



University of
BRISTOL

nonesuch

winter 2010

Research grants and contracts

Account Payee

Pay Bristol University

Date 20/07/10

Fifty two million and five hundred thousand pounds only

£52,500,000

Signed Charities, business and EC

GOVERNMENT CORE GRANTS™

Account Payee

Pay Bristol University

Date 20/07/10

One hundred and forty four million and two hundred thousand pounds only

£144,200,000

Signed HM Government

RESEARCH COUNCIL GRANTS™

Account Payee

Pay Bristol University

Date 20/07/10

Forty Eight million and nine hundred thousand pounds only

£48,900,000

Signed HM Government

Gifts from alumni and friends, endowment income, income from services, contracts, student residences etc. £60 million

TUITION FEES

Pay Bristol
£79.7 million



0012 3456
0012

HOME, OVERSEAS AND SHORT COURSE STUDENTS

VALID FROM 05/08 EXPIRES END 05/13



University of BRISTOL

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL,
SENATE HOUSE, TYNDALL AVENUE, BRISTOL BS8 1TH,
UK. TEL: +44 (0)117 928 7938

| | |
|---|--------------|
| ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS: | £142,400,000 |
| ACADEMIC SERVICES: | £27,300,000 |
| ACTIVITY RELATED TO RESEARCH GRANTS: | £76,200,000 |
| SERVICES RENDERED: | £14,000,000 |
| PREMISES, RESIDENCIES, CATERING AND CONFERENCES: | £69,300,000 |
| ADMINISTRATION: | £31,100,000 |
| OTHER INCLUDING GENERAL ENDOWMENT EXPENDITURE: | £16,400,000 |

TOTAL 2009/10 BILL: £376,700,000

SERVING 18,000 STUDENTS
AND 105,000 ALUMNI.

Your university's bill

Here's the bill for running the University for a year. You'll see that as well as the Government a number of individuals and organisations clubbed together to pay, including alumni, students and their families, charities and businesses.



With a focus in this edition on university funding and the need for continuous investment, it's appropriate to ask how the University is faring and what alumni can do to support it.

Three global league tables were published during the summer, which consistently confirm Bristol's position as one of the top learning institutions in the world. Furthermore, *The Times* noted that Bristol remains 'the most sought-after, multi-faculty university in the country'. Even with the need to treat league tables with some care, this is an eye-catching comment.

Clearly we can take pride in these achievements and feel confident that the University is well prepared to navigate the times ahead.

On the subject of 'support' for the University, Tom Shi's comment about Bristol's relatively low profile among employers in China (see page 27) reinforces the idea that we, as alumni, have a vital role to play as ambassadors in promoting Bristol around the world. With a 105,000-strong network that spans the globe and includes leaders in every field, there's a great story to tell.

Bill Ray (BSc 1975)
Chairman of Convocation, the
University of Bristol's Alumni
Association, bill.ray@bristol.ac.uk

Welcome

As I write this, the UK media is awash with speculation as it contemplates the likely outcomes and consequences of two of the most significant announcements our sector has seen in a very long time: Lord Browne's recommendations with regard to university funding and the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Both have been anticipated for a considerable time and will have a far-reaching impact in the immediate and the long term.

In this issue, we discuss the strategic imperatives surrounding university funding and seek to throw more light onto the complex landscape that underpins university finances, including the challenges posed by balancing the need to continually invest (to ensure we provide the best possible experience for our students) with the need to control costs. These are hugely important issues which perhaps haven't been aired sufficiently in the past, but which deserve greater profile and scrutiny as we move forward.

The subject of university funding has generated much debate for a very long time, during which we've seen various models of funding suggested and debated. One simple fact is clear: a first-class university education has to be paid for. However, it's incumbent upon the sector to articulate the benefits that higher education provides, and institutions must convey clearly the potential advantages available to their graduates.

In all of this we must not lose sight of one incredibly important group of stakeholders: our students. So I'm pleased that in this issue we hear some of their views and concerns on these important topics. We also hear from one of our local MPs, who is himself an alumnus of Bristol.

The coming months will be hugely important as we consider carefully our response with regard to fees and their contribution to our positioning nationally and, indeed, globally. These are interesting times, but they're also exciting times as we embark on defining Bristol's position both now and in the future.

Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004)
Vice-Chancellor





p8



p12



p30

Inside

editor

eve macfarlane

editorial board

laura blake (BA 2009)

jill cartwright

martin crossley evans (BA 1978, PhD 1990)

katie donaldson

claire eatock

hannah ford

jo friend

karen lippoldt

tania jane rawlinson

designed by

windrush

+44 (0)199 377 2197

printed by

westdale press

+44 (0)292 066 2620

editorial office

campaigns and alumni relations,

university of bristol,

senate house, tyndall avenue,

bristol BS8 1TH

tel +44 (0)117 928 7938

fax +44 (0)117 929 9383

alumni@bristol.ac.uk

www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni

If you need this publication in Braille, in larger print or on tape, please contact the Campaigns and Alumni Relations team.

Tel: +44 (0)117 331 7496.

Features

6 Balancing the books

Andy Nield, Director of Finance, puts Bristol's financial position in perspective.

8 The politics of change

Stephen Williams (BA 1988), Liberal Democrat MP for Bristol West, gets personal and political about the future of university funding.

12 Mind the gap

Laura Blake (BA 2009) talks fees, facilities and the future with Students' Union President, James Ashton-Bell (BSc 2009).

16 Interesting times

Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004) discusses university funding with his US counterpart Dr Graham Spanier, President of Pennsylvania State University.

20 Is it worth it?

Alumni share their personal thoughts on the value of a Bristol degree.

Regulars

4 News

30 Insights

Dr Wendy Thomson (PhD 1988), Professor of Social Policy at McGill University.

32 How to volunteer How I became a volunteer manager

34 Obituaries

35 Events

36 This is my Bristol

Iain Morris (BA 1994), co-writer of TV comedy series *The Inbetweeners*.

facebook.

www.facebook.com/bristol.university.alumni

LinkedIn.

www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=66290

100% recycled

This document is printed
on 100% recycled paper

recycle

When you have finished with
this document please recycle it.

genome
animals top
smallest time
fatale
Bronze
blood
choices
femme
honours
coral
screen
Year
Student
award
dementia
syndrome
possible
nonwealth
nation less
particle
confused
games
speed
bat

Student

Bristol student to become voice for UK science and engineering campaign

9 August 2010

A Bristol PhD student has been chosen to lead a nationwide campaign communicating the impact of science, engineering and maths on our everyday lives.

Times

Bristol scientists make *The Times*' Top 100

7 October 2010

Two scientists from the University have been named among the 100 most important people in British science and engineering in a list compiled for the first anniversary edition of *The Times*' science magazine, *Eureka*.

Admissions

Undergraduate admissions 2010

19 August 2010

The University received around 34,100 applications for the 3,280 home-funded undergraduate places available across the full range of subjects from this September.

Bacteria

'Jailbreak' bacteria can trigger heart disease

6 September 2010

Plaque-causing bacteria can jailbreak from the mouth into the bloodstream and increase your risk of heart attack, according to research from the University.

Gum

Revolutionary removable chewing gum hits the market

4 October 2010

The world's first easily removable and degradable chewing gum has been launched on the multi-billion dollar US consumer market. Rev7™ is the latest commercial chewing gum to emerge from the University's spin-out company, Revolymer®, based on a compound originally invented by chemistry Professor Terence Cosgrove.

Power

Seduction and power

20 September 2010

Artwork from Age of Bronze, Eric Shanower's graphic novel series about the Trojan War, went on display at The Bristol Gallery to coincide with an international conference on antiquity in the visual and performing arts at the University.



DIETMAR NILL

Bat

Less is more for a hungry bat

19 August 2010

Like a stealth fighter plane, the barbastelle bat uses a sneaky hunting strategy to catch its prey. A team of researchers from the University combined three cutting-edge techniques to uncover the secret of this rare bat's success.

“Throughout all this change we need to stay true to our core values. As a university we’re not here to make a profit; we’re not a business.”

Centenary Campaign

Philanthropic support now ranks as one of the University’s top three non-governmental income streams. To date, over **£54 million** has been donated to Bristol’s Centenary Campaign. The immediate impact of donor support can be seen across the University: students funded by bursaries, academics pursuing new lines of research, updated equipment in departments and new books in the library to name a few.

Among other things, in the past year philanthropic gifts to the University allowed the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry to continue a key connection with a medical school in Mbarara, Uganda, and to expand core curriculum texts for Bristol’s libraries.

Balancing the books

How is Bristol funded, what is the money spent on and how might this change? Andy Nield, Director of Finance, explains the University’s financial position.

This October saw two announcements of fundamental importance to the future sustainability of the higher education sector.

Firstly, Lord Browne published his review into university funding, ‘Securing a sustainable future for higher education’. The review covers many issues, but a key element is the proposal to remove the current fee cap of £3,290 for home undergraduate students and to allow universities to set their own individual fee levels.

This was followed a week later on 20 October by the Government’s announcement of its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The CSR broadly endorses the Browne recommendations and, subject to parliamentary approval, the Government plans to bring forward reforms to allow universities to increase student fees. It also envisages a broadly offsetting reduction in the teaching support grant. The Government made a further announcement in early November setting out its plans for an increase in the cap on student fees to a basic threshold of £6,000 together with a further higher cap of £9,000 subject to conditions.

It’s too early at this stage to assess in any detail how both the sector and Bristol specifically will be affected, however it’s clear that the financial landscape will change fundamentally. What I want to do here is set out our financial position in the context of these national changes and outline what we’re doing to secure our future.

We identified some time ago that to deal with the financial pressures that we already faced (ahead of Browne and the CSR) we needed to make cost savings of around £15m per annum. We then set out a programme to achieve this. We’re having to reduce our staff numbers, both academic and support staff. The way in which our support services in particular are delivered across the University will change radically. We’ve also been addressing the risks and costs associated with pension schemes.

At the same time we need to look at developing our income from other sources. Increasing the number of overseas students will be critical to this, but it needs to be done without changing the fundamental character of the University. Alumni donations will become ever more vital. We also need to position ourselves in important developing research areas with more initiatives such as the National Composites Centre.

As you can see it’s a time of great change. The positive story is that Bristol is in a strong position to face this changing reality. We have a reasonably strong balance sheet. We’ve already taken a series of measures to reduce our core operating cost base and to increase income. But most of all, our reputation will serve us well in these tough times in terms of attracting students, fees and research funding.

Throughout all this change we need to stay true to our core values. As a

Top 12 funders of research at Bristol 2005-09*

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Wellcome Trust | £42,815,568 |
| 2. | British Heart Foundation | £17,476,362 |
| 3. | Royal Society | £11,471,496 |
| 4. | Legacy gifts from alumni and others | £7,595,121 |
| 5. | Leverhulme Trust | £6,550,928 |
| 6. | Gifts from alumni and other people | £5,094,389 |
| 7. | Cancer Research UK | £4,627,092 |
| 8. | Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | £4,187,500 |
| 9. | The Wolfson Foundation | £3,757,168 |
| 10. | Rolls Royce plc | £3,206,292 |
| 11. | GlaxoSmithKline | £2,810,830 |
| 12. | Westland Helicopters Ltd | £2,143,136 |

*excluding Government sources, student fees and service income

university we're not here to make a profit; we're not a business. But to deliver on our objectives we must be financially sustainable. We need to generate enough cash from our operating activities to enable us to finance a programme of capital investment that will allow us to maintain our position as a world-leading university and a powerhouse of learning, discovery and enterprise.



Where does our money come from?

Our total income in 2009/10 was approximately £390m. Our biggest source of income – around £140 million – is teaching and research grants from the Government. Next are research grants and contracts at around £100 million. Student fees provide around £80 million. A combination of alumni donations, charges for student accommodation and services provided to outside bodies, such as industry, provides the remaining.

What do we spend it on?

Our biggest operating cost is staff salaries at around £230 million; that's roughly 60 per cent of our total spend. The rest is a mix of maintaining and running the estate, a raft of non-salary spends, from bursaries for students to AV equipment for lecturers, together with depreciation and financing costs.

Over the next ten years we have plans for a capital investment programme of around £400 million. This is a combination of the need to 'keep the show on the road' and strategic investments in new assets.



Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Water, sanitation and hygiene are key areas supported by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It's given a **\$13 million** grant to the Aquatest Research Programme, an international, multi-disciplinary consortium led by Bristol. Aquatest will be the world's first low-cost, easy-to-use diagnostic tool that will give a clear, reliable indication of water quality and could transform water management in developing countries.



British Heart Foundation

Over the past five years the British Heart Foundation has given **£17,476,382** to fund life-saving heart research at Bristol. In one recent project, researchers at Bristol found a crucial link between the kidneys and the brain that triggers high blood pressure. A major advance occurred when researchers were able to completely prevent high blood pressure by blocking certain brain signals.

The politics of change

Higher education is a subject close to MP Stephen Williams' (BA 1988) heart. He reveals both his personal and political views on the future of its funding to Rosie Dow (BA 2004).



“We’ve had good times but now it’s going to be more famine than feast, so universities need to be ready for scrutiny, and change.”

It’s 13 October 2010. Yesterday, the controversial Browne Report on the future of university funding was released amid a wave of controversy over its recommendation of uncapped student fees. One week from today, the coalition Government will announce spending cuts that many insiders believe could lead to an 80 per cent reduction in university teaching grants. It’s also been 25 years, almost to the day, since Stephen Williams (BA 1988), MP for Bristol West and Liberal Democrat spokesman for higher education, began his history degree at Bristol, when student fees were non-existent and student debt inconceivable. What a difference 25 years can make. So what does Stephen think the future now holds, not only for students, but for universities themselves?

Stephen’s own journey to university and beyond is quite remarkable. Raised in a pre-Thatcher south Wales mining community where the norm at the time was to leave school at 16 without any qualifications, Stephen not only became secretary of the local Social Democratic Party while still at school but was later the only one of his school year to go to university outside Wales. ‘I loved reading, I was always in the library and I worked hard. Well, you don’t get to be an MP without being determined and that’s what I’ve always been, I suppose.’ Stephen admits that ‘surviving domestically at university was very difficult’. He had to be incredibly careful. ‘I’d take out £5 a time from a cash point and absolutely eked it out to the last penny before I allowed myself the next £5.’

Stephen’s situation was very different from that of his Wills Hall peers, who he says were ‘mainly from well-to-do families from southern England’. It’s a demographic he feels also dominates the world of politics that he now inhabits. ‘Cameron, Clegg

and Miliband all went to famous schools and Oxbridge universities, as did most MPs around me – I’m still not the norm,’ he explains. ‘As such I worry that policy-makers may not be informed by real experiences, but by the comparative comfort of their own privileged experiences.’

Stephen’s unease about his fellow MPs’ perspective is apparent when he considers a future with uncapped student fees. ‘I’m very concerned about access for underprivileged young people. Universities like Bristol need to be available to all levels of society, but it’s already been proven that even the most generous grants don’t cover the basic cost of living at university. I see Bristol students working in Somerfield on St Michael’s Hill and I don’t think that can be right; it’s not conducive to studying.’

Given Stephen’s own background, it’s not surprising that this is a subject close to his heart. ‘There are still not enough underprivileged bright people going to university. The Government’s target of 50 per cent participation isn’t only unrealistic, it’s misleading,’ he says. ‘We should worry about who’s going to university, not how many.’ Moreover, Stephen sees the city of Bristol itself as typical of Britain’s dichotomous society. ‘My own constituency is one of the most qualified in the country – full of doctors, academics and engineers. Most children do go on to university here, but just a few streets away in Bristol South the university participation rate is under 15 per cent, the lowest in Britain.’

So what impact does Stephen think the Browne-recommended removal of the tuition fees cap will have on universities? ‘Higher fees will invoke a fundamental shift in universities’ relationship with their students; it will change their whole approach to teaching,’ he says. ‘Students are already



Stephen at the Liberal Democrat's society stall, Freshers' Fair 2010

demanding more contact hours and more prestigious lecturers and their demands will only increase if they have to pay £7,000 a year.' Stephen sees universities like Bristol as likely to be most affected by this shift, and says Bristol 'will have to charge the highest fees in the market to retain its prestige and that means recruiting star professors and flooding timetables with more classes'. Many would say that's a good thing, surely? 'Not necessarily. One of the most valuable things I learnt at university was to motivate myself to study in my own time. School is for teaching you to pass exams; university should be for teaching you to teach yourself.'

However, Stephen recognises the vital importance of student funding in enabling universities like Bristol to keep pace with their overseas competitors. 'Like it or not, universities

cannot be immune from their context. The fee-paying model is a reality in most other developed countries now, so if Bristol wants to compete on a world stage it must be commercially minded.' Stephen's also keen to remind me how dependent universities will still be on public funding in any new regime. 'The vast majority of research will still be Government-funded and research is equally, if not more, important to a university's reputation than teaching. Value for money is now the driver by which universities will operate, for students, yes, but also for the taxpayer. We've had good times but now it's going to be more famine than feast, so universities need to be ready for scrutiny and change.'

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, is a university education still worth it? From Stephen, it's an emphatic 'yes'. He clearly values his Bristol degree

very highly. 'Studying history has been extremely useful to me, both politically and professionally. I can analyse information, I can appreciate the detail in something but I can also take an overall view of it. I can write a quick speech or a long report. Then there's the prestige of having a Bristol degree, which has been of infinite value.'

And there's another side to it. Although we've covered many topics on the theme of higher education, never is Stephen more animated than when he talks about the friends he made at Wills Hall who are still an important part of his life, despite their initial differences. Indeed, he's still a member of the Wills Hall Association, proving that the non-curricular aspects of university can have as much impact on a person as their study time and that perhaps some university

The student disunion

Laura Blake (BA 2009) talks fees, facilities and the future with the man at the heart of Bristol's student politics, James Ashton-Bell (BSc 2009).

“We have certain people who believe we should raise fees, others who want to reduce fees, some who want a graduate tax and others campaigning for free education.”

While researching this article, it took a little time to construct a crystal-clear picture of the National Union of Students' stance on student finance. They strongly oppose the removal of the cap on tuition fees, warning that freedom for universities to compete on fees would give unfair advantage to older, wealthier institutions, who can exploit their 'reputational cachet'. Instead, they're backing a version of Vince Cable's hotly debated progressive graduate tax, embracing the notion that 'contributions must be greater for those who financially benefit most from their university education'.

Trawling the web for a clear statement of the Bristol Students' Union's stance on the subject, however, I hit a virtual dead end.

It's the first issue I mention to the President of the Students' Union, James Ashton-Bell, upon disembarking from the clunky lift and entering his office within Bristol's grey and outdated Students' Union – a fitting place to talk about funding, or the lack of it.

'We intentionally don't have an official stance because we don't feel there's been enough of a conversation to reach a consensus,' says James. 'We have certain people who believe we should raise fees, others who want to reduce fees, some who want a graduate tax and others campaigning for free education.'

In emphasising that no clear stance on the issue exists, James has highlighted the fact that it's one that provokes fierce debate and polarises opinion

within both student and national politics.

So what are his personal views on student finance? 'I think it's fair to say that the current higher education system is soul-searching at the minute,' he declares. 'The most glaring weakness is that we just don't know what place higher education has in our society and who should fund its outcomes.'

As a graduate in politics and economics and an active voice in student representation throughout his studies, it's not surprising that James has strong views on the viability of the graduate tax. 'At first glance it's really appealing in that it seems like you're paying for what you get and what you can afford, rather than paying fees up front,' he says. 'But I have to pick it apart from both a policy and a financial perspective.'

From a policy perspective he believes it has great potential, but 'only in ten years' time'. He points most notably to the significant funding gap which would arise in the period between universities providing the courses and graduates starting to repay even a fraction of the cost, and raises doubts that Vince Cable could find the money within the Treasury to fill that gap at a time of sweeping cuts.

'I think it has to come down to what we can realistically afford *now*. We can either afford fewer universities with fewer programmes and facilities, or we have to increase fees so we can afford more. It's a very stark reality.'

Removing the cap on fees, he says,



seems like the only way forward. But this isn't a conclusion he reaches comfortably, emphasising its consequences for the next generation of students. 'It's *horrendous* for widening participation, which is a huge concern. Regardless of grants and bursaries and how much of that price you're actually paying, you still see that price tag, and people are obviously going to be put off.'

Like me, James was part of the first intake of students to pay top-up fees. I ask what impact paying £7,000 or more a year might have had on his decision to enter higher education. 'I was always set on it, but it would absolutely have made me more hesitant,' he says firmly. 'In a booming economy education is a worthwhile luxury, but in a recession you have to compare its worth with the skills you would develop in employment. Leaving with £40,000 of debt is really significant, and I think a lot of students will think harder about which avenue is more viable for them.'

What seems certain, we agree, is that with an increased price tag comes an increasingly demanding student. Indeed, Bristol has already seen its fair share of student dissent in recent years over issues like contact hours and library facilities. As education becomes more of a commodity and less of a privilege, cancelled seminars, poor feedback or a lack of resources start to be perceived as poor customer service.

He speaks frankly when I ask whether he has seen a return on his own investment, citing few contact hours and independent study as possible indicators that it wasn't particularly good value. 'A lot of students revel in calculating exactly how much each tutorial and lecture costs them,' he says. 'But you need to take a step back and look at the skills, experiences, activities and the network you can access at university. These are the things that

round a person. In that sense, it's certainly value for money.'

In light of his mentioning these extra factors which give added value to his degree, I'm keen to ask about his perception of the impact of philanthropy on the student experience at Bristol. 'I've seen so many student projects funded by alumni that otherwise just wouldn't have got off the ground,' he says. 'It's been incredibly positive for those students involved.' He says that further down the line he'd like to support non-academic student activities.

James is aware that, from his privileged perspective, he knows more than most students about the impact alumni donations have had at Bristol. He worries that the top-up-fee-paying generation of graduates will be less inclined to show philanthropic support in the future.

Though there's no one-size-fits-all solution to the complex issues we've discussed, one thing is certainly clear: if universities want the next generation of demanding and debt-burdened students to see their education as an investment in their future, then they must show that they are investing in students. Universities need to demonstrate this investment – where the money is being spent and how it's benefiting students. 'That transparency has never existed before, but it's now more important than ever,' says James. ■

**“
Leaving with
£40,000 of debt is
really significant.”**





Alumni Travel Programme 2011



Turkey: The Coast of Ancient Lycia
13-20 June 2011 £1,590

Led by the University of Bristol's own Dr Tamar Hodos, this gulet cruise along one of the loveliest parts of Turkey's Mediterranean coast is exclusively available to alumni and their friends/family.

The area has wonderful classical cities like Xanthos, Letoon and Patara and the pretty coastal towns of Kas and Kalkan are littered with Lycian remains. Travelling aboard a graceful traditional gulet with every modern convenience, sample the excellent local cuisine. There is plenty of time for relaxation and swimming in crystal clear bays, as well as the daily explorations ashore, where Dr Hodos is on hand to bring the picturesque ruins to life.

Temple World IMA pioneered alumni travel in the UK, and is proud to have provided an exciting travel programme for University of Bristol alumni for more than eight years.

Travel with like-minded individuals in the company of an expert lecturer, while helping the university at the same time - a proportion of the tour price is donated to the University.



Art & Architecture of Imperial Morocco
15-26 October 2011 £2,750

In conjunction with Oxford University, this tour includes special access to museums arranged by trip scholar Prof. James Allan, lecturer in Islamic Art and Archaeology at Oxford. Experience wonderful food and exotic bazaars and visit the imperial cities of Fes, Meknes, Rabat and Marrakech, as well as fascinating Tetouan and Volubilis.



Galápagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador
24 November - 6 December 2011 £4,350

Accompanied by Oxford University ornithologist Ben Sheldon, this popular tour available jointly with alumni from Oxford visits Colonial Quito with its many beautiful churches, and the scenic Avenue of the Volcanoes, before flying to the Galápagos.

Embark on a seven night cruise through the islands on board our exclusively chartered first-class yacht, Coral I. The Galápagos are home to an amazing variety of wildlife and birds – red and blue footed boobies, frigate birds, giant tortoises, marine iguanas, sea lions and many more. Extensions are also available to the Amazon Rainforest, a world of colourful bird life and adventure.

For an itinerary see our website or contact Temple World IMA, 13 The Avenue, Richmond, TW9 2AL
TEL: +44 (0) 20 8940 4114 Email: alumni@templeworld.com Website: www.templeworld.com ATOL 2903



DO YOU:

- like to **run?**
- want to support the fight against **cancer?**

Well, you can do both by running the **LONDON MARATHON** in aid of the University's Cancer Research Fund.

We have six charity places up for grabs in the 2011 Virgin London Marathon.

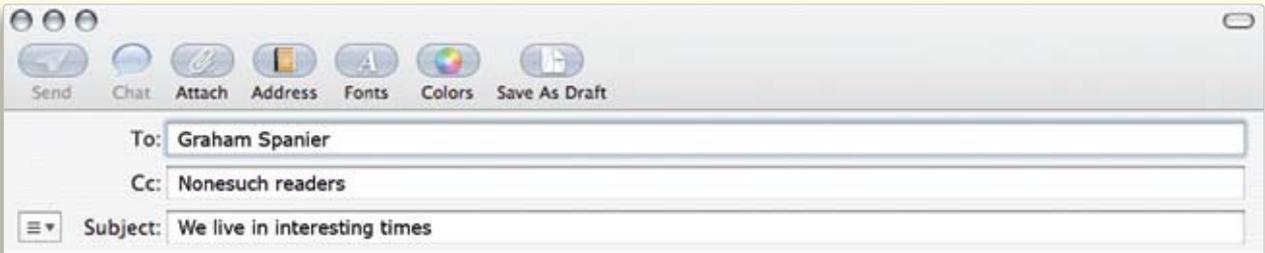
We're also asking alumni who have already got a ballot place to join the Bristol team. The bigger the team, the more money we can raise to help fight cancer.

The Bristol Cancer Research Fund awards vital pump-priming grants to researchers who are looking at ways to prevent and treat the major cancers.

To find out more and apply for a place, please contact the Alumni Relations team on +44 (0)117 928 7939 or at alumni@bristol.ac.uk.

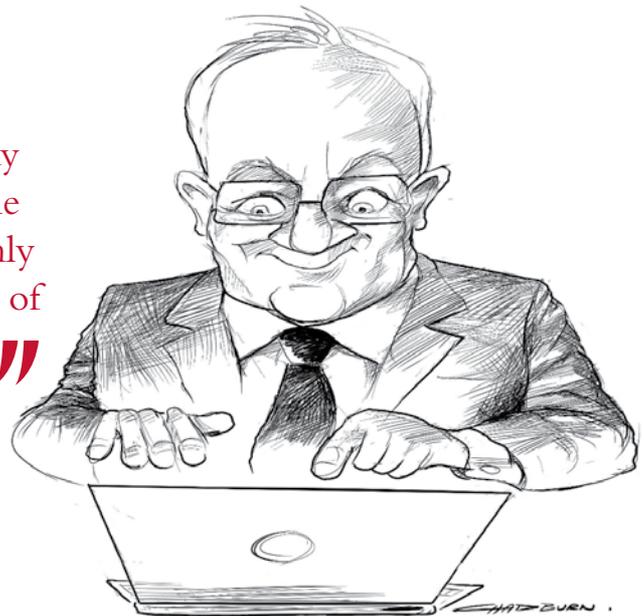


what do you care about



As UK universities face up to the prospect of cuts in public funding, can they learn anything from their counterparts in the US? Vice-Chancellor Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD) exchanges emails with Dr Graham Spanier, President of Pennsylvania State University.

“
 The challenge for me is to persuade politicians that what you’ve described is the only way forward and also to persuade the British public that this is the only way to maintain the excellence of their universities.
 ”



From: Eric Thomas
 To: Graham Spanier
 Cc: Nonesuch readers
 Subject: We live in interesting times

There is said to be an old Chinese curse on your enemies: ‘May you live in interesting times’. Wikipedia questions whether the curse actually exists but everybody uses it and knows what it means. Well, in the UK higher education sector these are interesting times. Nearly all our competitor countries have sought to deal with the recession by investing in universities. The UK Government has done the opposite; nearly £1 billion of funding has already been cut and there’s more to come. Increasing student fees still causes considerable problems for the Liberal Democrats in our coalition government.

In the US you’ve lived with decreasing state support for higher education over a much longer period of time. I’d be very interested in the strategies you adopted in order to ensure both the academic and financial success of Penn State when faced with that challenge.

 From: Graham Spanier
 To: Eric Thomas
 Cc: Nonesuch readers
 Subject: Re: We live in interesting times

I guess the curse came from a westerly direction, since it reached our shores before yours. Public universities in the US have witnessed a steady decline over the last decade in our appropriations from our state governments, which had traditionally been a significant source of support. Tuition fees are now the single largest source of income at universities like Penn State, and this trend is expected to continue.

☰ Subject: **We live in interesting times**

On the other hand, there's been a recent increased investment from our federal government in research and student financial aid, and as you point out, in other countries – China is an excellent example – there has been massive investment in government support of higher education over the past decade.

As I recently pointed out at a higher education conference in the UK, the trends are inevitable, both in the US and the UK, in part because higher education is increasingly seen by the public and by elected officials as a private rather than a public good, and in part because our governments are desperately short of cash. Universities like ours can best cope with such change and maintain our excellence and global competitiveness if we are allowed to become more independent of government regulation, allowed to be more entrepreneurial, are freed of external control of tuition fees, and encouraged to be more agile in the arenas of university–industry partnerships and private fundraising. We've pursued such a course here, and it's working.

From: Eric Thomas
To: Graham Spanier
Cc: Nonesuch readers
Subject: RE: We live in interesting times

There are many in this country who support your logic, yet there appears to be unwillingness to fully grasp the nettle. The state is withdrawing its funding and university education has repeatedly been shown to give substantial lifetime personal economic benefit. In fact, our current arrangements mean that no student has to pay fees up front and they repay when they can afford to through tax collection. Furthermore, these loans are at a very low rate of interest. To me, they seem like the best investment a young person could make.

However, it doesn't play out like that. The discourse contains words like 'debt averse' and 'burden of debt'. One of our coalition partners committed to stopping fees within six years in their manifesto at the last election. How they thought they would fund universities in the middle of other swingeing public sector cuts remains a mystery.

Was there a journey for your students and families to travel before they accepted fee raises at great state universities like yours or did the more independent nature of the North American people mean they were prepared to make the investment in order to get a first-class education?

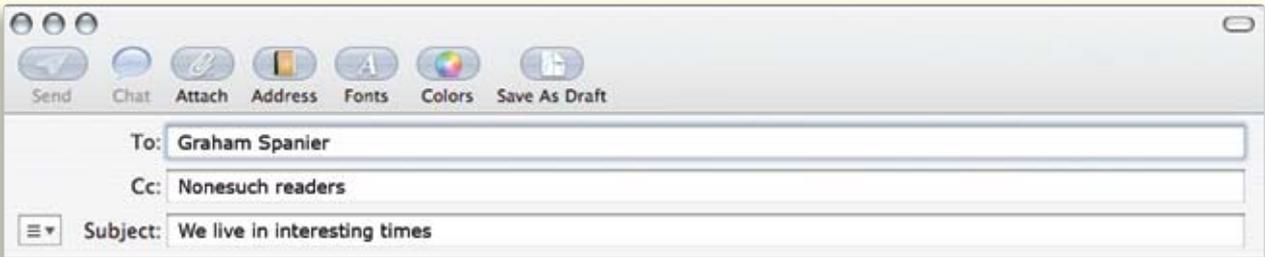
From: Graham Spanier
To: Eric Thomas
Cc: Nonesuch readers
Subject: Re: We live in interesting times

I certainly understand the angst. As one of the most expensive public universities in the US, more than 75 per cent of our students receive some form of financial aid, and 60 per cent of our students receive loans, with an average debt of \$28,000 at graduation. But a recent national study shows that the investment is worth it.

University graduates make nearly double in lifetime earnings than a high-school graduate makes, and those with graduate or professional degrees make substantially more. And fortunately, as in the UK, the payback period for loans is tailored to begin after graduation.

I had heard that some of your politicians in the UK want to get rid of tuition fees altogether. This would be great if it came about through proportionate funding increases, but it's likely a formula for failure if you're expected to get there by 'trimming' the budget. As I once heard the famous statistician W. Edwards Deming say, 'You can't cut your way to quality'.

I have taught at six universities in my career and have been an administrator at four of them, and I've found that no matter whether the tuition fee is low or high, everyone says that it is too high. Yet students and their families will pay for quality, they will sacrifice for the kind of education they aspire to, and above all they want a first-class education. Whatever you do, don't sacrifice quality, even if it means raising tuition fees. Our students accept this philosophy, even if they don't verbalize it, and as president I do what I can to help by trying to be frugal and efficient and spending a lot of my time



raising money for scholarships for the students most in need.

Philanthropy and alumni relations in particular have become a significant focus for universities in the US and occupy anything from 20–40 per cent of the time of a typical college and university president. Given that tuition fees rise every year, we work hard to offset that burden by seeking gifts to fund scholarships for students most in need. We use funds for merit-based scholarships to attract the most brilliant students. Philanthropy also helps us to establish endowed chairs for professors, build new buildings, develop new academic programs, support our athletic programs, and provide funds for study abroad, to name just a few examples. To give you some idea of the scope of philanthropy here, we are in the midst of a \$2-billion fundraising campaign at Penn State that spans seven-and-a-half years.

From: Eric Thomas
To: Graham Spanier
Cc: Nonesuch readers
Subject: Re: We live in interesting times

I couldn't agree with you more. As public funding decreases, it's inevitable that the individual will have to shoulder more of the cost. We must ensure that the repayment of the cost occurs at a time when the individual can afford it. We're already committed to additional student support. At Bristol our bursaries ensure that the most disadvantaged will incur no living costs at all in their three years here as long as they're moderately disciplined in their spending.

The challenge for me is to persuade politicians that what you've described is the only way forward and also to persuade the British public that this is the only way to maintain the excellence of their universities.

“
 If I can help you and your colleagues in the UK in any way, please call, since the University of Bristol is a valued partner and I know that the future quality of higher education in the UK and your competitiveness in the global marketplace are likely at stake.”



Subject: We live in interesting times

Philanthropy is becoming more important in the UK. You may remember Penn State was kind enough to host a visit in 2003 of a UK Government Taskforce I was chairing that made recommendations about increasing philanthropy to higher education. We were very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of your staff. The subsequent report, the so-called Thomas Report, galvanised activity in this area and the UK saw over £500 million of philanthropic income last year. Bristol has a campaign for £100 million based around our centenary. Alumni have been keen to support us and we're confident of success. However, it will be a long time before our target is \$2 billion. Still, from little acorns ...

Wish me luck and many thanks for your wise words.

From: [Graham Spanier](#)

To: [Eric Thomas](#)

Cc: [Nonesuch readers](#)

Subject: [Re: We live in interesting times](#)

I do wish you luck, but more importantly you'll need to polish your best skills of persuasion. I've found that there is law of nature that says that as times get tougher economically, legislatures and parliaments are inclined to step up regulation and intervene in the setting of tuition, rather than relax their oversight to grant more independence. I believe the reason is that they're trying to demonstrate to their constituents that they're advocating for their well being by keeping tuition low even while cutting back on appropriations.

If I can help you and your colleagues in the UK in any way, please call, since the University of Bristol is a valued partner and I know that the future quality of higher education in the UK and your competitiveness in the global marketplace are likely at stake. ■



Dr Graham Spanier, President of Pennsylvania State University



Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004) has been Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol since 2001

Is it worth it?

Alumni share their thoughts on the value of a Bristol degree.



Owen Peachy (BSc Maths and Philosophy 2008)

I'm a fairly recent graduate, so it's hard for me to put a value on my degree in terms of my career, although it clearly helped me get my position as a trainee accountant.

But in terms of the value it's been to me personally, all I can say is that it's meant the world. The University and the city have given me so much, not least all the wonderful friends I've made.

I've always said that to succeed in the workplace you need to have the whole package. My Bristol experience wasn't just about developing academically. The active halls, societies and clubs offered me opportunities to develop other skills. I threw myself into university life. I feel like I made the most of my time at Bristol, and encouraged others to do so as well.

I'm still very involved in the University. I sit on the on the Convocation Committee and the Manor Hall Association Committee.

I really value this continued relationship and knowing that I'm part of the Bristol community. Perhaps I feel that particularly strongly as I stayed on and settled in Bristol. When I started my new job, I was amazed at the number of Bristol graduates working for the company.

I do consider my Bristol degree a good investment. Relatively speaking I'm very fortunate in that I paid the fees of £1,200 a year. Looking at what it might be in the future, I feel like I've been lucky.

DAVE PRATT

Ian Hosier (BSc Maths 1972)

I arrived in Bristol in 1969 to study mathematics. In those days, relatively few working-class kids got that sort of chance. There were limited grants available and certainly no student loans.

It was very tough for my parents to support me, but they never once quibbled. They recognised – probably better than me at the time – just how important an opportunity it was. In fact, Dad didn't live to see me finish, but Mum insisted that I carry on after his death at the end of my second year. I owe them many things, but the support (financial and otherwise) throughout my degree course is right up at the top of the list.

At the time, Bristol was considered second only to Cambridge in respect of mathematics. Cambridge would have been closer for me, but even more of a stretch financially. So, with the support of my mathematics teacher, I chose Bristol.

I never regretted that decision as Bristol was a delightful place to be and there were lots of positive developments in the department at the time. It had just opened a new building and was embracing the then very new concept of computer science.

Unlike some other universities, and unlike the way I had been taught at school during my O- and A-levels, Bristol didn't employ 'rote' learning. I can still remember the shock to my system during the first few weeks at Bristol and wondering if I would ever cope with this 'conceptual' approach. Fortunately, I did, and ended-up with a 2.1 in June 1972.

Not only that, but the 'conceptual analysis' capability I gained has been invaluable ever since.



Laura Blake (BA Philosophy 2009)

Three years at Bristol changed my life in innumerable ways; I moved 300 miles away from home and fell in love with a new city, made wonderful friends, and embraced opportunities and experiences which have since shaped both my career and my outlook on life.

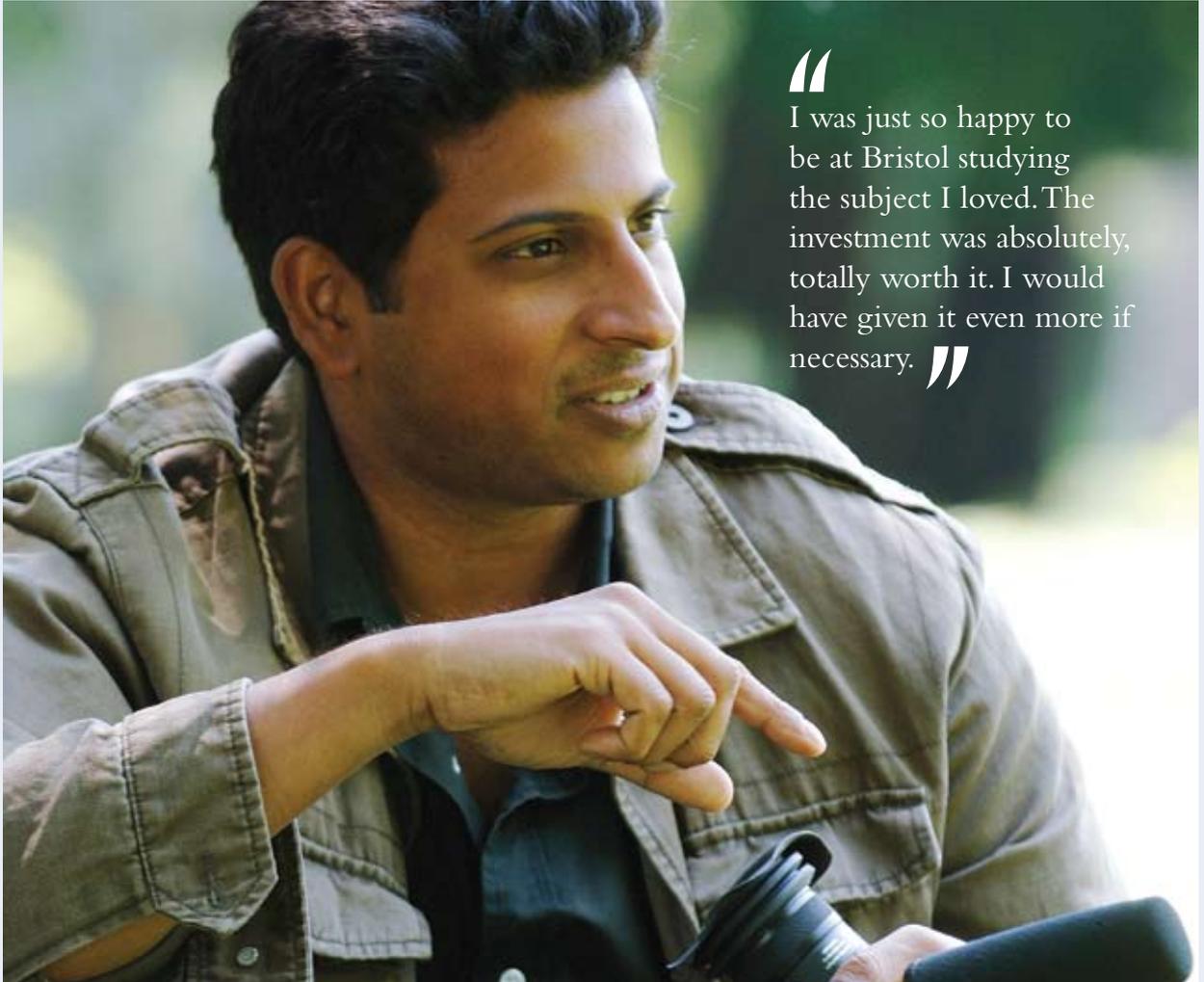
Studying philosophy was rigorous and demanding, but hugely enjoyable. It satisfied my inquisitive nature and gave me a chance to shine. It also equipped me with the ability to think my way strategically and creatively around problems or tasks.

The chance to get involved in organising a charity ball during my first year in halls, combined with my appreciation of the opportunity to study at university, had a tremendous impact on my life. My vague ambition to be a journalist transformed into a passion for fundraising, and I now work as a fundraiser within higher

education – a great cause, and a great environment within which to put my rigorous and creative philosophical thinking to good use.

As a student paying over £3,000 a year in fees it wasn't an investment I made carelessly. I made it knowing how much I would take away from that experience, both in terms of studying the subject I loved and the future opportunities that would arise from it. Now, doing a job I enjoy for a cause that I'm passionate about, I feel I'm already starting to see the money, time and hard work I invested pay off.

I do, however, think it's important to emphasise that you get out of university what you put in. If what you put in is just enough to get your grades and to know most of the local pub landlords, you might leave feeling a little short-changed. I realised very early on that my Bristol degree alone was not a golden ticket – regardless of where you study. It takes a lot more than a degree to land your perfect job.



“
I was just so happy to be at Bristol studying the subject I loved. The investment was absolutely, totally worth it. I would have given it even more if necessary.”

Asitha Ameresekere (BA Classics 1993)

It's great to have that immediate connection with people. I'm forever bumping into and working alongside people who went to Bristol. There seems to be a lot of them involved in theatre and film-making, which I guess isn't too surprising given the huge amount of theatre and creative stuff that goes on at the University and in the city.

I've a strong affinity with my department. There were only seven of us who graduated in pure classics in my year. It was a tight-knit group; we really got to know each other well and still stay in touch.

Studying classics at Bristol was the absolute pinnacle for me. I've been a classics enthusiast all my life, so to be able to study the subject I loved in such depth and with world-leading lecturers was just an incredible experience for me. The academics were the ones writing the textbooks – you really only get that in a few universities.

I've learnt so much through the study of classics. It informs everything I do. It sounds strange but it formed my perspective on life. I find the small aspects of life really quite interesting, and I'm fascinated by families – both of these are at the heart of Greek tragedy and comedy. You can see these themes coming through in my writing and my films. It's such a natural leap from classics to storytelling. So for a very

'non-vocational' degree course it's had a big impact on my vocation.

The department backed our endeavours and supported us to put on our own plays. I'd been writing before I came to Bristol, but it was only at Bristol that I was given a platform to take it further, and the department and the University encouraged this type of expression.

I didn't have any expectations about what my degree would give me. I was just so happy to be at Bristol studying the subject I loved. The investment was absolutely, totally worth it. I would have given it much more if necessary. Classics has stayed with me and influenced everything I do, and I count myself extremely lucky.

Andrew and Eileen (née Murphy) Williamson (BA Modern Languages 1968)

On a personal level, the primary benefit of my time at Bristol was finding my lifelong soulmate. I was a year ahead of Eileen and was the first man that she met at Bristol. I fell for her immediately – a ‘coup de foudre’ – despite already having a girlfriend.

When Emeritus Professor August Closs invited us to tea, his immediate advice was that we should enjoy ourselves and not spend all our time in the library and, long term, work at what we wanted, rather than had, to do. I certainly achieved the former: of four generations of graduates, I’m the only one not to have gained a first. In our professional lives we’ve lived and worked in three continents, thanks to the excellent preparation, both linguistic and cultural, that Bristol gave us.

I hate the term ‘employability’ in relation to a degree. I’ve always believed that the purpose of a university education is to develop one’s scholarship, while the duty of an employer is to train its staff to be occupationally fit for purpose. And what actually clinched my entry to the City was probably the fact that the personnel director recognised my old school tie as being the same as his father-in-law’s rather than my having a degree from Bristol.

In Eileen’s case, a Bristol degree, plus a York PGCE, undoubtedly helped secure her first teaching job at a leading independent school in London, but was no match for her head of department’s vindictive disapproval of her being married, which eventually drove her out. In later and more recent years, however, a Bristol degree has almost always ensured her an interview, and very often secured an appointment, as the University’s reputation has continued to stand out.



Lara King (BA English 2007)

Tuition fees, rent, hefty textbooks and far too many nice pubs for one small city; if my Bristol degree had come with an itemised receipt, the cost of my BA in English would have seemed enormous. But the true value of my three years at university could never fit on to a slip of paper.

I made friends at Bristol with whom I still live, work and travel. My first job after leaving university was secured because a Bristol course-mate recommended me for the role. The students I once shared lectures and hall bars with are now colleagues, contacts, confidants and even case studies in my work as a journalist.

Of course, the qualification itself has come in useful. I got to spend three years discussing and dissecting literature with others who shared my passion for it. My first-class honours in English helped me gain entry to a postgraduate journalism course, which in turn led to a place on the *Daily Mail*’s graduate trainee scheme.

But some of my most valuable experiences at university were gained outside the classroom. The Careers Service offered a series of paid internships, and through this scheme

I spent two years working part-time in the alumni office, helping produce publications including *Nonesuch* and receiving training in writing and editing. I use these skills on a daily basis in my current job.

When you add all those things together, the value of my Bristol degree can’t be expressed with a pound sign. I chose to study at the University because I liked the look of the course and admired its academic reputation, but what I left with was far more than a qualification. Doing any university degree is an expensive investment, but my three years at Bristol left me much richer intellectually, socially and emotionally – if not financially.

However, while my generation felt hard done by when it came to university funding, I fear for those who want to follow in our footsteps. The Browne review has suggested drastic changes to the system, and prestigious universities such as Bristol are expected to be allowed to charge up to £9,000 a year. Would I still make the same choices if I were considering applying to university today? I’m not sure. I couldn’t put a price on my degree – but I feel very lucky that I didn’t have to.

Peter Vuni (MEd 2009)

Before I came to Bristol, I worked as a head teacher in Sudan. After my degree, I returned to Sudan and got a job as an Education Project Officer for Concern Worldwide. I now work as an Outreach Advisor for Sudan Interactive Instruction Project, where I'm responsible for planning and implementing state education annual work plans. My life has been transformed and I've Bristol to thank for this.

I didn't expect as much, as friends of mine had been to university in the UK and still hadn't managed to get such good jobs back home. People don't just want to know that you went to university in the UK; they want to

know which one. Thankfully, Bristol has a very good reputation in my country.

I earned a very small salary as a head teacher; around \$300 a year. In my first job after Bristol I earned \$1,300. Now I earn \$2,000. So, yes, it's had a huge impact on my financial position, and I'm able to send my children to a better school.

The degree hasn't just benefited me; it's benefited my country too. The work I'm doing now is improving the quality of the education system in Sudan. The knowledge I gained about education through my course is very relevant to the work I do. I've been able to pass this on to others, including state officials, by training them in

education management.

When I received the Hodgkin Scholarship I knew I would have to leave my wife and two small children behind for a year. I had to do this to progress in life, and my wife agreed and supported my decision. Now we're all very happy.



Jason Mayes (MEng Computer Science 2008)

My Bristol experience has helped define who I am today. My lecturers were involved in new and exciting research areas, defining the things we will be using tomorrow. For me this was related to the next generation of mobile devices, reality mining and social networks.

At first I wondered why my course placed emphasis on developing business plans. My thesis wasn't just another research paper, it actually had to be developed and pitched to real investors. But now I cannot thank the department enough for integrating this into the course as it truly does

make you better prepared for the real business world, and confident too. Bristol graduates stand out in the crowd – fact.

So what did this lead to? Great memories, experiences and contacts. I am now working for XMOS, a global semiconductor company which was actually a start-up from Bristol's Department of Computer Science back in the day. Outside of this I've also started my own company Pure42. My experience is not a one-off – a number of my course friends have also gone on to start their own successful businesses.

Dr Sylvia McLauchlan (MB ChB 1959)

My degree in medicine was the key to a fulfilling and flexible career. I've been able to change direction at different times in my life, duck in and out of employment, live abroad and have a family. I worked at the Royal Infirmary for a year after I graduated, got married, had children, worked as a GP, worked in Switzerland and Holland, did an MSc at Manchester

University, went into Public Health and finally became Public Health Director at Ealing Health Authority. After retiring, I was Director General of the Stroke Association for four years.

There were quite a few women studying medicine at Bristol; I think it was quite pioneering in this regard. The broad basic training we received as part of our degree was really top quality and set us up well for our careers in medicine. To be honest, I

loved the course, and I've got great satisfaction from my career.

Stephen de Garis (MB ChB 1959) tracked us all down about 10 years ago and organised a 40-year reunion. We had a fantastic time and have kept in touch ever since.

The six years I spent at Bristol were a marvellous investment; indeed, I don't think I realised at the time just how important they were.



Hilary Abrahams (BSc Sociology 1998, PhD Social Policy 2004)

Looking back over the 15 years since I took my first degree, I know that the three years I spent as a mature student at Bristol reshaped my world and changed the direction of my life in totally unexpected ways.

To begin with, from life as a senior personnel manager – private office, secretary and responsibility for the safety, welfare and well-being of over 1,000 people – I became a student, responsible only for myself. I had the freedom to explore ideas, read widely, challenge accepted ways of thinking and to listen to lecturers who had spent years in research and study. I found it exhausting, exhilarating and liberating.

I think I was fortunate in that there were quite a few other mature students in my cohort, so I didn't feel as isolated as I might have done if I had been the only one. Instead, there was a constant interchange of ideas and opinions across all ages and I think that was to everyone's advantage. I still have close friends from that period and, once study was over, other friends from among my former teachers.

Mature students tend to have more responsibilities than those coming straight from school or college and juggling study around the family, maintaining contact with other friends and increasing caring responsibilities wasn't always easy. I certainly couldn't have managed without the wholehearted support of my husband, who welcomed new ideas and enjoyed meeting new friends and debating

long into the night.

Once the window had opened on my new world, I could never have closed it. Having gained a first, much to my surprise, life changed again; I stayed on to do my doctorate, researching the support needs of women who leave abusive relationships. That has resulted in two books, which have sold in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the US, as well as in the UK. I have addressed conferences and been involved in advising government departments – all activities that, hopefully, are beginning to influence policy and practice.

I could never have foreseen these changes to my life and I've gained so much from the experience. A good investment? Unquestionably for me and, I believe, for society in general.

**Meryl (née Harrison) Coleclough
(BA French and Spanish 1986)**

I had no idea what use my degree would be. This was 1982 and I was the first person in my family to go to university. I came in part because my school expected it and I was keen to grow up out of sight of a large extended family. But I did French simply because I loved it and was good at it.

Was my degree a good investment? This wasn't a relevant question back then. There was no financial barrier to coming, and in the early 1980s there were no jobs to stay home for. I was on a near-maximum grant with no tuition fees to pay. If you were careful with money, you could manage.

Did it change my life? Undoubtedly. But the biggest change was just

coming to university, being with bright creative people, and having the chance to do new things. Although I kept up with my studies, I gradually came to spend more and more time stage-managing plays in the Union's Winston Theatre. I worked the follow-spot at Anson Room concerts, helped run the World University bookshop and taught English to a family of refugees newly arrived from Uganda.

The wealth of some of my fellow students took my breath away, but to be honest it was pleasant to be far away from the strikes, and the dole office, and the skinhead racists who then terrorised my home town, a recession-hit Coventry.

And when I graduated, I was free to do what I liked, with no debts to pay back. Bristol was well regarded by employers on the milk round: I took

my 2:1 to a good job in the City. I've been an accountant, a journalist, headed a Council PR team.

I feel very privileged to have studied at Bristol and to have had it all paid for. I do ask myself whether I would have gone to university at all if it had meant taking on the debt students do today. Would I have gone somewhere cheaper or felt obliged to study something more practical, rather than studying my subject for its own sake? Certainly I would have had to find work to pay the rent, not learn to build stage sets.

But Bristol's longest lasting influence, and the one for which I am most thankful, has been the medical student I interviewed for the student newspaper. He was sat in a bath of jelly in a supermarket foyer, raising funds for RAG. He's my husband.

Simon Berrill (BA History 1984)



I can't put a financial value on my degree, because I didn't use it as a means to a lucrative career. After realising late in my second year that I would have to do something after I graduated, and that all I really wanted to do was write, I found my way into journalism, an option I could equally well have followed without going to university at all.

Looking back, I arrived in Bristol very unfocused. I was the first person in my family to go to university, so I didn't have specific expectations, and I studied the subject I liked best at school, without much thought of where it was going to lead me. That probably didn't matter as much then as it does today because in the early '80s you could still live on a student grant, and, amazing though it may seem now, I graduated without any debt.

I think the prestige of simply having a degree has helped me more since I changed direction and moved to Spain in 1999. Degrees are respected more here than in the UK and mine meant I was taken more seriously by employers, even though a history degree was totally irrelevant to what I was trying to do.

History has remained a lifelong passion, but the most important thing I learned at Bristol was probably how to live independently and organise

my own life. For me, though, lifelong university friendships have largely proved to be a myth, and I'm in touch with just one person from my student days, although I also developed a love for Bristol itself, and, if I ever returned to the UK, it would certainly be the place I would most like to live.

Having a student daughter, now in her second year at Cambridge, has made me wonder how I would have coped under the present system, and I'm honestly not sure that I would be prepared to take on the kind of debt that graduates routinely have to shoulder nowadays.

Strangely, though, my daughter and other students I know seem to be no more career-orientated than I was, simply accepting the student loan as something they have to live with and listening with vague disbelief to my tales of the good old days when the Government paid the bills.

**Tony Kendrick (BSc Physics
1979, PhD Physics 1992)**

The crucial value of my Bristol degree was making me understand what I didn't know and where I could look for answers. Throughout my career I've had to constantly learn new skills and almost reinvent myself every couple of years. I could only do this with the love of learning I developed at Bristol.

In the era when I first attended Bristol, state funding of students was seen as a benefit primarily to the country, not to the individual student. It would have been very difficult for my family to have had to pay the full cost of my university education. I consider myself very fortunate to have been through university in the late '70s. I think the full consequences of the ill-considered student-loan system will not be realised for many years. I'm sure many academically gifted students from middle- to low-income families will choose not to take the risk of a university education when the Government keeps changing the financial goalposts. Ultimately the country will lose out.

In short my Bristol degree has opened many doors and enabled me to develop the 'soft skills' to enjoy my career, and that career has been beneficial to the UK, the Netherlands and the US! Now I'm training to be a teacher, and intend to work in education in the UK, encouraging the next generation of scientists.

“
I think the full
consequences of the
ill-considered student-
loan system will not be
realised for many years.”



**Shi Liang, Tom (MSc Economics,
Finance and Management 2007)**

The biggest thing my time at Bristol gave me was a broader mind. I studied alongside and lived with people from all over the world, and this had a huge impact on me, shaping me into a better man. I shared a flat with five others and we were all from different countries: New Zealand, UK, US, Japan and Thailand. It was a fantastic experience.

In China we haven't traditionally been exposed to different ways of doing things. Bristol life equipped me with a respect for diversity and new ideas, and this has had a very positive impact on my career.

After graduating I took a job in a bank, and then founded two companies. I also worked with Evonik Degussa, a Fortune 500 company, responsible for the mergers and acquisitions in the Greater China region. Recently I joined Shanghai Pharmaceuticals Holding Corporation. In this job I'm collaborating with guys from the top companies all around the world. Thanks to my Bristol

experience, we can communicate easily with each other.

It's great to meet up with my friends from Bristol back in Shanghai. When you're in a different country you can feel homesick, so the friendships you make with people from your own country are deeply rooted. In pragmatic terms, most of us work in the financial services so we can be of great help to each other. Also, if I meet a Bristol graduate we have an instant connection because we have a shared experience.

One of the main reasons I chose Bristol was because of its world ranking. But the biggest problem faced by Bristol graduates returning to China to get a job is that many employers there don't know how good the University is. I think Bristol needs to promote its image to employers in China. If it does this, then, in my opinion, a Bristol degree will be an even better investment.

I wanted to come away from Bristol with two things: a distinction and an international perspective. I believe I got both, and much, much more.

**Jaya Chakrabarti (BSc Physics
1993, MSc 1995)**

Coming from a family where my mother is a doctor and my father a mathematician turned teacher turned researcher, I had a real appreciation for science. And the best thing about any science degree (but physics in particular) is that it instils in you a number of inherent transferable skills and develops your lateral thinking ability. This has lent itself to the industry I'm now in – the creative industries. With physics being quite a male-dominated subject, I turned from a rather shy wallflower of a girl into one that had no problems working with men on an equal basis.

Did it all turn out like I expected? No. Not at all. I think I was expecting and expected to follow an academic career (it's an Indian thing!). In a different universe perhaps that's what I am – a post-doc wandering from university to university looking for tenure. What it gave me was much more. I met my husband on my degree course. And my confidence with numbers, abstract concepts and people grew out of my degree and my interactions with the friends I made on my course.

My parents actually footed the bill on this one, but I'd say a resounding yes, it was a good investment. My experience during my degrees shaped me as a person and as a business leader. The good, the bad and even the ugly moments taught me many lessons. My kids will definitely go to university. It's not just a degree course – it's a life-changing experience, and the city you choose can have just as much of an impact as the subject. Bristol gave me that: a beautiful city in which to transform into an adult and a world-class university to teach me all that other stuff I'm now using in new and interesting ways.



Edmund Shillabeer (BVSc 1964)

Without my Bristol degree I would have achieved nothing as it opened the door to a noble profession. And in the process of working towards that degree, my extra-mural activities enabled me to clap eyes on a Redland College student at a RAG Ball called Barbara whom I chased all evening until I ended up walking her home. We celebrated our 47th wedding anniversary last August and have three lovely children to be proud of as well; I would say that's had quite a big impact on my life.

Bristol was my second choice, having had a provisional place to study

Veterinary Science at Peterhouse College, Cambridge. When Cambridge didn't work out, Bristol, after a daunting interview, came to my rescue by giving me a place. This enabled me to follow my dreams of helping animals through doctoring and raising a family.

My father was wealthy in character and attitude but, as a salesman, didn't have much spare money. To pay for things like expensive course books, I had to work when I wasn't studying. I slated roofs, dug drains, swept cement dust from a concrete production tower, sold soap door to door, collected fixed-odds football coupons from high-rise flats in Bristol,

delivered letters as a Christmas casual postman, picked blackcurrants and sold ice-creams in an A38 lay-by. But it was all worth it.



Trevor Jagger (BSc Physics 1946)

My Bristol degree has been of huge importance to me. The physics course itself was a revelation. I hadn't enjoyed physics much at school, though I loved pure mathematics. But the lecturers at Bristol were magnificent and, not only that, they were friendly. My fellow students were so able, several of them making real contributions in their later research.

We had a good social life, much of it

based around Wills Hall. I recall with delight taking part in cricket, football, tennis, squash, table tennis, snooker, drama, weekly dances at the Victoria Rooms and firewatching duties at the Royal Fort building.

I had no expectations about my degree as no-one in my family had ever been to university, both my parents having left school at 13. Indeed, I didn't choose Bristol. My headmaster directed me to go there. Remember, it was wartime and you did as you were told!

A good investment? And how! My investment was only in time. All my expenses were covered by a generous state bursary. Our course was subsidised as we were expected to go into radar by one route or another. About 30 of us began the course. At the end of the first year, ten were recruited into the Royal Signals. At the end of the second year, ten more were sent into the Navy. The rest of us were destined for the Telecommunications Research Establishment in Malvern had the war not ended. ■

And what about aspiring Bristol students? We went along to the University's open day to talk to students-to-be and their parents. Here are just some of the things that the bright young hopefuls had to say about the value of a Bristol degree.

'It's got a great reputation – especially for my subject. I want to go into journalism, and graduating from Bristol would prepare me for later life; the way the department operates and teaches would be a great foundation.' Zoe Cantley from Oxford, hoping to study English.

'It's such a cultural city, so studying at Bristol would give me more than just a degree. There's a really vibrant music scene, which would obviously complement my course. It's very competitive to get into music at Bristol, so people will know that you're good because you have to be good to get in.' Luke Thomas from Shrewsbury, applying to study music.

'It's the same as the other Russell Group universities. I'd be really happy to get in and graduate from Bristol. Employers look well upon it.' Rory Bain from Lincolnshire, wants to study medicine.

'Graduating from Bristol would be really good in terms of getting a job later. It will lead on to other things as employers rate it very highly.' Alice Green from Sheffield, aspiring to study modern languages.

'Bristol's very highly thought of, particularly in the field of modern languages. Employers take a Bristol degree very seriously. I was a student here, and I know that it's a great city to live in.' Sara Green (BA 1983), Alice's mum.

Public domain

Dr Wendy Thomson (PhD 1988) is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the School of Social Work at McGill University, Canada. She has had a distinguished career in public services in the UK, which included working as Tony Blair's Chief Adviser on Public Service Reform.

My values are about making the lives of the most vulnerable people better, and one way to do that is through better public services.

How do you make public services work for those who need them most? There's a huge gap between what's written in policy and the actual experience on the ground. That's what drove me to doctoral studies, to find out what public servants could do to reduce that gap.

I received a fellowship from the Canadian government, so I could pretty much choose any university in the world for my PhD. That was immense fun!

Bristol has a great reputation. Peter Townsend was one of the big draws. He was a great social policy figure of our times. His understanding of relative poverty and commitment to fighting it attracted me.

A number of Bristol academics were very influential on my thinking. It was a rich and exciting experience. The debates and discussions I had with Peter, Hilary Rose, Roy Parker and others are still very relevant today.

I came to Bristol full of questions from my Canadian experience. It was because of Peter that I became so much engaged in the British context.

International study broadens the perspective. Bristol was a great way to enlarge my world view. It exposed me to the fascinating world of British politics and opened the door for me to work with some great political leaders.

There's no simple answer to the question of what makes public service organisations work more effectively. These are complex social problems that no government can simply 'fix'. You need to engage

people and change attitudes and behaviours, as well as change policies.

Political leadership is key. You need politicians who are really committed to public services and believe they can make them work. It's a massive challenge and a lot of people don't want to go there. Blair did. When he came to work in Downing Street public service reform was at the top of his list of priorities.

The public has to think services are worth paying for. Their expectations need to be linked to their experience on the ground. Do they see what they hoped they'd see?

When I worked with Blair we did a poll asking the public what they most valued. The clear winner was time. Yet public services aren't always based on recognition of the importance of time. Think about the time you have to queue and wait for appointments.

Public spending is not a proxy for progress or impact. It's not just about the money. There are many examples where loads of money is spent without achieving much.

Reducing spending can be a spur to innovation. The current Government's idea of a 'big society' may not have a lot of legs, but the idea that civil society is part of the dynamic is a good one.

I find the idea that Canada has the solution quite ironic. Canada cut public expenditure in the mid-1990s, and I joke that the federal government must have woken up every morning and thanked heaven for the provinces, because their cuts (like their spending) were in the transfer payments to the provinces for health and education. Now the provinces are struggling to sustain these services. There's no magic in this approach.

I've been involved in a number of public service reform initiatives in developing countries. Many are facing enormous challenges but are trying to make the shift from seeing the state as an employer rather than a deliverer of services.

But there's a budding sense of entitlement in countries such as Ghana and others, where an increasingly well-educated, taxpaying citizenship expects the state to deliver quality services.

One project included a survey of service users' satisfaction in Nigeria. It was viewed as rather counter-cultural, given the sometimes fraught relations between state and citizens, but the idea that what the public says matters was an important message that the President was keen to convey.

There are challenging times ahead for the university sector in the UK. University funding isn't my speciality, but my advice to Bristol would be to take a strategic approach and challenge old assumptions. Where does Bristol's real excellence lie? Where does it add most value? Sometimes it's better to do a few things well than spread resources too thinly across many programmes. There should be no sacred cows.

And it needs to keep renewing itself. A university is all about great people. Bristol has to be a fun, vibrant creative place. It can't become penny-pinching, or the bright people will go elsewhere and Bristol will lose out on the talent.



Jo Bryant (Cert Ed 1999) with At-Bristol volunteer Lisa Johnsey who works as a technician in Bristol's School of Chemistry.

With the Government's 'Big Society' idea high on the political agenda, we take a closer look at volunteering. **Jo Bryant (Cert Ed 1999)** tells us 'how to volunteer' and **Declan Hamilton (BA 1993, MA 1995)** describes, how he became a volunteer manager.

How to volunteer

Take stock

Before you do anything you need to think about your motivations for volunteering. Be honest with yourself. Do you want to meet new people, change your career, gain skills, travel abroad or feel part of your community? Then think about your availability and what time you can commit to. It's worth thinking about the impact this will have on other parts of your life, such as work and family.

Seek out opportunities

Armed with this information it's time to find out what opportunities are out there. Most towns and cities will have a volunteering centre where you can go to get advice. National volunteering websites such as www.doit.org and www.volunteering.org.uk are good places to look for specific roles. Alternatively, you can contact a charity or organisation directly and ask what's available.

Is volunteering right for you?

Anyone can volunteer. There's a huge range of volunteering roles, and the key thing is matching the right volunteer with the right role. Some roles will demand specialist skills, others will look for enthusiasm and willingness to learn; some will be informal and relaxed, others will be more structured.

A good volunteer tends to be focused on the organisation's needs, but is also honest about their own agenda. There are some personal qualities that help, such as enthusiasm and flexibility.

Being open and able to communicate your needs is also helpful.

Why volunteer?

Volunteering is a way for individuals to affect the world around them. Rather than assuming someone else is doing it, you can get out and do it yourself. If you're fed up with homelessness you get out there and help. If you think science is great you get out there and spread the word. In a sense it's a proactive way of engaging with the issues you care about. One of the highlights of my job is seeing the amazing things that can happen when a group of people work together for something they believe in.

Volunteering also offers opportunities. It can fast track your career. I've seen people leap-frog into interesting and responsible roles as a result of volunteering. It can also add a huge amount to your life personally. Volunteering has enriched my life immeasurably – I've met incredible people and it's broadened my view of the world. Most of all, I've had a lot of fun.

Big society?

That's not a new idea. The voluntary sector has been alive, thriving and making the world a better place for years. It's beloved of all political parties.

Jo Bryant is Volunteer Manager at At-Bristol. Previously she has worked for BF Adventure in Cornwall and Voluntary Service Overseas. She has volunteered locally and internationally.

How I became a volunteer manager

I became a volunteer manager by a twist of fate. I'd worked in customer service for eight years and was looking for a career change. I was on a train from London to Bristol reading the newspaper and, by chance, saw an advert for a Volunteers Manager in the University's Campaigns and Alumni Relations office.



When I got off the train that day I thought I could see myself leaving London and moving back here. I love Bristol and had really enjoyed the time I spent here as a student.

You need to be personable and get on with all sorts of people. You should have the ability to sift through ideas that volunteers come up with. You need to be able to think strategically; you should keep the institution's mission in mind at all times, and the work that you're encouraging volunteers to do needs to be constantly in line with this. It sounds simple, but you also have to remember to thank people. Volunteers invest their time, energy and expertise and this must be acknowledged just as you would thank a financial donor.

Declan Hamilton is Volunteer Manager at the University. To find out more about volunteering for the University, visit www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/getinvolved.

Obituaries

The University extends its sincere condolences to the families and friends of those alumni listed below, for whom the University has received notification of death.

Alumni (in order of degree date)

- Kenneth Higson** (BSc 1935, Diploma 1936) died June 2010, aged 95.
- George Ashford** (BA 1936, Diploma 1937) died 21 July 2010, aged 95.
- Philip Slade** (MB ChB 1939, ChM 1955) died 2010, aged 94.
- Dr Maurice Foss** (BSc 1943) died 2010, aged 88.
- Audrey Hutchins (née Gear)** (BSc 1944, Diploma 1945) died 17 July 2010, aged 87.
- Winifred Parry (née Bowen)** (BSc 1944) died 5 August 2010, aged 88.
- Sidney Taylor** (BSc 1945) died 30 June 2010, aged 85.
- Dr John Parry** (BSc 1947, PhD 1956) died 9 August 2010, aged 84.
- Marcus Moore** (BSc 1949) died 26 November 2009, aged 87.
- Dr Stanley Taylor** (BA 1949, PhD 1958) died 2010, aged 89.
- Malcolm Ward** (LLB 1950) died 2010, aged 81.
- Elizabeth Godfrey** (BA 1951, BMus 1952) died 22 August 2010, aged 81.
- Michael Prosser** (BDS 1952) died 2010, aged 81.
- Dr Gordon Lowther** (MB ChB 1952) died 3 September 2010, aged 90.
- Peter McKenna** (BA 1952) died 13 March 2010, aged 80.
- David Pittway** (BA 1953) died 2006, aged 78.
- Dr Roy Baylis** (BSc 1953, PhD 1956) died 6 June 2010, aged 79.
- Dr Michael Coleman** (BSc 1953, PhD 1957) died May 2010, aged 83.
- Trevor Dawes** (BA 1954, Cert Ed 1957) died 1 September 2010, aged 77.
- Brian Murphy** (BSc 1955) died 28 September 2010, aged 77.
- Peter Johnson** (BA 1955) died 15 April 2010, aged 75.
- George Hannaford** (BSc 1956) died 13 September 2010, aged 75.
- Philip Plumbley** (BA 1956) died 9 May 2010, aged 78.
- Dr Irene Gibbs (née Bach)** (MB ChB 1956) died 2010, aged 81.
- Brian Potter** (BSc 1957) died 6 August 2010, aged 76.
- Colin Littleton** (BVSc 1957) died 2010, aged 75.
- Phyllis Davidson** (BSc 1958, Cert Ed 1959) died 2010, aged 74.
- Christopher Gadd** (BSc 1959) died 2010, aged 72.
- Mary Knight (née Harmer)** (BA 1960) died June 2010, aged 72.
- Pamela Perratt (née Lewis)** (BSc 1960, Cert Ed 1962) died 20 June 2010, aged 71.
- Alan Rogers** (BSc 1960) died 4 July 2010, aged 71.
- Dr Christopher Hayward** (MB ChB 1960) died 2010, aged 74.
- Rodney Housego** (BA 1961, Cert Ed 1962) died 1 September 2010, aged 70.
- John Roberts** (BSc 1962) died August 2010, aged 69.
- Peter Jacques** (BSc 1968, Cert Ed 1969) died 16 April 2010, aged 66.
- Dr Robert Gledhill** (BSc 1970) died 14 August 2010, aged 61.
- Anne Chapman (née Blatchford)** (MA 1996, BA 1970, Cert Ed 1971) died January 2010, aged 61.
- Derek Wise** (Cert Ed 1972) died 16 June 2010, aged 61.
- Ann Nelson (née Williams)** (LLB 1973) died 17 May 2010, aged 58.
- David Myerscough** (BSc 1974) died 21 June 2010, aged 58.
- Heather Bryant (née Morris)** (MLitt 1974) died 2010, aged 86.
- Professor Simon Swordy** (BSc 1975, PhD 1979) died 21 July 2010, aged 56.
- Christopher Thompson** (BSc 1976) died 8 July 2010.
- Louis Walker** (BSc 1978) died 2010, aged 78.
- Michael Jones** (BDS 1984) died 11 May 2010, aged 47.
- Charlotte Markson** (BSc 1984) died 2010, aged 48.
- Timothy Coop** (BSc 1985) died 23 September 2010, aged 47.
- Sally Ledger** (Cert Ed 1986) died 2009, aged 48.
- Dr Robert Byrde** (DSc 1987) died 2010, aged 88.
- The Rt Hon Lady Daphne Park** (Hon LLD 1988) died 24 March 2010, aged 88.
- Bryan Wynn** (MEd 1989) died 24 March 2010.
- Dr Timia MacDonald (née Willmer)** (PhD 1992, BA 1985, PhD 1991) died 9 May 2010, aged 71.
- Vincent Champault** (Erasmus 1995) died 12 April 2010, aged 37.
- Dr Basil Davidson** (Hon DLitt 1999) died 9 July 2010, aged 95.
- Ingela Kishonti** (MA 2001) died 27 September 2009, aged 40.
- Sharon Rees** (BSc 2004) died 23 January 2010, aged 48.
- Clare Young (née Hogg)** (BA 2004) died 1 June 2010, aged 28.
- Joanna Walters** (BA 2004) died 13 July 2010, aged 28.
- David Liddle** (MA 2005) died 6 July 2010, aged 66.
- Elizabeth Beach-Macgeagh** (History 2008 -) died 17 June 2010, aged 20.

Cambridge event

Alison Wilson (BA 1966) organised an evening at Murray Edwards College. This was an inaugural event for Bristol alumni and friends in and around Cambridge. Highlights included a pre-dinner presentation on sustainability for Bristol and Cambridge Universities and a speech by former Vice-Chancellor of Bristol, Sir John Kingman FRS (Hon LLD 1989).

If you would like more information about Bristol alumni activities in Cambridge please contact Alison Wilson at amw18@cam.ac.uk.

London Branch fifth annual lecture

The London Branch of University of Bristol Alumni organised a lecture on 6 October at the Royal College of Pathologists. Pro Chancellor Professor Dame Carol Black DBE (BA 1962, MB ChB 1970, MD 1975, Hon DSc 2003) gave a presentation entitled: Work: benefit, blessing or curse? Drawing on research carried out over four years, Professor Black delivered an exposition on the blight a culture of sickness and reliance on benefit has had on the nation, and the changes she has had implemented to reverse this.

Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Branch of University of Bristol Alumni has launched a monthly restaurant event for alumni. The emphasis is on fine food at an affordable price. For more information, please contact Kenneth Chue (LLB 2002) at kenneth.chue@gmail.com. For more information about alumni activity in Hong Kong, visit www.bristolalumni.org.

Events calendar 2010/11

With another year of successful events behind us, we're looking forward to 2011. Unless otherwise stated, more information and booking details are available at www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/events or by calling +44 (0)117 928 7939. The events programme is always being updated, so please visit the website regularly and contact alumni@bristol.ac.uk if you would like our help publicising an event you're organising for alumni.

DECEMBER

Thursday 9 December 2010

Convocation reception and awards, Bristol

The annual Convocation reception will honour outstanding students. All alumni, their guests, staff and students are welcome.

JANUARY

Saturday 15 January 2011

AGM of the Midlands Branch of University of Bristol Alumni
Bristol alumni based in the Midlands are invited to the annual lunch and AGM. For more information and to book, please contact Tim Drakeford (BA 1966), timdrakeford@btinternet.com.

MARCH

Friday 4 March 2011

Inaugural event for Bristol alumni in New Delhi, India

An evening reception will be hosted by Robert Dufton (LLB 1983), Deputy Chairman of Convocation, the University's Alumni Association, and a former member of University's Council.

Wednesday 23 March 2011

Bristol alumni forum, London

A panel discussion on 'Flood risk and climate change' led by Paul Bates (PhD 1993), Professor of Hydrology.

APRIL

Tuesday 12 April 2011

Visit to Churchill War Rooms

The London Branch of University of Bristol Alumni has organised a private visit to the Churchill War Rooms.

MAY

Wednesday 4 May 2011

Student, staff and alumni golf challenge 2011, Bristol

If you're interested in playing for the alumni team, please email John Bramhall (BSc 1975) at john.bramhall@bristol.ac.uk.

JULY

Friday 1 July to Sunday 3 July 2011

Alumni Weekend 2011: Back to the future, Bristol

All alumni welcome. Special anniversary celebrations for those who graduated in 1986, 1981, 1971 and 1961 and earlier.

San Francisco cocktail party

In September, Jane Camblin (BA 1973) generously hosted a cocktail party reunion for Bristol alumni and friends in San Francisco and the Bay Area. There was a good mix of familiar and new faces, and Bristol was represented by the Chairman of Convocation, Bill Ray (BSc 1975). This has been the second reunion in four months on the West Coast of the US thanks to the dedication of alumni volunteers in the area.



This is my Bristol

Comedian and writer Iain Morris (BA 1994), co-writer of *The Inbetweeners*.

“
If you don't enjoy
your first year, stick
with it. It's a big
enough place to find
your niche.”



Iain Morris (BA 1994) (left) with his writing partner Damon Beesley. Above: the cast of *The Inbetweeners*.

Why did you choose Bristol?

I had a friend who lived in Bristol, and when I visited him I liked the feel of the city. I also failed to get into Oxford, so it was Bristol or Edinburgh. I imagined long, hot West Country summers, so Bristol won. Then it just rained for three years. I chose theology because I did the dossers trio of A-levels – English, RE and Theatre Studies. The English and drama courses at Bristol were clearly too hard to get on so I went for theology. I do also love the subject.

What were your first impressions?

To be honest, it was terrifying. I didn't really enjoy my first year and a half. I didn't get into halls and was offered full-board lodgings in Westbury-on-Trym that I couldn't afford. I'm quite posh, but all the other students seemed incredibly posh. It was all pretty scary.

What kind of student were you?

Spectacularly bad. I didn't study, I didn't do any reading. I only had seven hours a week – there really was no excuse not to study. I bite my knuckles with embarrassment now thinking of some of the show-off, ill-informed comments I made in tutorials. I'm obsessed with theology now and would give anything to have all that time to read about it.

And away from study?

I was a bit square. You would probably find me kicking a ball around on the Downs or drinking in the pubs in Clifton. By the second year I'd got into doing plays with Dramsoc and found some friends.

Were there any academics or other members of staff who made a particular impression on you?

Rupert Gethin was a lovely man. In my second year he taught me Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures. I

was awful; I've no ear for languages. I think I got about four per cent in my exam. But he was incredibly nice and patient. Even though I was a terrible student, he always had time for me. And he introduced me to chamomile tea.

Where did you live?

In my first year I ended up living in Pembroke Road with family friends. That was nice, but it was a bit like having two middle-aged best friends.

What were your highlights?

Playing in the intra-mural football team was great. In my third year I did a film course in the Drama Department. It was incredible. On the Thursday evening we would watch a classic film and then on the Friday morning we'd have a lecture about the film explaining why it was so good. I remember thinking 'I want everything I do to be like this'.

Also, a friend and I wrote and put on a panto in the third year. It ran for four nights and sold out. I had my first taste of megalomania. Another highlight was meeting Michael Foot. I was Secretary of the Political Society, and Michael came to speak to us and we all went out for lunch. He made an enormous impression on me. He was the most insightful, thoughtful, perceptive man.

And were there any lowlights?

The whole of the first year really. Because I wasn't in halls I missed out on meeting people. Then I was dumped by my girlfriend – she went off with someone high up in the Students' Union.

Looking back, would you have done anything differently?

I would have studied much harder. I didn't know how lucky I was to have

time to read all day. That's all I want to do now. I wish I'd given football more of a go and got into the first 11.

What are the key things that your time at Bristol gave you?

A pretty big chip on my shoulder about class. A sense of self-reliance. I wasn't very happy but I discovered that no-one else was going to cheer me up, I had to sort this one out for myself. The tutorials trained my brain to look at things in a critical manner and I've used that skill ever since in my work. It also gave me the city of Bristol, which I'm still hugely fond of.

How has it influenced your career?

It did inspire me to work hard in life. Being surrounded by bright people and not being that bright myself made me realise that I'd need to work hard to succeed. I felt I had to prove something.

Do you ever come back to Bristol?

Yes, every couple of years. Outside of London, it's by far my favourite city. I used to love walking down to Ashton Gate to see Bristol City play.

Do you have any tips or words of advice for Bristol freshers?

If you don't enjoy your first year, stick with it. It's a big enough place to find your niche. It's a great town and a great university. I had a terrible first year, but by the second year I found my friends and by my third year I was having a great time.

Sum up your Bristol experience in three words.

It would be by year: Depressed. Better. Brilliant.



www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni