both employees of leading film and visual effects company, Double Negative, have also worked on Oscar-tipped musical adaptation, Les Miserables. James Rustad, of The Moving Picture Company worked on the helicopter computer generated effects in the climactic scene of Skyfall, whilst his previous work has included Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows and Man of Steel.

David Byers-Brown, Senior Lecturer in Animation, said: ‘We are delighted to see so many former students going on to make a significant mark on the film industry, working on such huge Hollywood movies and household name franchises, such as James Bond.

‘The courses are designed with a strong focus on current professional practice, helping our graduates secure jobs at some of the best film production companies in the UK and work on some of the biggest blockbusters of all time.’

Alongside Skyfall and Les Miserables, graduates from the University’s School of Engineering and Digital Arts have become sought after recruits with many currently working on soon-to-be-released movies, including Fast and Furious 6, and ‘47 Ronin’, starring Keanu Reeves.

Several graduates from the School secure jobs in leading film production companies in the UK following undergraduate degrees in Multimedia Technology and Design or MScs in either Computer Animation or Digital Visual Effects.

The two screenwriters of Skyfall, Neil Purvis and Robert Wade, are also alumni of the University of Kent.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact Kent Innovation & Enterprise. Contact details can be found on the back of the newsletter.
To celebrate the University of Kent’s 50th anniversary in 2015 we have an exciting programme of special projects and events to mark this significant milestone in the University’s history.

All of Kent’s campuses in the UK and its centres across Europe will be fully involved in the Celebrations and we have had a tremendous response from past and present students and staff, as well as members of the local community, who want to celebrate with us.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Keith Mander said: ‘We are delighted to be able to confirm a dedicated programme of events to celebrate our 50th anniversary. The array of different activities taking place will not only offer a whole host of people the chance of being involved, but also provide an opportunity to reflect on the success and achievements of the past 50 years and plan for the next 50. We’re looking forward to each of the projects getting underway as the official start of our anniversary approaches.’

The activities include a charity trans-campus cycle ride by staff cycling between the University’s campuses and centres, including Paris, Brussels, and Rome. This is one of many fundraising events and volunteering activities which will support local charities.

Staff from The School of History and Templeman Library have teamed up with student volunteers and are busy gathering memories and photographs from Kent’s past. These projects will showcase the University’s heritage in public exhibitions and commemorative history books.

Throughout the anniversary year, there will be musical performances and concerts, a series of exciting projects from Schools including art exhibitions, and Kent Union will attempt a Guinness World Record.

The Kent Eye
The Kent Eye will be one of the biggest attractions during the 50th anniversary. It is an exciting opportunity to see the University and the city of Canterbury offering you a panoramic view of the surround areas. We will welcome everyone from Kent’s community, to enjoy this unique attraction.

The Eye will be on the Canterbury campus for 4 months in total, mid-September to mid-October 2014 and then again in summer 2015. We are expecting approximately 40,000 people (students, local community, staff and alumni) to visit this attraction over the 3 month period.

Sponsorship opportunities
We are offering businesses the opportunity to sponsor activities and events throughout the year.

For more information on the 50th anniversary celebrations please visit www.kent.ac.uk/planningfor50 or email 50years@kent.ac.uk.