

teaching and learning

Bristol pays close attention to the quality of its teaching and learning, and 2007/08 saw a significant reorganisation of its education support services. Other developments saw to it that the University's commitment to fair access, new learning methods, well-appointed facilities and top-rank teaching practices was more than just a paragraph in a mission statement.

Right: Dr Lorena Barba, one of the winners of the 2007 University Teaching Prizes (see p15)



Education Support Unit – a University-wide reference point

The new Education Support Unit, formally launched in October 2007, is an amalgam of the previous Teaching Support Unit and Learning Technology Support Service. The unit also has responsibility for managing the University's Teaching and Learning Programme for new academic staff. Its 23 members of staff include three academic posts.

The rationale for creating the unit was to provide a central reference point for advice about teaching, learning and assessment in the University, from foundation degrees to doctoral programmes. It is being structured around eight themes to achieve an appropriate balance between support for academic practice and the quality assurance of education, with a focus on improving the quality of the student experience and maintaining academic standards.

More details about the Education Support Unit can be found at www.bristol.ac.uk/esu.

Bristol celebrates opening of new Centres for Excellence

The University's two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) were officially opened in November 2007, having already chalked up a busy and successful first year.

Development of the centres – Applied and Integrated Medical Sciences (AIMS) and Bristol ChemLabS – was funded by £10 million from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and £14 million from the University itself. The Chief Executive of HEFCE, Professor David Eastwood, presided at the opening event alongside the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eric Thomas.

The CETLs include state-of-the-art chemistry laboratories for undergraduates and visiting school

students, computer-controlled human patient simulators (see image below) and high-tech facilities for anatomy teaching. A joint Mobile Teaching Unit hosts anatomy demonstrations for local hospitals and postgraduate training centres. Together, the CETLs could help to revolutionise the teaching of medical sciences and chemistry across the country.

Access Agreement approved

In February, the Office for Fair Access approved the University's revised Access Agreement for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11. The Agreement underlines the University's commitment to widening participation and fair access and aims to ensure that no potential student is deterred from applying to Bristol by financial worries.

The University has extended eligibility for its bursary schemes. From October 2008, all new UK undergraduates with a household income of £50,000 or less (increased from £38,000) and receiving a government maintenance grant are eligible for a non-repayable bursary. The University still provides an additional bursary scheme for local students, and hardship funds totalling around £160,000 are also available.

Investment in outreach work has been increased from £400,000 to over £600,000 to enable the University to encourage as wide a range of highly talented students as possible to apply for a place at Bristol.

How to be a high flyer

The University's Language Centre has been selected by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, to take part in a project funded by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to design and deliver an innovative new language-learning programme. Entitled 'Gateways into the Professions', the project connects students with employers and professional bodies.

The Language Centre is working with Airbus UK and colleagues in the Department of Aerospace and Avionic Engineering to develop online learning materials for interactive study in French for undergraduates. The aim is to help the next generation of aerospace engineers develop language and intercultural skills for their future careers.

Conducted entirely in French, the course includes a history of avionics, specialist terminology, interviews with industry professionals, business French, vocabulary and grammar exercises. Professional bodies such as the

Engineering Council UK and Construction Skills will offer advice and disseminate the work of the initiative. The project is intended to yield a model of best practice and lead to further collaborative work between higher education and the professional sector.

New Dental School facility 'UK's most advanced'

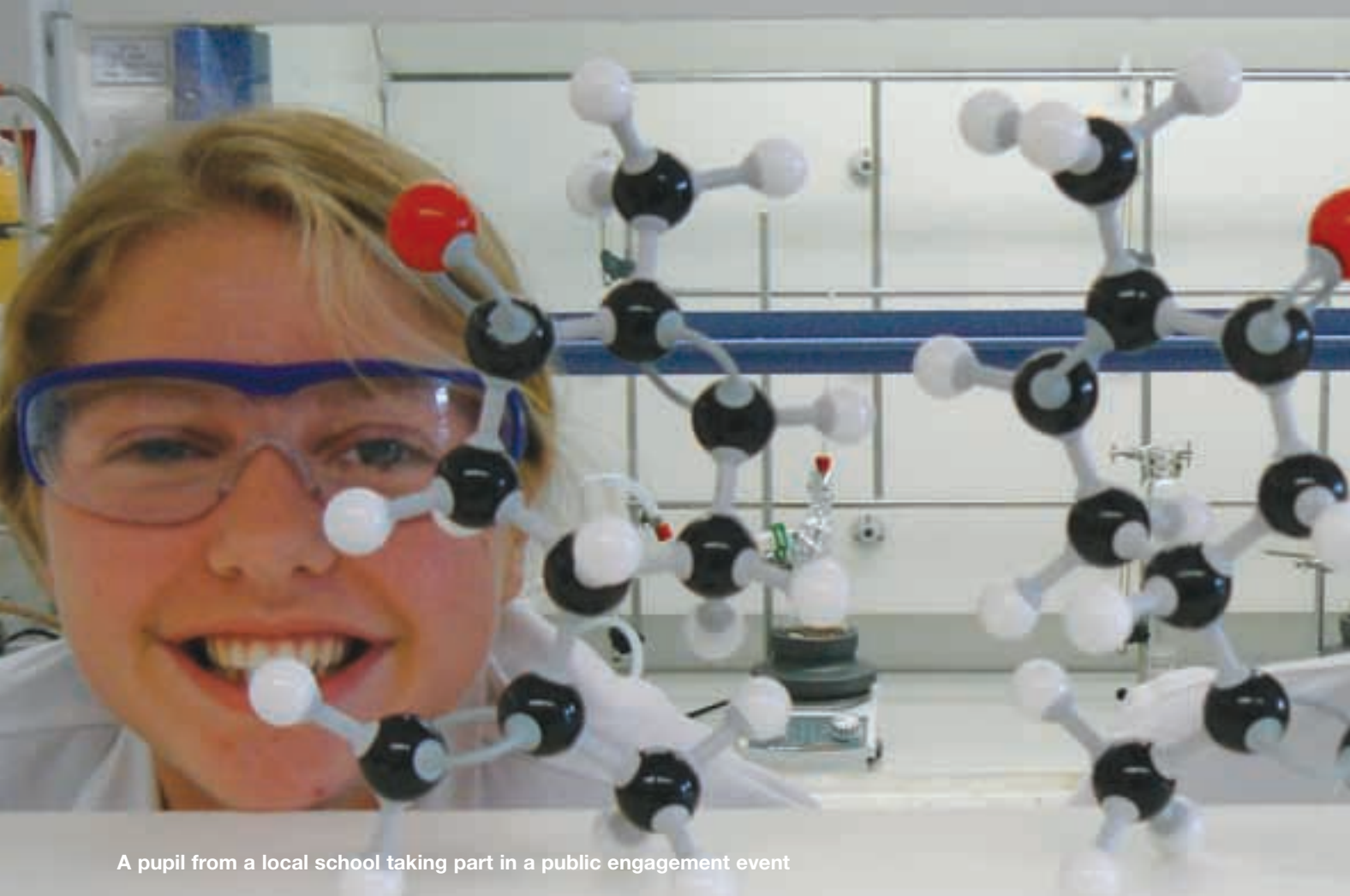
Dr Barry Cockcroft, Chief Dental Officer for the UK, presided over the opening of the expanded facility at the University's Dental Hospital and School. This is the most advanced of its kind in the country, with room for 29 new dental students who, when qualified, will provide much-needed NHS dental treatment to an estimated 63,000 patients a year.

A joint bid from the University and the United Bristol Healthcare Trust secured over £15 million in capital investment for the work from the Department of Health, via the Strategic Health Authority and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The new facility includes 12 new places for dental hygiene and therapy students, 50 new dental chairs, two new decontamination suites, new teaching, research and dental production labs, and a refurbished library with two computer-aided learning suites.



Above: AIMS technician Pete Dickens with Stan, the human patient simulator



A pupil from a local school taking part in a public engagement event

Towards a broader Learning Life

In June the University hosted This Learning Life 2, a major conference on new and non-traditional methods of teaching.

The three-day event, organised and sponsored by the Graduate School of Education, the Institute for Advanced Studies and TLO Limited, featured leading figures from many walks of life talking about their own unconventional learning experiences. Among those taking part were the scientist Heinz Wolff, international horse-riding instructor Mary Wanless and ITN newsreader Alastair Stewart, OBE.

Teachers and others involved in education discussed whether techniques and approaches used in other fields, such as professional sport, song-writing or theatre, have any place in the classroom. Other

participants included Bill Lucas, Chairman of the Talent Foundation; Mick Waters, Director of Curriculum at the QCA; Kathy Sykes, the University's Professor of Sciences and Society; and academics from the universities of California and Washington.

Science shines at Bristol

In late 2007, four of the University's departments were included in a rigorous assessment of postgraduate programmes in 500 European universities – and all four were awarded medals and given 'top group' ranking. One of the departments, Chemistry, even achieved rare 'excellence group' status.

The ranking was carried out by the prestigious Centre for Higher Education Development in Germany.

Bristol's Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics departments were assessed and won 11 medals between them, seven of them gold. The School of Chemistry won an exceptional three gold medals and one silver medal.

Departments were assessed on a range of criteria including how many research publications they produce, the number of international citations received by staff, and students' views on the quality of their experience.

University Teaching Prizes

In January, the University held its annual Learning and Teaching Exhibition and awarded prizes to members of staff in recognition of their efforts in supporting the student learning experience. The event included an exhibition of innovative learning and teaching practice from across the faculties, short talks on developments in learning and teaching, and a keynote presentation by Professor Sir David Watson, Chair of Higher Education Management at the University of London's Institute of Education.

During the evening, the 2007 awards were presented to the following people:

Teaching and Learning Prizes

- Dorinda Offord**
School of Modern Languages
- Professor Joe Quarini**
Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Dr Cathy Fuller**
Department of Anatomy
- Professor Andrew Halestrap**
Department of Biochemistry
- Dr David Dymock**
Department of Oral and Dental Science
- Dr Trevor Thompson**
Academic Unit of Primary Health Care
- Dr Russell Cox**
School of Chemistry
- Dr Helen Heath**
Department of Physics
- Dr Richard Kiely**
Graduate School of Education

Rising Star Awards

For staff who have been teaching in higher education for less than five years and who show excellent potential through the quality of analysis and practice in teaching.

- Jane Wright**
School of Humanities
- Dr Arthur Richards**
Department of Aerospace Engineering
- Dr Michele Barbour**
Department of Oral and Dental Science
- Dr Lorena Barba**
Department of Mathematical Sciences
- Dr Simon Pemberton**
School of Policy Studies

Awards Recognising Support for Teaching and Learning

Recognising outstanding contribution to education by members of support staff.

- Marjorie Dunderdale**
School of Arts
- Tony Griffith, Clive Rendall, Richard Walker, Andrew Dixon and John Bracey**
Faculty of Engineering
- Pete Dickens**
Department of Physiology and Pharmacology
- Kirsten Slater and Kate Walter**
Centre for Medical Education
- Siobhan Harris, Jane Coles, Ed Thomas, Duncan Baldwin**
School of Chemistry
- Steve Croker**
School of Geographical Sciences
- Maggi Walton**
Norah Fry Research Centre
- Keren Gwinnell, Dave Jarman, Jenny Smith**
Insight Organising Team, Careers Service
- Mark van Rossum and Mike Hackett**
Estates

Engagement Awards

Recognising staff whose work in public engagement has been exceptional and/or innovative.

- Dr Shelley Hales**
Department of Classics and Ancient History
- Dr Elinor Griffiths**
Department of Biochemistry
- Professor Bruce Hood**
Department of Experimental Psychology
- Dr David Smith**
School of Chemistry
- Bristol Dinosaur Project Team**
Department of Earth Sciences
- Professor Janice Thompson**
Department of Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences

e-Learning Awards

Recognising innovative and effective use of e-learning in the delivery of programmes and the support of staff and students.

- Helene Duranton**
Language Centre
- Hanrahan Highland**
Faculty of Engineering
- Dr Bevis Miller**
Department of Clinical Veterinary Science
- Dr Jane Williams**
Centre for Medical Education
- Dr Adrian Barnes**
Department of Physics
- Chris John**
Centre for Deaf Studies

public engagement

Engagement is part of the University's culture. It is embedded in its research, education, widening participation and volunteering activities, and is vital to its relationships with alumni, business, local government and other organisations. Examples can be found in other chapters of this report, but here we focus on just one important aspect of the theme – engagement with the public.

