



Funding aids fight to counter gun crime

Experts from Kingston's Digital Imaging Research Centre have embarked on a major project to improve the way closed circuit television is used in the battle to keep guns off Britain's streets. Drs Jean-Christophe Nebel and Dimitrios Makris have secured £186,590 of funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council to develop a CCTV system able to pinpoint the behaviour of people carrying concealed weapons.

Working in partnership with academics from Loughborough, Brighton, Liverpool and Sunderland Universities, the Kingston researchers will play a key part in developing intelligent software capable of monitoring body language and reactions. The three-year Multi-Environment Deployable Universal Software Application (MEDUSA) project is backed by the Metropolitan Police and the Firearms Partners Group and has a total budget of £620,500.

Existing technology only provided operators with the scope to detect weapons if they were somehow visible on camera, Dr Nebel said. The new product would allow CCTV systems to automatically scan footage, searching for tell-tale signs that might indicate a person was carrying a firearm and bringing them to operators' attention if necessary. "This will mean

operators will be in a better position to alert police more promptly about the possible presence of a firearm and give officers additional time to respond to a potential incident," Dr Nebel said.



Dr Jean-Christophe Nebel, left, and Dr Dimitrios Makris are set to play a key part in enhancing the capability of CCTV technology.

The first phase of the cross-institutional collaboration will involve psychologists at Loughborough studying genuine CCTV footage of people carrying hidden weapons to examine their demeanour in the lead-up to gun-associated crime. Posture, movement and eye contact with cameras will all be scrutinised. Once the information has been analysed, it will be passed to digital imaging experts at Kingston and Loughborough who have been charged with developing the identification software.

The project was particularly important since the number of firearm-related offences in the United Kingdom had been growing since the mid-1990s, Dr Makris said. Home Office statistics showed there were almost 11,000 such incidents recorded in England and Wales between 2004 and 2005, up 6 per cent on the previous year. "We hope to develop technology that will eventually be applied to the network of 6,000,000 cameras already in place in the United Kingdom, providing an easily-implemented and effective means of helping tackle a problem of national concern," he said.

Kingston's Digital Imaging Research Centre is held in high repute for its pioneering research in visual surveillance. Other advances in the use of predictive CCTV systems have already been trialled on the underground and rail network.

Alumnus savours Oscar success



Claire Billett makes some final touches to one of the characters from the Oscar-award winning film Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.

A Kingston illustration graduate has had special reason to celebrate the Oscar success of box-office hit Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit. Claire Billett, who worked for two years on the Aardman Animation production, is the hands and brains behind Were-Rabbit characters Victor and Lady Tottington.

"I didn't know which company had won the award for best animated film until I switched on the television the morning after the Oscar ceremony in March and I was so proud to hear the news," she recalled. "Going to the premiere and seeing your work on the big screen is a real high point of the job, especially on a major project like Were-Rabbit, so for the team to get an Oscar on top of that was just amazing. Everyone at Aardman is a perfectionist striving to make each production as good as possible and I think the Oscar is a real tribute to that dedication."

The 29-year-old character animator is no stranger to success. Her work on the film also saw her carry off a prestigious award all of her own – the ANNIE, which is the animation industry's equivalent of an Oscar – in January. "Winning the ANNIE was such an honour, especially since it can be quite challenging trying to convey characters' thoughts and emotions so viewers forget they are looking at puppets and believe in them as individuals," she said.

Ms Billett started working at Aardman's Bristol base shortly after graduating in 1998, launching her career

on the company's first feature film, Chicken Run. She is now in the throes of creating new children's series Shaun the Sheep, using stop-motion animation techniques which require meticulous attention to detail. "It can often take a whole day to make two seconds or less of finished animation. I place the puppets in position, take one frame, move the characters just a fraction, then take another frame," she said.

The focus of the Kingston illustration course, and especially her tutors, had provided the perfect foundation for her career, Ms Billett said. "Because the lecturers were practising professionals, they were always keen to push us as students to achieve to industry standards. The intensity of the course was invaluable and the strong work ethic created a real atmosphere of creativity on campus," she said. "I think the fact my Kingston degree had a strong emphasis on drawing helped me a lot in terms of observation, which has turned out to be crucial to the kind of animation I do."

Ms Billett won her first animation accolade during those early days at Kingston, scooping the Royal Television Society's National Student Award. Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture technical officer Brian Ackland remembers her as an outstanding student with a real passion for her chosen subject. "It's no surprise Claire has gone on to award-winning success so early in her career," Mr Ackland said.

Inside ■ V-C's Column ■ Accolade for Automotive Engineering Student ■ Research Awards ■ Events



■ **Building Work Takes Shape**

page 3



■ **Graduate Tops London Teaching League**

page 4



■ **Festival Fosters Creative Thinking**

page 5



■ **Facilitator Increases Emphasis On Sustainability**

page 7

V-C'S COLUMN

The New University Project is dead – long live the NUP. That was my, admittedly second and more considered, reaction to the news that Surrey County Council had pulled out of the Private Finance Initiative deal to build a new headquarters in Woking (which means – almost certainly – that it will have to stay in County Hall for the moment, which means it can't sell it to the University). My first reactions, of course, were disappointment and frustration.

The NUP was always conceived of as more than just another big estates project, although understandably a lot of people tended to regard it as a (rather pretentious?) code-word for buying and converting County Hall (plus some other bits and pieces). Now, with the collapse of the County Hall deal, we can no longer regard the NUP in that light. So we have a choice – to junk the NUP (not the detailed estates projects, of course, just the 'big idea') or to re-launch it.

My vote goes for a re-launch. There are two main reasons:

- First, buildings (and the spaces in, around and between them) are machines in which people work, relate to each other, live; they are not just trophies in brick and concrete and glass. This is true of all buildings but especially true of university buildings. Built in, literally, are values – social values, design values and, of course, intellectual values. A simple point maybe – but it means that to get our estates right we have to be clear about our business strategy (and, above all, our academic strategy);
- Secondly, as I have often said, the NUP offers Kingston its best – and maybe only – opportunity to become a new university (not in the ex-polytechnic sense, but a new kind of university). We have tried to sum that up in the phrase civic university – not, of course, as a reprise of the old Victorian prototype but describing a university for the 21st Century that rescues the idea of a public university from the perils of creeping privatisation, is dynamic, innovative, creative. . . You get the (rhetorical) idea!

So, far from junking the New University Project, we should try to expand it to embrace all the University's key priorities. In my view the NUP covers:

- Student growth – Sometimes people assume we need more students because we need more income to pay for new or better buildings. I see it the other way round. We need new and better buildings to provide a better experience for our existing students but also to reach out to new students who should be given the opportunity to go to university. So the important thing is not more income but widening participation. Kingston should be – and is – an opportunity university;
- Internationalisation – Again this is not just a matter of recruiting more international students to increase our income (although that is very important) but the need to make the University more outward-facing, more open to the world. Higher education is not just a global business. Many students now pursue international careers; they need and deserve a more international experience. Also, as we all know, research has to be of international standard to count for much in the Research Assessment Exercise (and, more importantly, creative research and scholarship needs to reflect diverse intellectual traditions);
- Learning and teaching and new 'maps of learning' – There are two ideas embedded in



the concept of the NUP. The first is that students will learn in new ways – not just using new learning technologies (although these are bound to be become much more important – even if you discount some of the hype about e-learning) but also evolving new social configurations of learning – for example, more fluid boundaries between formal and informal

learning. The second is that some of the most significant course developments will be produced by new synergies, between disciplines but also between academic and practice environments;

- Research and enterprise – Maybe an artificial distinction because one feeds off the other, although in complex ways. Rather, as with internationalisation, if Kingston is to realise its full potential as a university, research is key. It provides a vital edge, a stimulus to (even) higher aspirations, across the whole range of academic work. But, as I've written in other places, traditional research is just part of a much wider spectrum of activity that includes application, innovation and creativity;
- Relationships – Establishing the three-way alliance with St George's and Royal Holloway (building on the existing St George's-Kingston alliance), deepening and strengthening our links with our further education college partners by creating a lifelong learning network, developing our relationships with industrial and community partners – all these are part of the NUP too (physically because they may impact on our plans for new buildings, but academically and organisationally because they create the strategic context which determines our trajectory as an academic organisation);
- Restructuring, both academic and administrative – There are strong links between the recent changes in the academic structure of the University (and the current changes in its administrative structure) and the NUP – although these changes cannot be treated as an exact template for the configuration of the University's estate. The former were designed to make Kingston as fit for academic purpose as possible; the latter to produce not just administrative reform but to help change the organisational culture. The NUP is also about both these things.

I could go on. This list is far from comprehensive. The points I want to emphasise are, first, that the NUP is not dead; and, secondly, that, far from being dead, it is more alive than ever. We did not choose the title – New University Project – simply as a rather grand label to describe the development of the University's estate, crucial as that is because there seems to be general agreement that the current condition of our estate is a serious deficit (although we have developed most of the substance of a university, we still lack a university 'presence'). We chose it to make a confident statement about our commitment to developing Kingston itself as a successful 21st Century university, in tune with the aspirations set out in our mission statement. Those words about 'democratic entitlement', 'creativity', 'firing the imagination' – written by us, remember, not a public relations or image consultant – sum up what we're trying to achieve with the NUP.

Professor Peter Scott
Vice-Chancellor
p.scott@kingston.ac.uk

IN THE NEWS

Conference explores advances in learning and teaching

New measures to help students make the most of their time in higher education topped the agenda at the University's 2006 Learning and Teaching Conference. Organised by the Academic Development Centre, the annual event reviewed recent initiatives to improve undergraduates' first year experiences and examined fresh approaches to enhancing pastoral care and student retention. More than 140 course directors, field leaders, faculty and department representatives debated changing expectations of course provision, using results from the National Student Survey to set the scene. They also explored ways of making students feel more actively involved in wider university life.

Keynote speakers Elaine Smith and Barry Beggs from Glasgow Caledonian University opened the conference outlining their institution's success in reducing drop-out rates. Kingston's new Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary Stuart, also shared her views on the factors vital in ensuring student satisfaction. Other conference highlights included a session led by Ian Smith from De Montfort



University explaining ways of using feedback to improve course delivery and a presentation on the Kingston experience from Students' Union representative Chris Ford.

Associate Head of the Academic Development Centre Marion Webb said the conference had provided delegates with a valuable opportunity to share examples of good practice from across the institution. "The participants recognised that it was becoming increasingly important for them to pool their knowledge and keep up to date with latest trends in an era where students want to be sure their education equips them with the right qualifications to launch a successful career," she added.

Appointment promotes economic potential of island state

A Kingston honorary graduate has added a new diplomatic responsibility to his credentials. David Doyle, who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration in 2004, is now representing the interests of the small island nation of St Kitts and Nevis in France. Serving as honorary consul, he will assist the Caribbean state's Government in identifying new opportunities for increasing exports.

A former Irish civil servant, Dr Doyle has worked in French diplomatic circles for more than 30 years.



Honorary graduate Dr David Doyle has taken on new diplomatic duties representing the interests of the Caribbean nation of St Kitts and Nevis in France.

He intends to draw on his experience championing small business in Europe in an effort to transform the economic fortunes of St Kitts and Nevis. "The country is currently facing a crisis as a result of a loss of preferential tariffs for commodities such as sugar. This has led to job losses and the demise of a 300-year-old industry," Dr Doyle explained. "My role will involve attracting inward investment, promoting tourism and increasing general awareness of the islands to help redress the effects of the downturn."

Dr Doyle believes a number of similarities exist between Ireland as it was more than 30 years ago and the current situation in St Kitts and Nevis. "Ireland has undergone a transformation during the past three decades to boast a modern, innovative and successful economy. As an island state, it overcame many of the challenges facing St Kitts and Nevis. I am looking forward to using the skills I acquired representing Irish trade interests in France to aid the islands' prosperity," Dr Doyle said.

Researcher gains international recognition

A senior lecturer from the School of Life Sciences has been appointed to the editorial boards of two medical journals with a worldwide readership. Dr Gulfaraz Khan, a cellular pathology specialist, will review and commission articles for publication in the Pakistan Journal of Pathology and the Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences.

A rising star in research charting the viral pathology of cancer, Dr Khan has devoted much of his career to investigating the effect of the Epstein-Barr virus in the development of lymphoid malignancies. After completing a PhD at Bart's Medical College in London, he undertook post-doctoral study in Boston before completing further research at the University of Glasgow, where he looked at the role of the Epstein-Barr virus in Hodgkin's lymphoma.

A member of academic staff at Kingston for the past 18 months, Dr Khan said his editorial appointments reflected the high regard in which the University's School of Life Sciences was held. "The medical sciences' journal attracts articles from around the world and its board consists of experts from as far afield as the United States and the United Kingdom. The Journal of Pathology,

meanwhile, serves as the official publication of the Pakistan Association of Pathologists. It is a tremendous honour to be asked to work on two such influential periodicals read by academic peers around the world," he said.

Dr Khan hopes the experience could also lead to his involvement in new international research collaborations. "Working in partnership with experts from other countries is particularly important on medically-orientated projects because the causes, development and incidence of a disease can vary considerably between different geographical locations," he explained.



Kingston academic Dr Gulfaraz Khan has been appointed to the editorial boards of two medical journals produced in Pakistan.

New look for University website

Almost 3,000 new pages have been added to the University's website to ensure it provides prospective students, their parents and teachers with an indispensable research tool. Major changes include a high-impact home page, improved accessibility to key content and an undergraduate section targeted more specifically to its audience's needs. Virtual tours of Kingston's four campuses, updated photography and more detailed information about the University, its facilities and the local area are among other features.

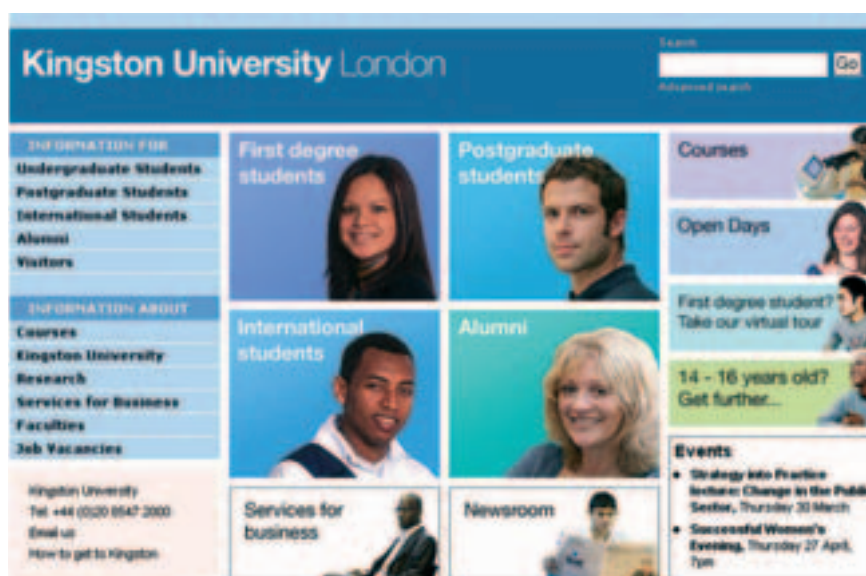
The revamp has taken place following extensive research commissioned to give the University a thorough understanding of what students expected when they visited websites while planning their move to higher education. Head of Marketing and Communications Gillian Squires said it had been clear from the findings that students wanted quick and easy access to information, firstly about courses followed closely by other topics likely to have a major impact on their lives, such as accommodation and money matters. "The respondents emphasised that they wanted material in one place and in a consistent format, so we have tailored the undergraduate section of the website to do exactly that," Ms Squires said.

Headed by the web team based in the Marketing and Communications section within the Department of External Affairs, the project took seven months to complete. It also involved members of staff from across the University, who contributed additional course material, student and alumni profiles and career information.

One of the biggest parts of the project involved moving the prospectus online, following the purchase of the Rhythmx Content Management System. Web manager David Gilbert said the database provided staff across the University with a more efficient means of modifying their course pages instantaneously. "This ensures students are now able to log on and view a definitive, up-to-date version of the prospectus at any point in the year," Mr Gilbert said.

Initial feedback from users had been very encouraging, Mr Gilbert added. "Not all students are able to attend open days, especially those living abroad, so the new features give them a real flavour of where they will be studying and living without even having to move away from their computer terminals," he said.

A second phase of website redevelopment is now under way, focusing on postgraduate, international, alumni and newsroom content.



The University's remodelled website contains more detailed information for students considering enrolling for a Kingston degree.

Redevelopment work gathers pace

Activity has stepped up on two major construction projects at the Penrhyn Road campus. A new six-storey quadrangle building and a state-of-the-art centre for sustainable education are set to transform the site into a modern town-centre campus by the end of 2007.

Estates project manager Neil Woodcock said contractors Dean and Dyball had started work on the quadrangle complex earlier this year, following demolition of an outdated workshop block. The structure will include three lecture theatres along with dedicated information technology and teaching space.



The company's first task has been to prepare the area prior to the foundations being laid. "Work on the main body will proceed shortly before cabling is laid," Mr Woodcock said. The building is expected to be ready for use from September 2007.

Elsewhere on site, the development of the Centre for Sustainable Communities Achieved through Integrated Professional Education (C-SCAIPE) has been progressing to plan. Financed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, it is one of 18 centres of excellence in teaching and learning being established across the country. Preparatory work in the section of the Main Building where the centre would be based was nearing completion, Mr Woodcock said. The ground floor had been completely stripped and 50 per cent of the partitions removed to open up space for a large debating chamber and lecture area. An interactive learning resources centre would also be created.

The centre would serve as a model of the way buildings could incorporate elements of sustainable design, Mr Woodcock said. "Everything from the drainage system, where we are using cast iron instead of plastic pipes, to the timber worktops and floor tiles, which are made of 80 per cent recycled material, has been chosen for its sustainable characteristics," he said. C-SCAIPE is due to open in August.

Contractors have been clearing part of the Penrhyn Road campus to make way for construction of the new quadrangle building.



Government grant to boost alumni activity

The University has secured £357,000 from the Department for Education and Skills after being selected to take part in a new Government scheme to encourage private donors to support higher education. The money will be allocated to Kingston during the next three years as part of a £7.5 million pilot project involving 27 institutions across the United Kingdom. The initiative is expected to spawn a number of mutually-beneficial relationships with such stakeholders as alumni and industrial partners.

Kingston's funding allocation of £119,000 a year saw it join Cranfield, Bath, Nottingham Trent and De Montfort Universities at the top of the awards list. Each successful institution will match the Government funding, in Kingston's case meaning more than £700,000 will be pumped into new activity by the end of 2009.

Alumni and events manager Dr Helen Trott, whose team was responsible for the successful bid, said the funding acknowledged the strides Kingston had made forging links with former students. "We now have a flourishing alumni association with more than 87,000 graduates on our books and are keen to make contact with more, particularly those from the 1960s and 1970s," she said.

Alumni were playing an ever-increasing role in activity at the University, Dr Trott added. Many came back to undertake further study and attend cultural events, became involved with course projects or lecturing, gave careers advice to current students or helped financially through donations. "These activities in turn promote lifelong learning and encourage a new generation of students to enrol at Kingston," she said. "The additional funding will put us in the perfect position to further strengthen this circle of learning."

Scheme ensures mathematics counts in the classroom

Eight mathematics students have been putting their lecture theatre learning into practice by sharing numerical knowledge with pupils at schools across the borough. They have become the University's first participants in the Undergraduate Ambassadors Scheme, established to boost the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates moving on to careers in teaching.

As part of a 10-week programme, the Kingston students have been paying a series of visits to Hollyfield School in Surbiton, Coombe Girls' School in New Malden and Chessington Community College. Principal lecturer Nigel Atkins said the nationwide initiative added a vital vocational dimension to degree-level learning. "By taking a hands-on role in classroom



Undergraduate Ambassadors Scheme participant Bozena Miller has gained an insight into teaching mathematics at Hollyfield School in Surbiton.

activities, second and third year students from the University have been able to see for themselves that mathematics continues to play an important part in the modern-day school curriculum," he said. "They have also been developing their communication skills explaining concepts to children of different ages while acquiring a first-hand view of the challenges teachers encounter and the fulfilment that can come from doing the job well."

Mature student Bozena Miller, who has been working with Year 7 and 9 pupils at Hollyfield School, said assisting with a range of exercises and giving special attention to young people with language difficulties and special needs had proven more rewarding than she had anticipated. The experience had made her more determined than ever to train as a teacher once she had graduated,

she added. "I have really been enjoying interacting with the pupils and being able to make maths come alive for them. It's been especially satisfying when I've succeeded in explaining a difficult problem to them," she said.

Hollyfield's head of mathematics, Andrew Newton, praised Bozena's enthusiasm in the classroom. "We have gained an enormous amount from having another person who is passionate about maths at the school. Bozena has become a real asset in my department—even volunteering to come in during the Easter break to provide extra help for pupils sitting their GCSEs next term," he said. "Her presence has provided an excellent role model for the pupils, many of whom have been inspired to think more seriously about the advantages of completing a degree themselves."

Graduate takes trophy for top class teaching

Year 1 pupils at Tolworth Infant School have very good reason to pay attention when they set to work mastering the finer points of reading, writing and arithmetic each day. The person guiding the five and six year olds through their lessons has been named the latest winner of the Teacher Training Agency Award for Outstanding New Teacher in London.

With just three years' teaching experience to her name, Kingston alumnus Anita Maynard still finds it hard to conceive she could have received such an accolade although she admits to being passionate about education. Before joining the staff at Tolworth Infants, she was



Tolworth Infant School pupils, from left, Cameron Finlay Hylton, five, and Muhaimin Khan and Tara Clegg, both six, are among the children benefiting from Anita Maynard's award-winning teaching skills.

already well known around the school after six years as a teaching assistant. It was at that point that the mother of three started to consider taking an even more active involvement, signing up for evening classes and then enrolling at Kingston University where she received a first class degree from the School of Education.

On her return to Tolworth Infants, Ms Maynard's aptitude soon impressed two of her colleagues so much they nominated her for the Teacher Training Agency trophy. Fellow teacher Rebecca Helene credits Ms Maynard with making a huge difference to the performance of the 30 young charges in her class, particularly through her use of drama and play to make the curriculum come alive. "Every child in Anita's class last year underwent a complete turn around. She really is able to work

miracles, motivating any pupil with her positive and calm attitude," Mrs Helene said.

The Teaching Awards panel echoed those sentiments, noting that Ms Maynard possessed an exemplary enthusiasm for education and flair for teaching. "She is a natural teacher with gifts and talents to make real progress in the profession," the judges added.

Now on a fast-track programme for prospective principals, Ms Maynard is heavily involved in the management of her school. Her first love, however, remains the classroom. "At my Kingston University interview, the panel asked me what the three most important attributes were for a teacher," she said. "My answer then still stands now. I believe a teacher needs to be patient, consistent and they must have a sense of humour. That is the philosophy I apply to my work every day."

Theatre company makes its debut

Three drama graduates have been so inspired by their Kingston degree studies that they have launched their own theatre company. Anni Rhodes, Charlotte Johnson and Nicola Stockley have joined forces to take a range of original work to the stage. Performing as the Why'd Theatre Company, they have already earned critical acclaim for their production of *Hidden Identity*, one of the highlights of the Think in Kingston festival in March.

Ms Rhodes, who has penned the company's first productions, still finds it hard to believe the direction her life has taken. After raising her family and running her own business, she enrolled at Kingston intent on majoring in English. However, a chance visit to the School of Performance and Screen Studies' Reg Bailey Theatre during her first day on campus put paid to those plans. Before she knew it, she was setting to work on a drama degree.

The three Why'd members formed a firm friendship during the course of their studies. "We

performed in nooks and crannies all over campus which provided a wonderful opportunity to hone our technique and were even part of a production at the Edinburgh Festival," Ms Rhodes said. "Belonging to the Performance Initiative Network run by Kingston and a group of partner London universities also gave us tremendous scope to develop our work."

The Head of the University's School of Performance and Screen Studies, Frank Whately, is not surprised the trio has moved on to the professional circuit with such ease. "Anni, Charlotte and Nicola are among Kingston's best drama graduates and I'm confident their talent will see them make a name for themselves in acting circles," he said.

The company members are now gearing up for their next performances during the Leatherhead Drama Festival in May. Meanwhile, Ms Rhodes is also immersed in writing her fourth script, for a children's play the company hopes to take on tour around schools.



A shared passion for the dramatic arts has to led to Kingston graduates Nicola Stockley, left Charlotte Johnson, centre, and Anni Rhodes forming their own theatre company.

Award winner flies the flag for female engineers

A Kingston student's drive to succeed in a male-dominated occupation has been recognised with a top industry accolade. Automotive engineering student Kiara Harper has become the proud holder of the Ford WISE award, which honours high-achieving female undergraduates in the penultimate year of their studies.

As part of the selection process for the trophy, 20-year-old Kiara had to explain to a panel of professional engineers how she would cope working in an industry where most employees were men. "Being the only female in a course intake of 36 students, I told them I was already quite used to being in a largely male environment and the experience had simply made me even more determined to do well," she said. "After all, engineering isn't only about oily rags and overalls – it's actually a highly technical profession just as suitable for women."

Having completed the first two years of her Kingston degree course, Kiara is now developing further hands-on skills as part of a year-long work placement with engine manufacturer Cummins. "I've also been involved in the company's scheme to promote engineering in schools in Daventry and I've really enjoyed talking to pupils about my experiences," she said. "I wish someone had filled me in on the opportunities open to women in this field when I was still at school."

Away from the classroom, Kiara is a motorsport enthusiast. A regular at the Grand Prix, one of her career goals is to help design and test vehicles for a leading Formula One team. "Motorsport is one of the most competitive industries to break into and, whether you are male or female, you have to be at the very top of your field to stand a chance," she said. "I'm prepared to start at the bottom, though, and work my way up gradually."

The University's field leader in automotive engineering, Denis Marchant, said Kiara's attitude and commitment had made her an obvious contender for the Ford WISE award. "She lives and breathes the subject and is an excellent role model always ready to help at open days and induction events," he said.



Automotive engineering student Kiara Harper has been highlighting the opportunities open to women in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Festival stimulates thought-provoking discussion

The challenges posed in a knowledge-based era were explored in detail during a packed programme of activity organised as part of the second Think in Kingston festival. Billed as a celebration of ideas, the six-week event was organised by Kingston Council with backing from the University and a range of other organisations.

The Council's principal arts officer, Colin Bloxham, said the festival themes reflected the fact that, in the 21st Century, innovation and creativity were more important than ever in helping to address issues affecting modern communities. "They provided us with the scope to bring borough residents into contact with some of the many inspiring intellectuals and policy-makers that we have in Kingston, both employed at the University and living and working in our neighbourhoods," he said.

Alumni and events manager Dr Helen Trott said the festival had given the University the perfect platform to share information about academic advances and research developments. Highlights included a discourse between the University's Chancellor, internationally-acclaimed theatre director Sir Peter Hall and his namesake, Sir Peter Hall, a professor at the Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning at University College London. Bringing together two of the most pre-eminent thinkers in their fields to discuss the contribution culture made to the quality of urban life had attracted considerable audience interest, Dr Trott said.

The series of debates, discussions and performances featured in the festival had spurred many borough residents to reassess the role they could play in the community, Dr Trott added. "Throughout the festival, discussion focused not just on infrastructure, but on the regeneration of the town centre, fresh approaches to schooling and simple steps to improve the quality of everyday life," she said. "The consensus was that everyone in the community could contribute to making Kingston a more stimulating place in which to live."

Festival workshops also attracted a high level of media interest, even prompting a BBC Newsnight crew to film a front garden barbecue in Surbiton as part of a segment exploring new approaches to engendering community spirit. The publicity, which followed the release of the People Make Places research report, raised the profile of work



Nine-year-old Isabelle Eyres put her talents to the test at a Stanley Picker Gallery Saturday Art Club session staged during the Think in Kingston Festival.

being undertaken at the University's Centre for Suburban Studies and think-tank Demos. University research fellow Dr Nick Hubble said the attention confirmed that the subject was now being taken more seriously. "We have moved beyond old stereotypical associations that are no longer relevant to recognising that suburbs are now much more vibrant sites of social mobility and ethnic diversity," he explained.



A film crew from BBC Newsnight highlighted new approaches to suburban living as part of coverage connected to the Think in Kingston Festival programme. Photo: Deadlinepix/Kingston Guardian

Shared knowledge creates stronghold in the marketplace

A new business venture has seen its fortunes soar after technology created as part of a Kingston University Knowledge Transfer Partnership was purchased by the Hilton Hotel chain. The accommodation giant has commissioned The FMCompany to install its touch screen site terminals in 60 hotels in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The multi-lingual online system, set up to streamline facilities management, was developed when engineering consultancy Lerch, Bates and Associates approached the University's Enterprise Exchange for support. The link soon led to software engineering graduate Andrew Lewin and marketing postgraduate Richard Cooper being commissioned to turn a prototype already patented by the company into a commercially-viable product.

Known as KTP associates, the pair set to work establishing an internet-based device able to share information about maintenance requests among landlords, insurance companies, contractors and other users. University staff members Dr Andy Curley, Professor Wendy Lomax and principal lecturer Helen Robinson added academic input as the technology and associated strategies to introduce the product to the marketplace took shape.

Just two years after the project's completion, The FMCompany, set-up as a stand-alone concern as the innovation evolved, is now valued in excess of £5 million. It has offices in Covent Garden and employs a team of sales, programming and management staff catering for a growing list of blue-chip clients. Mr Lewin, who still works for the company, said the experience broadened both his technical and commercial skills. "The expertise and business support Richard and I were able to access through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership ensured we were able to rise to the challenge of delivering a user-friendly, revenue-generating product," he said.

The successful outcome has also brought other rewards. The University and Lerch, Bates and Associates collected a Knowledge Transfer Partnership Award from then Trade and Industry Secretary Alan Johnson in March. At a ceremony which also marked the 30th anniversary of the knowledge transfer initiative, Mr Johnson commended the programme for giving companies across the United Kingdom three decades of vital practical assistance. "If we want to keep our competitive edge in the modern global economy, this type of collaboration between businesses and educational institutions needs to become the norm," he added.



Knowledge Transfer Partnership facilitators Dr Andy Curley and Helen Robinson have helped the University receive official recognition for the success of its industry collaborations.

New research projects under way

Academic staff have commenced their latest round of research projects after securing backing from a variety of funders.

Grant Holder	School/Centre	Project Title	Funding Body	Amount/Duration
Dr W Skok	Business Information Management	Application of Internet Technologies for Competitive Advantage	Department of Trade and Industry Knowledge Transfer Partnership	£102,872 – two years
Dr P Remagnino	Computing and Information Systems	Visual Modelling of Peoples' Behaviours and Interactions for Professional Training	United States Air Force Office of Scientific Research	£25,300 – one year
Dr H Tenenbaum	Social Science	The Influence of Explanatory Conversations on Children's Emotional Understanding	British Academy	£6,248 – one year
Professor M Hart	Small Business Research Centre	Evaluation of Regional Selective Assistance and its Successor, Selective Finance for Investment	Department of Trade and Industry	£68,684 – eight months
Dr J-C Nebel	Computing and Information Systems	MEDUSA: Multi-Environment Deployable Universal Software Application	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council	£186,590 – three years
Dr A Petroczi	Life Sciences	EUResist: Integration of Viral Genomics with Clinical Data to Predict Response to Anti-HIV Treatment	European Union	£60,000 – 30 months
Dr J Orwell	Computing and Information Systems	CARETAKER – Content Analysis and Retrieval Technologies to Apply Knowledge Extraction to Massive Recording	European Union Framework Six Programme	£235,000 – 30 months
Professor I Favretto	Social Science	Promoting Reconciliation Through Youth	European Union Marie Curie Action	£104,570 – two years
Professor J Wen	Engineering	HYFIRE: Hydrogen Combustion in the Context of Fire and Explosion	European Union Marie Curie Action	£670,000 – four years
Professor R Blackburn	Small Business Research Centre	Visiting Fellowship 2005-6 – Dr Jarna Heinonen	Leverhulme Trust	£17,660 – nine months
Professor N Pettford	Earth Sciences and Geography	Core Formation Under Dynamic Conditions: A Combined Numerical and Experimental Investigation of Metallic Liquid Segregation	Royal Society	£6,800 – one year
Professor C Edwards	Human Resource Management	Human Resource Management in the Media in China	Tsinghua University, China	£18,000 – one year

Report reveals bankruptcy remains a last resort

The assistant director of Kingston's Centre for Insolvency Law and Policy has cast doubt on suggestions that bankruptcy is on the rise because it is regarded as an easy way to escape financial woes. In a pilot study released earlier this year, senior lecturer John Tribe, who is based at Kingston's Law School, found that many debtors in England and Wales would go to great lengths to avoid being declared bankrupt. He also noted that the causes were far more complex than sometimes perceived.

More than half the respondents sampled as part of the Bankruptcy Courts Survey 2005 attributed their predicament to an inability to manage credit, Mr Tribe said. Business failure, divorce, illness and redundancy were the next most-frequently cited factors. Commissioned by the Insolvency Service as part of its evaluation of Enterprise Act reforms that came into effect in 2004, the report concluded that most individuals declared bankrupt felt they had little if any practical alternative.

Modifications to the Enterprise Act had brought the discharge period for bankrupts down from three years to one, reducing the time they had to wait to once again become eligible for credit, Mr Tribe said. However, the research had demonstrated that changes to the law had not made being declared bankrupt any more palatable a prospect. "There appears to be as much of a stigma attached to bankrupts as there was 500 years ago when they were labelled 'evil-minded' by the Bankruptcy Act of 1543," Mr Tribe said. "It is certainly not as easy an option as some lending institutions would make out – in fact most people would do anything to avoid becoming bankrupt to the point where some take drastic measures."

Given a 30 per cent rise in bankruptcies between the second and third quarters in 2005, Mr Tribe maintains that the conduct of lenders should be reappraised. "A credit agreement is a two-sided contract and therefore it could be argued that both the debtor and the bank are equally culpable. Some of the 995 bankrupts I interviewed had been given credit when it was clear they were in no position to make repayments," he said.

Mr Tribe has taken his findings all the way to the Scottish Parliament, where politicians are considering adopting similar reforms. "Through the evidence collated during my research, I was able to demonstrate that claims shortening the discharge period had led to an increase in bankruptcies didn't take into consideration the fact that irresponsible lending was occurring. I was encouraged to see that my address stimulated some lively debate in the chamber."

A dearth of researchers studying personal insolvency in the United Kingdom was worrying given the growth of debt nationally, Mr Tribe said. "This means Britain lacks a lobby group similar to that in America where there are more academics specialising in insolvency acting as a watchdog on financial institutions. Without being held to account, unscrupulous lenders could encourage an overly easy credit environment," he said.



Senior lecturer John Tribe has discovered changes to the law have not resulted in bankruptcy being viewed as an easier means of escaping debt.

Academic accomplishments

The University has announced the latest recipients of its prestigious research degrees.

Anthony Escott has become a Doctor of Philosophy after examining the work of 'Alan Cuthbert: Colour Theory and Practice'.

John Hudson has been named a Doctor of Philosophy after completing a study entitled 'Alan Ayckbourn: Subverting the Form'.

Etienne Corvee has become a Doctor of Philosophy after 'Investigating Optical Flow and Tracking Techniques for Recovering Motion within Image Sequences'.

Facilitator strengthens focus on sustainability



New sustainability facilitator Nicola Corrigan has been raising awareness about Fairtrade products and recycling issues across the University.

Nicola Corrigan is a woman with a mission. The University's newly-appointed sustainability facilitator is determined to ensure environmental responsibility is embedded at the heart of all activity and decision-making on campus.

With a job role that encompasses tackling a range of social, community and resource issues, Ms Corrigan is already making her mark. She has just helped the institution succeed in its bid to achieve Fairtrade status, recognising its support for goods produced using ethical business practices, and is also hard at work promoting greater energy efficiency and recycling. She said her appointment signalled the University's commitment to taking even greater responsibility for the impact it had on the local community and the environment. "Kingston is already recognised as a leader in this field, particularly through its work on the sustainable curriculum," she said. "My aim now is to make sure all students and staff are aware of actions they can and should take to preserve the planet for future generations."

Previously head of an award-winning environment team at the University of Hertfordshire, Ms Corrigan is well aware of the significant effect a large educational establishment can have on the surrounding area. An organisation as big as Kingston University not only consumed significant quantities of water and energy, but also faced transport issues and needed to make important considerations when purchasing goods, she said.

Ms Corrigan firmly believes the University has an obligation to help ease pressure on local roads and develop sustainable travel. She intends to draw on data collected from a survey assessing the ways staff and students get to the University's four campuses in her bid to change attitudes and increase support for the institution's Travel Plan. "It's inevitable that people will sometimes need to use cars, but what I hope to do is raise awareness of alternative transport options that are more environmentally-friendly," she said. "Even by considering car sharing just one day a week, it's possible for people to make a huge difference."

Recycling is also a pivotal part of Ms Corrigan's remit. Long term she aims to raise the University's rate above the national target of 25 per cent. "Recycling should still however be the last resort," she said. "I'm encouraging staff and students to be more mindful of keeping waste to a minimum in the first place and to think more about reusing products in other ways before they turn to recycling. Every time something is thrown away it costs the University money for disposal which could be better spent elsewhere."

The future behaviour and decisions of students with regard to sustainability would be shaped by what they learned from their campus experiences and through the leadership of the institution, Ms Corrigan added. "Kingston University has a strong tradition of academic research in sustainability and it is important that this knowledge and experience continues to be put into practice on campus and in the local community to provide a positive example of the good things that can be achieved," she said.

Academic takes action to restore urban rivers

A senior lecturer is spearheading a campaign to help communities rediscover what he believes is one of their most precious resources. Dr Stuart Downward, who is based in the School of Earth Sciences and Geography, has been providing the Environment Agency and local councils with expert advice in a bid to restore rivers in city settings.

The presence of a clean, picturesque river played a crucial role in urban regeneration as it encouraged people to forge a strong bond with nature and their surroundings, Dr Downward explained. "Rivers and parks are among the last bastions of nature in built-up areas and the authorities are now beginning to realise exactly how important it is to protect and improve them," he said. "Rivers bring all sorts of benefits to communities, not just in terms of making the environment more pleasant and encouraging wildlife. They also have enormous educational value for schoolchildren, for example, and provide a venue for recreational activities."

Many rivers had been swallowed up by urban encroachment over the years, Dr Downward said. "In some towns and cities, rivers have literally been forced underground and forgotten about, so people have become divorced from nature," he explained. "I'm keen to see them returned to their former glory to recreate that link."

Improving contaminated waterways is also high on Dr Downward's agenda. He has already seen his recommendations for transforming the Wandle Park Channel in South West London become a reality. When called in to survey the site 10 years ago, Dr Downward found a clogged stretch of water running between ugly concrete banks. "In the past, the council would probably have viewed the river as a health hazard and built over it but now thinking is more enlightened," he said. "During a five-year period the concrete was removed and water quality improved. It's now a clean river where wildlife flourish and heron come to fish." Another recent project has resulted in the River Quaggy – once driven underground by urban sprawl – restored in Lewisham's Sutcliffe Park, where it now occupies a prominent position as a wildlife and wetlands area.

Dr Downward acknowledges river restoration can present some risks. The possibility of pollution and flooding, especially in dense urban areas, had to be considered along with public safety issues, he said. However, there were likely to be even more dangers if nothing was done. By encasing a river in concrete, the problem of contamination, for example, was not being solved.

The next project on Dr Downward's list is advising on the clean-up and restoration of the River Lea in East London, which is part of a multi-million pound regeneration project before the 2012 Olympics. "This is a huge opportunity to revitalise a long-neglected river and show the rest of the world how such work re-energises both the environment and the whole community," he said.



Senior lecturer Stuart Downward has been championing the importance of rivers in British cities.

Exhibitions and Events...

SPRING 2006

EXHIBITIONS

THURSDAY 11 – SATURDAY 13 MAY

School of Humanities and School of Performance and Screen Studies Degree Show – Showcasing a selection of students' work, including big-screen films and digital media projections, creative writing and interactive digital installations.
Reg Bailey Building, Penrhyn Road campus

UNTIL SATURDAY 3 JUNE

The Kingston Turnpike – Featuring artwork by Philip Akkerman, A K Dolven, Annelies Štrba, Andrew Bick and Tal R.
Stanley Picker Gallery, Middle Mill, Knights Park

TUESDAY 13 – SATURDAY 24 JUNE

London Orbital – Providing perspectives on urban and suburban living through exhibits from lecturers, research fellows, PhD students and visiting professors at the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture.
Stanley Picker Gallery, Middle Mill, Knights Park

Gallery opening times: Tuesday-Friday 12.00–6.00pm; Saturday 12.00–4.00pm; Monday by appointment only

WEDNESDAY 14 – THURSDAY 22 JUNE

Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture Undergraduate Degree Show – Featuring work by students graduating from the Schools of Architecture and Landscape, Art and Design History, Fine Art, Design and the Department of Fashion.
Knights Park campus

Opening times: Monday-Friday 10.30am–8.30pm; Saturday 10.30am–4.00pm; closed Sunday

EVENTS: MAY

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY

1.15pm **Lunchtime concert** – Hosted by the School of Music, featuring the newly-formed Kingston University Guitar Ensemble.
Coombehurst Studio, Kingston Hill campus

FRIDAY 12 MAY

4.00pm **The Future of the United Nations Genocide Convention** – Part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Rights Seminar Series.
Guest speaker Linda Melvern, Honorary Fellow at the University of Wales.
Room TH10, Penrhyn Road campus

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY

1.00 – 3.00pm **Is Human Rights Useful for Improving Development Policies and Practice?** – Part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Rights Seminar Series.
Guest speaker Marta Foresti, programme manager for Rights in Action and research fellow at the Overseas Development Institute.
Room TH113, Penrhyn Road campus

1.15pm **Lunchtime concert** – Hosted by the School of Music, featuring the Kingston University Wind Orchestra.
Coombehurst Studio, Kingston Hill campus

6.30pm **Local Residents' Meeting** – An opportunity for residents to hear about the University's plans, meet senior staff and discuss issues of mutual interest.
Picton Room, Penrhyn Road campus

TUESDAY 23 MAY

1.15pm **Lunchtime concert** – Hosted by the School of Music, featuring the Kingston University Chorus.
Coombehurst Studio, Kingston Hill campus

SATURDAY 27 MAY

7.30pm **Evening concert** – Featuring the Kingston University Chorus and Orchestra.
Surbiton Assembly Rooms, Maple Road, Kingston

EVENTS: JUNE

SATURDAY 3 JUNE

7.30pm **Evening concert** – Featuring the Kingston University Chamber Choir.
Kingston Parish Church, Market Place, Kingston

SATURDAY 10 JUNE

7.30pm **Evening concert** – Featuring the Kingston University Big Band.
Surbiton Assembly Rooms, Maple Road, Kingston

MONDAY 12 JUNE

4.00 and 8.00pm **University Fashion Show** – Launching catwalk collections created by final year students.
Banqueting House, Whitehall Palace, London

Editorial Information

Editor: Nicky Baird, ext 63166 (internal); 020 8547 7166 (external)

University staff are invited to submit ideas for possible stories and features. Contributions should be sent by email to bridge@kingston.ac.uk or by internal mail to Bridge, Room 6, River House.

The editorial team reserves the right to amend articles as appropriate.

Links put literature in the limelight

The University is gearing up to play a major part in supporting the fifth annual Kingston Readers' Festival. Alumni and events manager Dr Helen Trott said the University would this year be hosting 15 events at locations across campus.

Dr Trott believes the festival is an ideal way to showcase the literary talents of academic staff while contributing something special to the local community. "The University is a huge resource of learning and we have so many interesting members of staff who are either writing books or can talk about them with passion and knowledge," she said. "We have always found that for many people the Readers' Festival opens doors to a whole range of opportunities at the University, from seminars and short courses through to postgraduate study."

From humble beginnings in 2002, the festival now consists of 65 events staged over a five-week period. Speakers will provide an insight into such subjects as politics, poetry, philosophy, publishing, cookery, music and interior design. Festival director Sandy Williams said the University's support was always guaranteed to add a range of inspiring features to the programme. "Kingston University has been instrumental in the success of the festival since its inception, helping it grow into the event it is today," she said.

Also supported by Kingston Council and sponsored by Borders and John Lewis, the festival will raise funds for the new Rose of Kingston Theatre, the All Saints Parish Church Appeal and a range of reading-related charities.



The University has joined forces with Kingston Council and retailers Borders and John Lewis to provide backing for the Kingston Readers' Festival. *Picture: Mike Matuszek/Surrey Comet*

The following Kingston Readers' Festival events are among those being hosted by the University:

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY

7.30pm **What Good Are the Arts?** – Reviewer and academic Professor John Carey talks about his most recent book which assesses the true value of art.
Room 4, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

FRIDAY 12 MAY

1.00pm **Pinter in the Theatre** – Dr Ian Smith from the School of Humanities discusses his latest book looking at the work of Harold Pinter.
Room 41, Main Building, Penrhyn Road campus

SATURDAY 13 MAY

11.30am **Chernobyl Strawberries: Memory and Translation** – Dr Vesna Goldsworthy from the School of Humanities reads from and talks about her memoir, *Chernobyl Strawberries*.
Room 4, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

1.30pm **Edith Wharton and the Haunted Heart** – Professor of English Avril Horner assesses American author Edith Wharton's ghost stories.
Room 10, Town House, Penrhyn campus

MONDAY 15 MAY

7.30pm **Why Theatre?** – The University's Chancellor, internationally-acclaimed director Sir Peter Hall, discusses the influence of theatre on life in the 21st Century, from the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare to Beckett, Pinter and new young writers.
Reg Bailey Building, Penrhyn Road campus

TUESDAY 16 MAY

1.00pm **We Are At War** – Simon Garfield, a feature writer with *The Observer* and author of two compilations of oral history, discusses his latest publication, *We Are At War: The Remarkable Diaries of Five Ordinary People*.
Room 4, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

SATURDAY 20 MAY

11.30am **English National Identity: A Fairy Tale?** – Dr Andrew Teverson from the School of Humanities discusses the impact of English folk and fairy tales on national identity.
Room 4, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

1.30pm **The Other Brontë: Mystery and Misreading in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall** – Dr Meg Jensen from the School of Humanities discusses Anne Brontë's story.
Room 102, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

MONDAY 22 MAY

7.30pm **Odysseus Unbound** – Robert Bittlestone and James Diggle discuss their book, *Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Odyssey*, which tells the story of the recent discovery of the true location of Homer's Ithaca.
Room 102, Town House, Penrhyn Road campus

Tickets are available online at <http://www.kingston.gov.uk/eticketing>.