Imperial goes green

Alex Platt Editor

LAST week saw Imperial going green with a range of awareness-raising activities organised by ICU at South Kensington Campus. Activities included a ‘green fair’ and a variety of workshops and talks on subjects such as the environmentally-friendly architectural design deployed in the Faculty Building. Biofuel cars were exhibited on the Queen’s Lawn terrace and a ‘green art’ exhibit in Upper Dalby Court showed just a fraction of the waste generated by the College.

Paper leaves were handed out for students to sign to show their support for recycling on campus and a change in the College’s environment policy. The week ended with the presentation of a tree made up of 1,765 of these leaves to the Rector, whose own leaf hung from a bird’s beak at the top of the tree.

He congratulated all who had organised and contributed to the week and said:

“There is still more we can do on our own campuses to ensure we are as energy efficient and environmentally responsible as we can be. We have to work together, both staff and students, individually and collectively, on this agenda, as it is in all of our interests to consider sustainability and the environment in all that we do. I sincerely hope that the spirit and enthusiasm of the week continues so that we can ensure that we’re leading the way on campus as well as in our teaching and research fields.”

New staff awards for excellence—now open

Alex Platt Editor

DO you regularly go that extra mile to inspire those you work with by the way you lead or manage? Do you know someone who aids staff development through mentoring or promotes equality and diversity in the workplace? If so, the new Rector’s Awards for Excellence are the perfect way to recognise these individuals and share their good practice.

The awards have been introduced by the Staff Development Unit to recognise the essential part that good leadership and management, mentoring, and the promotion of equalities and diversity, play in making Imperial a great place to work. The awards, which will honour members of the College who have shown an outstanding commitment to continued on page three...

IN BRIEF

Campus Dean is a natural

Professor Maggie Dallman, Professor of Immunology and Head of the Immunology and Infection Section in the Division of Cell and Molecular Biology, has become the first female Principal of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Professor Dallman was previously Campus Dean for South Kensington.

Oxford honours ethicist

Imperial’s Emeritus Professor of Medical Ethics, Professor Rannan Gillon, is to be awarded an honorary DSc by the University of Oxford. Professor Gillon joined Imperial in 1978 as a part-time doctor, subsequently becoming Director, at the Health Centre. He helped to develop the subject of medical ethics in Imperial and became the first visiting lecturer, then visiting professor, and finally full Professor of Medical Ethics at the College. He retired and was made an Emeritus Professor in 2000.

In the sci-fi zone

Pencrun, the annual convention of the Imperial College Science Fiction society (CSCF), was held at ICR last month. Three guest authors, Ian Watson, Natasha Mostert and Mark Roberts, and 130 visitors from across the country who came to hear them speak, made this year one of the most successful. In addition to the guest authors and bookstall on site, fans could take part in science fiction quiz at 6:30pm in the evening. For more information about CSCF, visit www.ic-science-fiction.co.uk.

AIM listing for ParCos

Imperial spin-out company ParCos Ltd, founded by Professor Steven Prithก๊า thumbins of the Centre of Process Systems Engineering, is reported to be admitting to trading on the AIM market of the London Stock Exchange on Tuesday 21 March. ParCos provides energy-saving, advanced control and optimisation solutions enabling performance to be delivered on a chip rather than via existing bulk, slow and rather expensive computer-based solutions. Professor Prithก๊า thumbins licensed the company in 2001 with Imperial Innovations Ltd, Imperial’s technology commercialisation company. ParCos will be the fourth Imperial spin-out to be listed on the AIM market, following the Societas de Cross Power, TomTom Technology and Turbo Connect.

What do you call the funniest graph?

The Journal of Researchproductions

Result, the science humour magazine. is inviting entries in its contest for the FUNNIEST graph. Any form of graph, or set of graphs, from any branch of science, medicine or engineering, can be submitted. Writers may even take a copy to an article. Can you think that there is not the same opinion that plagues you are welcome. If the graph has already been published, you must include the full citation and if it was created by someone else, you must be made clear. Visit www.jir.com for more information.
Anti-HIV drugs unlikely to stop HIV spread

Tony Stephenson Communications

RESEARCHERS believe antiretroviral therapy (ART) will not be effective in stopping HIV epidemics even if it is made universally available in poorer countries, and that widespread use could even lead to an increase in the numbers infected with HIV. Research published this week in *PLoS Medicine* by a team from Imperial reveals a model that predicts how different strategies for increasing access to ART might affect HIV infection rates.

The modelling found that while ART reduces the viral load of infected individuals, thus decreasing the risk of HIV transmission, slowing disease progression allows patients to live longer, increasing the number infected and potentially the number of new infections they will cause. Rebecca Baggaley, Department of Epidemiology, Public Health and Primary Care, and one of the authors of the paper, said: "This model demonstrates that ongoing provision of prevention initiatives for stopping the spread of HIV is vital. Although ART may prove effective as part of an integrated treatment and prevention programme, including increased education and promotion of safe sex practices, it is unlikely to be effective alone.

"For a number of years, there has been significant debate about access to antiretroviral drugs, and how the high cost of these drugs has hindered many poorer countries' attempts to combat HIV epidemics. While ART is undoubtedly effective at treating AIDS patients, particularly in richer countries, without public health interventions it will not prevent or control the spread of HIV in poorer countries."

The model also showed how ART treatment might affect behaviour. The researchers believe it could result in a greater spread of HIV by making infected individuals feel physically better, and more likely to be sexually active, but counselling of ART patients about risk behaviour could compensate for this to some extent. Therefore prevention initiatives aiming to decrease patients' risk-taking behaviour are even more relevant.

Rebecca Baggaley added: "This study could be important in helping to ensure that limited supplies of ART are used most effectively."

Making an art of evolution

Abigail Smith Communications

AN original piece of theatre developed by an Imperial science communication lecturer receives its London premiere in the Royal Albert Hall later this month.

*Darwin's Dream*, a collaboration between lecturer and science writer Stephen Webster and composer Graham Trencher, illustrates Charles Darwin's theory of evolution through music and dance. It aims to communicate the main themes of the theory to children in a fresh and accessible way.

Based on Haeckel's *The Creation*, *Darwin's Dream* imagines the founder of evolutionary theory meeting modern children and challenging them to explore how his theory has advanced since his death in 1882. Their quest takes them from the oceans where life is believed to have begun, to Africa to meet a fossil hunter looking for evidence of the earliest humans. Stephen Webster, Humanists, comments:

"Darwin knew that evolution would be an ongoing area of scientific quest and he was very curious about what would be uncovered as time passed, so the idea that he would want to know what we have since discovered is entirely realistic."

The creators are working with three adult soloists, a chamber orchestra and a chorus of 100 children from primary schools in London and the south east. Teachers and parents were also involved in the development of the piece, helping pupils to make costumes and create interludes, such as a dance about DNA. Stephen describes how the subject matter lends itself to dramatisation:

"There are lots of nice things you can do with evolution in terms of musical metaphors - life emerging slowly, dramatic extinctions and so on. It's great to see how something quite abstract can really capture children's imaginations."

The production will be supported by an exhibition of pictures, models and other materials produced by the schools to illustrate evolution, as well as installations of sounds and images provided by the Galapagos Conservation Trust.

*Darwin's Dream* is being staged at the Royal Albert Hall on Monday 20 March 2006 at 19.00. Tickets cost between £12.50 and £15 for adults and £5 for children. More details can be found at http://tickets.royalalberthall.com or from the box office on 020 7589 8212.
From Huxley to Hollywood?

Abigail Smith Communications

AN Imperial education may not seem the most obvious route to hanging out with the Desperate Housewives, but it has brought alumnus Carlo Massarella closer than most.

Carlo, who completed a BSc in Physics and MSc in Science Communication at Imperial, has bagged an Emmy for outstanding science, technology and nature programming for the film DNA: The Human Race.

The award-winning documentary is part of a five-part series charting the history of molecular biology to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the discovery of the double helix.

“We conceived it as the definitive, inside account of the race between public and private consortia to sequence the human genome,” said Carlo, now a producer and director for TV company Windfall Films, which specialises in science and history programmes.

His broadcasting career began at Imperial with experience on STOIC, the student TV station, and he believes his time at the College played a large part in his successful career. He said:

“My MSc taught me to communicate scientific subjects to a non-scientific audience, making the subject accessible and informative but also emotionally engaging. I also made many contacts in the scientific community during my time at Imperial that are useful on a daily basis.”

Carlo joined Windfall Films immediately after completing his Science Communication course and has produced several programmes for the Channel 4 Einstein series, as well as writing material for websites, magazines and a book to accompany the DNA film. He is currently working on a second series of

Monster Moves for Five, which follows the highs and lows of engineers attempting to relocate entire buildings.

Congratulations Carlo on his success, Nick Russell, Director of the Science Communication Group, said:

“It is very pleasing to see that alumni from our Science Communication courses are making successful media careers and winning important prizes. All the team here want to say well done to Carlo.”

Since Carlo completed his MSc in 1996, the Science Communication Group has grown to offer additional postgraduate courses in Science Media Production and Creative Non-Fiction Writing. Dr Russell added:

“We believe these provide an excellent, specialised, pre-vocational education for scientists and science graduates who aspire to bring science to a wider audience.”

From left to right, Sonia Hince with Philip Blissett, Faculty of Medicine Finance Officer, Martin Knight, Chief Finance Officer, Andrew Murphy, Director of Finance, and April Northam, Divisional Finance Trainer.

Top ten success for trainee accountant

Marcus Bridger, who studied at Imperial in the 1920s and went on to receive an OBE for his services to education, would be proud.

He was extremely excited when I started my job at the College and am sure he would have been happy to see me do so well in these exams. It can be tricky fitting studying in around my job, but this qualification goes a long way to making it all worthwhile.”

Martin Knight, Chief Finance Officer, joined other members of the College’s Finance team to award Sonia a Harrods voucher to celebrate her success. He said: “It’s with great pleasure that we recognise Sonia’s achievement. To retain top quality staff, part of a department’s remit must be to train and support them. We’re very proud of what Sonia has achieved.”

Media mentions

Abigail Smith Communications

Second rate at first language

When it comes to using the English language correctly, UK students are falling behind their overseas peers according to Bernard Lamb, Division of Biology. Mistakes such as not knowing the difference between “bi” and “it’s” or “whether” and “weather” are far more common amongst students whose first language is English, he tells the Times Higher Education Supplement (02.03.06). “Overseas students have had more grammar teaching, more correction of errors and more emphasis on correctness than British students.” Dr Lamb blames the errors on a reduction in the time spent reading and an increase in time spent watching television in the UK. He gives students a two-hour lecture on writing scientific English at the start of their first year.

Alcohol-powered cars could save the planet

UK trials of cars powered by ethanol fermented from sugar cane, due to begin in Somerset later this month, are welcomed by Jeremy Woods, Centre for Environmental Policy. Agreeing that biofuels have the potential to help reduce the amount of fossil-derived carbons we emit, he says in The Guardian (26.02.06): “FFVs—flex-fuel vehicles—have only just come on the market in the UK but sales in other countries have been explosive. All major motor manufacturers are now designing their own versions.”

Eat less for exam success

Revising on an empty stomach may be the key to exam success according to new American research, which has found a connection between the hunger hormone ghrelin and the creation and retrieval of memories. Imperial’s appetite regulation expert Steve Bloom, Division of Investigative Science, who also studies ghrelin, finds the connection credible. He tells BBC News Online (20.02.06): “It is entirely plausible that we are more alert and keyed up to both remember and recall more readily when stressed by hunger. If we weren’t our individual forebears might have died out in the competition for food.”

Philosophy finds a friend

Remarks reportedly made by higher education minister Bill Rammell that fewer philosophy students are bad thing have not found support from all scientists. Writing in Nature (18.02.02), Igor Aleksander, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, comments: “I cannot resist mentioning one of the greatest British mathematicians, Sir Roger Penrose, the view that even scientists and mathematicians should know enough philosophy to question ‘primitive propositions’. It is reassuring that the Royal Academy of Engineering is currently examining the way in which philosophy could enrich the education of engineers to allow them to question the present in order to invent better futures.”

Awards open to all staff

...continued from page one

developing and supporting staff in one of these three areas.

Christine Yates, Equality and Diversities Consultant, explained: “The awards will ideally identify a diverse range of staff from all grades and job families to serve as role models, not only to their departments, but also to their faculties and the College as a whole. It’s a way of valuing our staff for things that aren’t always valued through salary and career progression and showing that they are incredibly important to the College.”

Subha Shaminathan, Staff Development Advisor (Research Staff) added:

“Sometimes people are being really proactive in these areas, but might not realise it. We understand that people don’t always make the time, resources or commitment to make huge changes, but this isn’t necessarily what we’re looking for.”

Judy Barnett, Staff Development Manager, is keen to encourage as many people as possible to enter: “This really is a chance to reward those members of staff who are making a real difference in their workplace.”

The awards are open to all staff providing they meet the selection criteria. The deadline for nominations is 17.00 on Monday 31 July and entries can be submitted to the Staff Development Unit, Room 411, Sherfield Building, or to Christine Yates, Room 410, Sherfield Building. The awards, along with a cash prize, will be presented to the winners by the Rector in October. Visit www.imperial.ac.uk/staffdevelopment for further details and nomination entry forms.
A day in the life of...

Minna Rushen was the manager of the Imperial Volunteer Centre (IVC). The role involves providing a service to students and staff members interested in getting involved with local community work. Currently over 200 local partner organisations work in cooperation with the College offering over 230 projects to nearly 140 volunteers. Minna explained: "My role is about promoting community interaction and engagement, but also to ensure that all the volunteers are placed in a safe environment. I want to help volunteers get the most out of their experience. I have been a volunteer in the past myself and know how rewarding it can be."

Reporter’s Alex Platt went to meet her to see how she spends a typical day in her working life.

8.30-9.30 Minna cycles the nine miles between her home in Hackney and her office on the South Kensington Campus. She said: "The cycle ride in gives me a chance to clear my head and reflect on the day ahead. I get into work fully awake, whereas when I was using public transport it sometimes felt like I’d been sleepwalking all the way to my desk."

9.30 Minna has a cup of coffee whilst reading her emails and making various phone calls. The Centre has a policy that, wherever possible, all emails are answered within two days.

10.00 The Centre opens. Minna continues dealing with her emails and helping the odd volunteer as they pop in with questions or updates on the projects to which they’re assigned.

10.30 Meeting with the Refugee Council. Minna explained: "I regularly meet with all the organisations we work in partnership with. We discuss the specific projects we’ve funded so far and ensure that the volunteers we’ve supplied are being effectively recruited for the type of work offered. It is paramount that I understand best practice is being adhered to. I will often arrange these meetings to take place at the organisation, so I can then give relevant information to potential volunteers, even if only to let them know how to get there from the nearest tube station and what to expect on their first day."

12.00-14.00 This is the time that new volunteers come to register at the centre. During the autumn term this can mean enrolling as many as 25 new volunteers per day. At this time of year it’s about three per day.

Lectures and seminars

Inaugural Lectures

Wednesday 15 March 17.30 Professor Michael Marmot (Oxon) Blackett Lecture Theatre

Thursday 16 March 17.30 Professor Alan Frowde (Infectious Disease Epidemiology) Cler Lecture Theatre

Tuesday 25 April 17.30 Professor Justin Cobb (Orthopaedic Surgery) Cler Lecture Theatre

What’s on

24 Feb-15 March

Sir Alexander Fleming Building

Wednesday 22 March 17.30 2006 Rausing Lecture Tunnelling and Geotechnics—New Horizons—Professor Robert Main, University of Cambridge, Great Hall, Sherfield Building

Art and music

Artworks


Monday 20 March 19.00 Sir John Hall Gallery and Main Dining Hall Marrow Art Exhibition 2006 in aid of the Anthony Nolan Trust

Email elizabeth.carwright@imperial.ac.uk to purchase tickets. Click on www.marrow.ac.uk for further details.

1-2 March Sir John Hall Gallery, Level 5 Sherfield Building Exhibition by Imperial College Photography Society.

Noticeboard

Ethos official opening

Ethos will be opened from 9.00-18.00 on Wednesday 26 April for the official opening ceremony. Facilities, with the exception of the sports hall, will be available between 7.00-9.00 and from 18.00. The sports hall remains open on 27 April.

Is your department planning an event?

If so, check out the new Imperial marketing tools including online guidelines and resources at www.imperial.ac.uk/marketing_marketing-tools. Email events@imperial.ac.uk to subscribe to the Events E-Bulletin.

A day in the life of...

Minna Rushen, first part of call for those wishing to volunteer at Imperial.

15.00 Accreditation meeting. The IVC offers all its volunteers an opportunity to participate in an externally verified accreditation programme. The Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDN) offers nationally recognised qualifications acknowledging the transferable skills and good practice an individual needs to participate effectively in voluntary activities. Minna explained: "This is a really worthwhile qualification to take if you are volunteering. I ran an initial group introduction and then followed up with one-to-one meetings with those taking the programme."

16.00 Imperial Outreach meeting. Minna said: "We’re trying to set up a community engagement strategy that will see Imperial working in a cohesive way to successfully engage with the community. This strategy will ensure that the College engages with both existing and new community activities in a responsible, relevant and sustainable way."

17.30 It’s time for Minna to get back on her bike for the cycle home. She said: "My partner and I are currently refurbishing a property in the evenings which is really hard work, but ensures I can switch off after work! Saying that, I love my job, the interactive nature of it and getting to meet such a wide range of people. It’s very rewarding seeing the self-confidence that can develop in a volunteer and know that I’ve been part of that."

If you’d like to get involved contact the Voluntary Centre on 0207 594 8556 or email volunteering@imperial.ac.uk. You can also drop into the office located in Room 324, Sherfield Building for a chat. Visit www.imperial.ac.uk/volunteering for a list of current opportunities or subscribe to the weekly e-newsletter by emailing the Centre.

Working towards good health

Looking after your eyes

Alan Swan Occupational Health

ALTHOUGH looking at a computer screen cannot damage your eyes, it does demand a lot of our eyes. The typical viewing distance is greater than that for reading a book, but still close enough that the eye muscles have to be active to maintain focus. Also, the image quality of a computer screen is still not as good as a printed image and we blink less when using one. So, all in all, it’s not unusual for people to find that their vision is/does not notice difficulty focusing when working on their computer.

For tired eyes, the first remedy is to take a break from looking at the screen, at least once an hour. If that doesn’t fix it, or your problem is difficulty focusing, then it is worth getting your eyesight checked. Some people, particularly those over 45, may need spectacles — or for those already wearing glasses, a change in their usual lens prescription for computer work.

Imperial offers a free eyesight test for any member of staff who experiences visual difficulties and believes that these may be related to their work with computers. An optician has been appointed for each campus to provide this.

The College will cover the cost of the test and the supply of simple plastic or metal framed spectacles, if these are needed exclusively for computer work. If you want a more elegant pair, you would need to cover the extra cost yourself.

Go to www.imperial.ac.uk/spectrum/occupational for more details of how the scheme works and to download an eye test request form.

Spotlight on Spectrum

New campus maps

Peter Gillings, Communications

IMPERIAL staff and students who need good quality campus maps to print and give to visitors can now download newly updated maps in PDF format from the main College website.

Created by Communications in consultation with building occupants and Estates, there are currently maps of the campuses at South Kensington, Silwood Park and Wyke. Maps of the medical campuses and a revised west London locations map, which will include the North West London Hospitals Campus, are in preparation.

Security over Easter

THE building permits access control system will be activated from 23.00 Friday 24 March until 7.00 Monday 24 April. There will be two exceptions: the main entrance, Exhibition Road (open 7.30-18.00 Monday to Friday) and the Sherfield Building main foyer (open 7.00-23.00).

During this time, staff and students will have to use their access control cards to enter the buildings they are authorized to use.

Visitors to the College will be directed to the main entrance where reception staff can contact the person being visited.

If you have any access problems, telephone 020 7594 8905 or email id.card@imperial.ac.uk.

Reporter is published every three weeks during term time. The copy deadline for issue 164 is Friday 21 April. Publication date is 3 May. Contributions are welcome (no more than 300 words). Please note the editor reserves the right to reject the articles, as necessary. Information correct at time of going to press.

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"The way in which the word is put down has a bearing on the way it is understood."

Imperial College London