Right: Anatomy demonstration at Science Alive!, the University's contribution to National Science and Engineering Week (see p19)





Jake Cadwaller (left) and Josh Beesley at Sporting Ability

Responding to community needs

The **Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health** continues to be involved in a wide variety of community projects. Coombe Dingle Outdoor Sports Complex hosted the Festival of School Sport and a sister event, the West of England Festival of Sporting Ability, both of which were aimed at

inspiring children to stay active and healthy by playing sport. Jake Cadwaller (pictured left above) of New Fosseway School, Hengrove, and Josh Beesley of Ravenswood School, Nailsea, were two of the pupils from local special schools that participated in Sporting Ability. Another of the year's new initiatives

was a Wellness Day for disadvantaged jobseekers organised in conjunction with Business in the Community's Business Action on Homelessness Programme. The event was designed to encourage homeless people and those at risk of homelessness to stay healthy as they look for work or start a new job.

The **Merchants' Academy** in Withywood, an independent state-funded secondary school sponsored by the Society of Merchant Venturers and co-sponsored by the University, opened in September 2008. It is designed to provide free education of outstanding quality to more than 1,100 pupils. The University has played a significant role in the planning of various aspects of the school, including its education strategy, and will continue to be involved as the school progresses.

Bristol is one of eight universities to be involved in a venture that will allow UK researchers to build links across institutions and disciplines to form **synthetic biology** networks. The networks, funded by four UK research councils, aim to build the UK's expertise in the emerging field of synthetic biology. Recognising that this new area of science may raise issues of public interest and concern, all the networks have a strong social and ethical dimension. The Bristol network will be working with Explore At-Bristol to generate an exhibit about synthetic biology, which will allow members of the public to engage with the subject and air their views.

Promoting dialogue with the public

To support the increased focus on engagement with the public, the University's **Centre for Public Engagement** has been working with the direction of the Engaged University Steering Group to develop a new strategy to ensure that academics are appropriately encouraged, recognised and supported in their engagement activities. The Centre provides hands-on guidance to academics and promotes public engagement internally and externally.

One of the year's major public engagement events was **Science Alive!**, the University's contribution to National Science and Engineering Week. Interactive displays gave school children and members of the public a chance to explore aspects of science, engineering and technology and medicine.

Bristol Neuroscience teamed up with Explore At-Bristol to celebrate International Brain Awareness Week in March. More than 30 scientists were on hand at the science centre's 'Inside DNA' exhibition to provide members of the public with a wealth of information about the brain.

The **Department of Earth Sciences** ran a series of volcano-related events throughout Science Week, including a field trip to extinct volcanoes at Weston-super-Mare, an exhibition at Bristol's City Museum and Art Gallery and public lectures, to celebrate the life of 'local hero' George Walker, a renowned geologist and Emeritus Professor at Bristol.

Staff and students, together with local schoolchildren and members of the public, supported International Human Rights Day in December by taking part in a 29-hour, non-stop reading in Spanish of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The readathon, aimed at bringing people together to study and enjoy works of literature, was organised by the **Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies**.

The **Norah Fry Research Centre** has been working to disseminate, and facilitate the implementation of, government guidance to help parents with learning difficulties and their children stay together as safe, healthy families. The Working

Together with Parents Network co-ordinates a national taskforce to help bring about policy change; helps set up forums for professionals, where experts who work with people with learning difficulties can meet to exchange information; and supports CHANGE, a partner organisation that co-ordinates a Parents' Network. This enables parents to share ideas that can be fed into the taskforce, and help create easy-to-understand leaflets on issues such as child protection and court procedures.

The **Department of English** launched a part-time BA in English Literature and Community Engagement. Taught entirely in evenings over six years, it is aimed primarily at mature students from the local area who need or wish to study part-time. The degree is the first in this country to combine literary study and community work. Students have the opportunity to study a full range of literature in English and to run a reading group as part of their studies.

Helping to set the national agenda

Working with the University of the West of England, the University has set up the **National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement**, which works with organisations across the UK to improve links between universities and the public. It is part of a national network of local Beacons for Public Engagement that have been established as part of the same initiative in Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, London, Cardiff and Edinburgh. The £9.2 million scheme is funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust.