

Principal's Update June 2012

Colleagues

I know that with the exam period in full swing this has been a very busy time and I'm sure many colleagues will be looking forward to the celebrations of the graduations and the respite of the summer. And as we edge towards the end of the academic year there are a number of reasons to feel positive about the position of the University.

Academic Recruitment Campaign

Not least of which is the progress of the academic recruitment campaign in response to which we have so far received over 1500 applications or expressions of interest in the 100 posts we advertised in the Spring. To receive that level of interest in joining our community is a hugely encouraging endorsement of the intellectual standing of the University. There remain some areas where there is scope for more candidates to be considered and we will continue to work with colleagues to promote these opportunities through their academic networks to ensure that across the board we have a rich pool of applicants from which to recruit. As we do so, however, it is absolutely essential that we focus on excellence and that appointments made are of the highest quality.

Staff Achievements

To continue on the theme of excellence, I would briefly want to congratulate two colleagues who have recently won external recognition in their field. Professor Mandy Ryan has been ranked as the top health economist in the UK and 21st in the world in a study within the Journal of Health Economics. This is great news not only for Mandy but for the reputation of the Health Economics Research Unit and the University.

Congratulations are also due to Professor Kevin Edwards, Geography, on being invited to deliver the 'Rhind Lectures' at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. This lecture series is widely regarded as one of the most prestigious in the field of archaeology and Kevin is only the third Aberdeen academic to have given the lectures since their inception in 1874.

Applications for 2012 Entry

While the undergraduate recruitment process continues, we know that applications to Aberdeen number 19,350, up 2.1% on this point in 2011. The indications are that we are on course to meet our intake targets but we will need to continue to work hard on conversion activity particularly in relation to RUK applicants. In terms of international recruitment, there is a great deal of work going on across the University to explore how over the next few years we can build our student population particularly in relation to postgraduate taught programmes. This is incredibly important to the future growth and success of the University in financial terms and in terms of the diversity of the student experience on offer.

Catholic Archive

The confirmation that the University's new special collections centre will be custodian of the Scottish Catholic Archive and the Blairs collection represents a very significant addition to the University's collections. It will greatly enhance our already strong reputation as an internationally important centre for scholarship in the humanities. There is also a strong local connection with these two collections and they are a wonderful example of the opportunities the new Library and Collections Centre are opening up for the University.

Seminar on Science with the Permanent Secretary to The Scottish Government

Last Friday I had the pleasure of hosting a seminar for academic colleagues with Sir Peter Housden, Permanent Secretary to The Scottish Government, to discuss a range of practical issues that academics face in trying to pursue scientific research. It was a fascinating discussion which I know Sir Peter gained a great deal from and I'm grateful to all colleagues who helped to make it a successful event.

Olympic Torch Bearers

The University can take a great deal of pride in having one of its students and a recent graduate running as torch bearers. Eilidh McLeod (Geography) selected as a torch bearer for the Olympic Torch Relay. At the age of 19 Eilidh McLeod was a prospective Olympic skier but who tragically suffered a horrific skiing accident in which she broke both her legs and was in a critical condition for several weeks. Despite being told she would never ski again, Eilidh, now 21, has overcome a huge amount to not only be back skiing but competing again and at year's British Universities Championship in Austria she was the top female competitor.

Ryan Whelan a recent law graduate of the University has also been selected as a torch bearer. Ryan established The Aberdeen Law clinic where Aberdeen law students provide *pro bono* legal advice to those who might not otherwise have access to the law.

I'm sure all colleagues will join with me in congratulating Eilidh and Ryan on their achievements

Diamond Jubilee

Those of you who took advantage of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Aberdeen recently may have enjoyed the performance of the 'Aberdeen Anthem' a piece that was composed specially for the occasion by Professor Paul Mealor, Music. As I think most of you know already, this is the latest high-profile assignment for Paul who is no stranger to music with Royal connections after one of his compositions was performed at the Royal Wedding last year.

Best Regards

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor