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Cities of opportunity?

Understanding the barriers to HE
New approaches to shared resources
University-community partnerships



Bulletin

The Bulletin is the magazine of the Association of Commonwealth Universities – the membership organisation and representative body for universities of the Commonwealth.

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Editorial



I feel tremendously honoured to have been elected Chair of the ACU Council, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Council in the months and years ahead to advance our common goals.

As a founding member of the ACU, my institution – Western University in Ontario, Canada – has long subscribed to the philosophy that knowledge knows no boundaries, and that international collaboration is an essential element of success in advancing and disseminating knowledge.

This has become even more important in an increasingly interconnected world. One of the time-honoured, noble goals of a university education is to open the minds of young students who will become the leaders of tomorrow. This must include enhancing our understanding of the diverse peoples and cultures that constitute the global village. It's a viewpoint I'm passionate about, and one I believe applies as much to the 'global citizens' we aspire to educate as it does to the institutions we lead and the countries we serve as custodians of the public good.

I know this view is shared by a wide range of academic leaders. In its 2014 survey of Canadian universities and their progress towards internationalisation, Universities Canada highlighted the strengths, benefits and shortcomings of student mobility programmes. The report described student mobility as 'one of

the most high-profile policy issues in both Canadian and global discussions of internationalisation in higher education'. It went on to highlight the 'twin imperatives' of raising students' awareness as global citizens, and promoting cross-cultural competencies that prepare them for a globalised labour market, as 'vital reasons for promoting international experience for Canadian students, both abroad and on campus'.

As leaders of Commonwealth universities who recognise that educating global citizens is the imperative of our time, it's clear that empowering student mobility is more important than ever.

We live in a time of rapid change, and the forces of evolution are reshaping the world we know at an unprecedented pace. Of course, universities are not immune to change. We must innovate how we teach, how we conduct research to solve the pressing social, political, environmental and scientific issues facing humanity, and how we engage with our communities in more meaningful ways.

We can respond best to these challenges – and better serve the needs of humanity – by sharing knowledge and best practices more broadly across the globe. To fully leverage the advantages of high-speed modern transportation and communications that have shrunk our world and increased our connectivity, individual institutions must think beyond conventional bilateral models of collaboration,

which lack scale and limit impact. Rather, we must begin to embrace multilateral frameworks and truly international supporting networks as more effective ways to promote and enhance global collaboration.

All of which leads me to the benefits of engaging with the ACU. ACU member institutions are bound by our common heritage through the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth itself is large enough to provide the diversity we seek, yet not too large to be unmanageable. The use of English as a common language, and the academic traditions inherited from the Oxbridge models or variations thereof, make it easier for us to collaborate at a global scale.

We all have much to learn from and share with our Commonwealth colleagues. I'm excited about the ACU's convening and brokering power to facilitate international collaboration. I'm excited about leveraging its capacity as a platform for member institutions to learn best practices from each other. And I'm excited about its unique ability to strengthen people-to-people relationships for the greater public good of the Commonwealth and beyond. ■

Dr Amit Chakma is President and Vice-Chancellor of Western University, Canada, and Chair of the ACU Council.

Rediscovering our shared urban spaces

The ACU's annual Summer School brings students from across the Commonwealth together for a week of workshops, lectures, field trips, and group work. In 2018, the theme will be 'Sustainable cities and communities', exploring the challenges and opportunities inherent in urbanisation. Hosted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, participants will learn more about a concept which lies at the heart of the institution's urban studies programme – the 'urban commons'. **Alex Frew McMillan** tells us more.



What makes a city great? What are the challenges for an urban environment? And how should emerging-world communities evolve? The urban studies programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) seeks to answer these questions, using Hong Kong as a petri dish for city planning.

A major theme of the programme is 're-commoning' – the potential for rediscovering and reclaiming shared urban spaces for the public good – and sometimes in unusual ways.

What is an urban common?

The idea of the common or commons has its roots in medieval England. Originally an area of open land set aside for grazing farm animals and other public use, many of these spaces have since been lost to industrialisation or claimed as private property. Where they still exist, they are often swathes of land used for dog walking, jogging, and so on.

The idea of an 'urban common' is also a public space set aside for community use. However, it does not have to be a public park; it does not have to be a community centre. It does not even have to be publicly owned.

It can just as easily be a street full of hawkers selling street food, where the elderly join the young for an evening stroll, a bit to eat, and a chat. It could be a 'wet market' where shoppers chat to vendors and drop in for their produce. It could be a working pier where dockhands unload ships, old men fish, and lovers hold hands to watch the sunset.

'This picture in which everything is dominated by either the government or the market is not a real image,' says Professor Mee Kam Ng, director of CUHK's urban studies programme. 'We still have a lot of commons in our lives. We need to rediscover and explore them – to use them as a collective resource, not just for profit-making or government.'

Gradually, though, many of our urban commons are already being lost. Wet markets

move indoors and to higher floors; the bustling streets are sanitised and changed through the addition of railings, parking spaces, escalators, and barriers that disrupt the flow of foot traffic and erode the sense of community.

Even the addition of helpful public infrastructure – subway lines, bus terminals, and train stations – may have unintended consequences. Travel may become more convenient for many, but the increase in rents in the neighbourhood may force poorer residents out of an area they have, for decades, called home.

Can individuals be trusted with shared resources?

The concept of the commons is not without its critics. The 'tragedy of the commons', a term first popularised by the ecologist Garrett Hardin in 1968, holds that every individual who has access to a shared resource will simply exploit it for his or her own good, without considering its public utility. This eventually results in shared grassland being

overgrazed, for instance, but can apply to any urban feature.

Others disagree, however. Elinor Ostrom, who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 2009, disagreed with the idea that the public would inevitably trash their shared resources. Given the time and opportunity to speak out, she argued, communities will often work out rules to protect common resources, using them fairly and sustainably.

Professor Ng agrees with Ostrom that the 'tragedy of the commons' does not have to hold true. 'We can maintain a common pool of resources,' she says. 'Give people time and information, and they will work out a scheme to use the commons to satisfy everyone's needs while still sustaining the resource.'

Preserving heritage

In Hong Kong, the cluster of buildings around, and including, the historic Blue House in Wan Chai is just one example of a successful re-commoning project. The government's original plan was to convert the neighbourhood into modern shops. But through the efforts of local residents, social workers, and heritage conservation groups, the redevelopment took an unprecedented path for Hong Kong. It preserved the existing buildings for use by community-based social enterprises, allowed existing tenants to remain if they chose (while improving living standards), and created a 'good neighbour' scheme that gives priority to new occupiers who commit to contributing to the community.

The repurposing of this group of buildings also incorporates new features, such as the Hong Kong Story House – a space set aside for preserving the oral history of the district. There are also shared areas for use by local markets. Instead of commodifying the space as private property, it has been turned into a public/private space that satisfies housing needs while also providing jobs, economic opportunities, social utility, and greenery.

The idea of re-commoning may be

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particularly relevant in developing societies, where it is all too easy to assume that bulldozing old neighbourhoods and repopulating them with gleaming steel-and-glass skyscrapers is the way forward. We hope that our students will learn that the path taken by the world's developed economies is not the only road to progression. It may be that preserving old neighbourhoods and allowing them to grow and modernise organically is a better course of action.

'Many developing countries – such as Thailand and Cambodia – already have urban commons,' says Professor Ng. 'But literally in front of their eyes, these commons are disappearing. Authorities are forbidding people to trade on the street. They are banning hawkers and taking away the wide streets.'

Retaining culture and character

In times of rapid change, it should not be seen as 'backward' to explore, retain, and celebrate a country's traditional elements, culture, and character. We encourage our students to examine how some of Hong Kong's neighbourhoods have lost their sense of identity or history – from former fishing villages to mining communities – in the hope that these young people will revisit their own.

'We hope students will have the maturity to appreciate their own communities more, and not see them as backward or developing,' says Professor Ng. 'Instead, we encourage them to see their communities as having rich treasures, which can be kept even as they

modernise. Communities should have an urbanisation of their own – rich in their own history, heritage, and character – not just copy what they see in other developed countries.'

A sense of community

In urban planning, too much emphasis is sometimes placed on efficiency at the expense of our sense of community, says Professor Hendrik Tieben, architect and programme director for urban design at CUHK. Tieben points to an example in Hong Kong's Western District, where he feels the government has redeveloped its central street – with its thriving traditional markets – into a 'concrete slab'. While close to a cluster of public hospitals and healthcare facilities, the redevelopment offers no easy path for elderly people to reach them, thanks to difficult traffic crossings, raised sidewalks, and railings. 'It's not all about getting from A to B as fast as possible,' says Professor Tieben. 'You have to have seating, easy access, a concept of who is benefitting. People must feel at home there.'

To encourage Hong Kong's neighbourhoods to appreciate their sense of community, the university launched an educational project called 'Magic Carpet', which aims to document daily life, engage communities in their own development, and encourage a more inclusive version of urban design. The project has been rolled out across different neighbourhoods, with journalism students interviewing residents about their communities, and architecture students exploring the potential for community-orientated development.

The project also hosts community-wide events in each neighbourhood, to foster a broader understanding of urban issues and help rethink the whole idea of participation. It is not enough to present local residents with a set of prescribed options for urban development and ask them to pick from that set list of ideas, Professor Tieben believes. By encouraging residents to examine how even the smallest of urban features fits into their neighbourhood, the project organisers hope to stimulate fresh thought and make people realise they can effect change on the ground level.

Another project backed by the university recently won the inaugural Wendy Sarkissian Award for 'courage in the field of community engagement'. Stakeholders – including fabric sellers, fashion designers, academics, built environment professionals, and volunteers – worked together to save the Pang Jai fabric market from government-forced closure. They hope to reshape it as a viable market, with a fashion showroom, a lab for developing textiles, and a site for sharing skills – demonstrating the essence of re-commoning for the public good.

A humanistic approach to city planning

At the 2018 ACU Summer School, students will be invited to consider what has worked and what has not in Hong Kong's rapid metamorphosis from fishing village to developing town, then from thriving economic hub to post-industrial 21st century service economy – and there's much that urban planners can draw on by examining Hong Kong and its people.

Ultimately, we hope that graduates in the 21st century will be able to create or adopt a more humanistic approach to city planning, development and evolution – one that does not just look at numbers, market forces, and utility. 'When we talk about economics, it can be rather cold-blooded,' says Professor Ng. 'But we are not just economists, we are urbanists.'



The revitalised Blue House in Hong Kong

Alex Frew McMillan is a reporter for Dragonfly Media, and writes here on behalf of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

To find out more about the ACU Summer School 2018 and apply, visit www.acu.ac.uk/summer-school

Bright lights: universities, cities, and access

Evidence suggests that young people living in urban areas are far more likely to go to university than those in rural areas. But does this mean that cities are winning the battle to widen access to higher education? **Graeme Atherton** argues that the true picture is far more complex.

It is arguably one of the biggest challenges facing universities today: how do we create opportunities to allow people from all social backgrounds to benefit from higher education? While inequalities in access and participation exist across the Commonwealth, the patterns and nature of these vary between countries, and between rural and urban areas.

On one hand, the evidence we have suggests that the lowest entry rates for higher education are found in rural areas. But does that really mean that access to universities is somehow more equal or open in our cities? I would argue that the overall picture is far more nuanced.

Cities of opportunity?

In recent years, global university rankings have been joined by rankings of cities, which have included measures of 'higher education excellence'. In 2014, for example, the multinational accounting firm PwC published its sixth *Cities of Opportunity* report, which compared 30 global cities and declared that 'London has claimed top spot as a centre for business, finance and culture'. Central to London's success in this particular ranking was its high number of university students and the quality of its

higher education institutions, as measured by the *Times Higher Education* rankings. Fellow accounting firm Deloitte has also produced a global city ranking, and within it included higher education – relying again on the *Times Higher* rankings. It also places London at the top, calling it 'the world's high skills capital'.

Despite their talk of opportunity and the availability of quality education, however, these rankings do not include information on who is actually accessing higher education – their socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds, for example. And this oversight matters for both cities and for universities.

The defining characteristic of the modern global city can be described as 'hyper diversity' – an intense diversification of the population in socioeconomic, social and ethnic terms, but also in terms of their lifestyles, attitudes, and activities. While hyper diversity is the source of creativity and entrepreneurship that drives a global city, it also brings with it severe inequalities between richer and poorer groups. London, for instance may be the richest part of the UK, but it is also its most unequal, with the highest levels of poverty.

While growing participation in higher education is certainly a good thing, there is a risk that it can actually exacerbate inequalities in urban environments rather than reducing

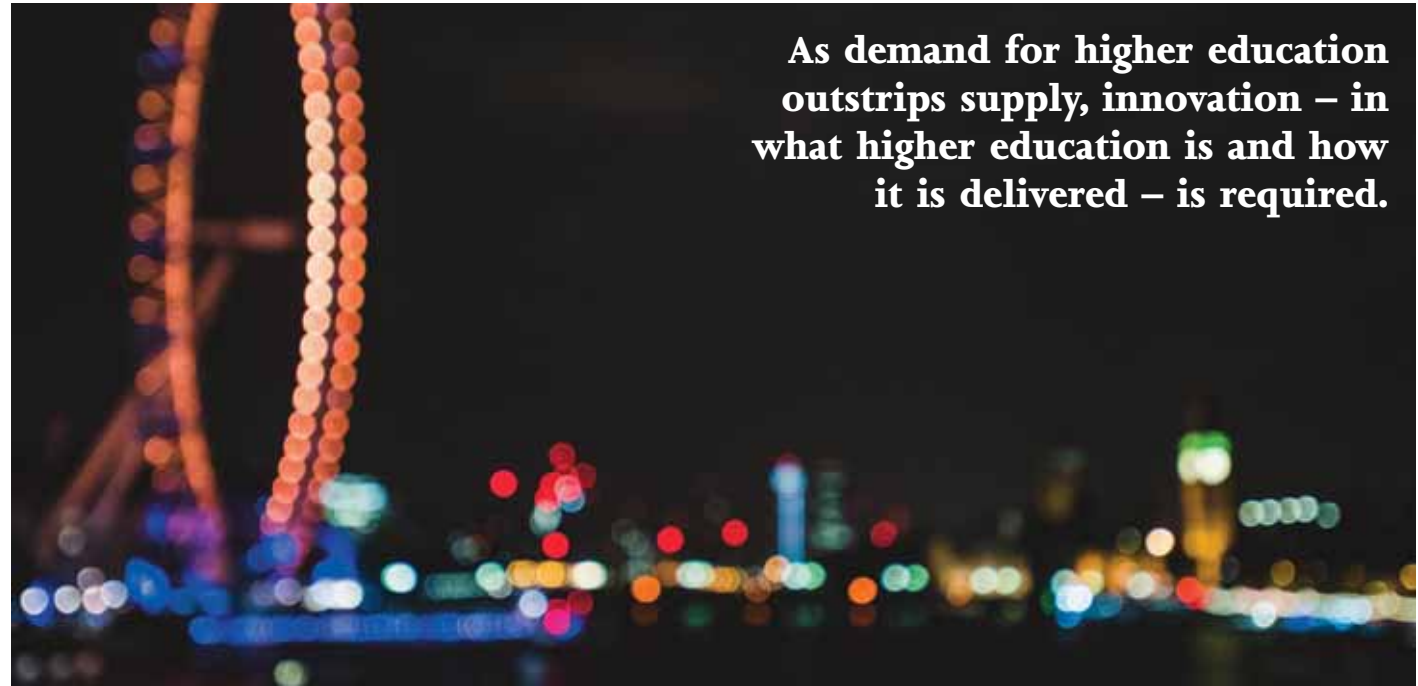
them, enabling the already advantaged to cement their position and power.

A mixed global picture

To a large extent, the failure to look closely enough at who higher education is benefiting in cities is the result of scarce comparable regional data on who participates in education by social background across different countries. What we do know is that such inequalities are a global issue: a recent report on higher education participation by social background, *Charting Equity: Drawing the Global Access Map*, found that evidence of inequalities in university participation exist in 90% of countries.

What regional evidence does exist from across the world shows clearly that residents in urban areas are more likely to enter higher education than those in rural areas. Across European countries, the gap in tertiary level participation rates between rural areas and cities is 20%. In Asia, the differences are even more pronounced.

In India, for example, published figures point to a wide disparity in higher education enrolment across states, and urban and rural areas, quoting a gross enrolment ratio of 23.8% in urban areas compared to 7.5% in rural areas.



As demand for higher education
outstrips supply, innovation – in
what higher education is and how
it is delivered – is required.

In China, geography appears to be the main way in which inequalities in higher education participation are conceived, and an issue that policymakers feel the need to act upon. A report released by Peking University in 2009 found that the proportion of rural residents in China with an undergraduate degree is only 0.7%, compared to 12.3% for urban residents. In 2017, the Chinese government launched three new projects aiming to get 100,000 students from rural backgrounds into higher education.

Where there is evidence on urban and rural differences in participation for other parts of the world, it echoes the trends above. In Australia, for example, students from rural backgrounds are 10% less likely to have plans to attend university than metropolitan students, after controlling for socioeconomic status.

Is access in cities really more equal?

There is little international data to tell us how inclusive higher education is in different cities – or, at least, little data that is shared internationally. But where there is data, it shows that inequalities exist. The UK and the US collect the most comprehensive data in the world on who participates in higher education by social background, but when it comes to cities, the picture is uneven.

In the US, work undertaken by the Equality of Opportunity Project has ranked different cities on the basis of their intergenerational mobility opportunities – with participation in higher education used as one of the factors that underpin this mobility. The project has revealed the huge differences that exist between different cities – a reminder that we cannot simply focus on the rural/urban divide.

In the UK, data on higher education participation is collected by very small geographical areas and by proxy measures of economic background at municipal authority level. In its capital city, London, as in the rest of England, those from higher income backgrounds are more likely to go into higher education. However, in certain inner city areas of London, those from lower income backgrounds are actually more likely to enrol than those from higher income backgrounds in certain parts of the UK.

The reasons for these higher levels of participation, however, are often grounded in the existence of immigrant communities in these areas who place a high value on education, alongside a concentration of university provision. London, for example, is home to more young people from Chinese and other Asian backgrounds than the rest of the UK, and both these groups have high rates of participation.

Urban interventions

The concentration of universities in our cities does more than just provide enough places for students and greater choices, it also creates the potential for collective action where inclusivity is concerned. In London, over 25 universities are part of a network called AccessHE, which supports the progression of under-represented groups into higher education.

AccessHE facilitates a number of action forums, which bring providers together to share practice and develop joint projects – working, for example, with disabled learners or those who are separated from their parents. It also links universities with schools so they can support and encourage higher education participation by providing additional academic support, encouraging undergraduate students to act as mentors or tutors to school-age children, and allowing schools to make use of university facilities.

In the US, the city of New York has taken even greater steps to widen access, providing specific financial support for learners who earn, or whose families earn, less than \$100,000 to attend New York's public universities. They have taken the lead where the federal government will not follow. The ability of New York to do this depends to a great extent on the structure of the nation's education system, and it would not necessarily work in other countries in the same way. However, there is nothing stopping municipal governments in global cities offering specific support for their residents to enter higher education – although the risk that the bill could escalate beyond what is deemed affordable is a real one, given what we know about differences in participation between rural and urban areas, coupled with rising populations in cities.

Challenges ahead

The need to address inequalities in university participation is gradually becoming a higher priority for global and national policymakers. It is mentioned in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and countries including Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK have all included actions to address inequalities in access as part of their national strategic frameworks for higher education.

As the evidence base and policy attention in this area steadily grows, a set of more nuanced questions emerge. Should national policymakers focus on inequalities in participation in urban areas and cities, when the lowest entry rates are found in rural areas? When resources to support widening access are finite, it may be more justifiable to con-

centrate on improving levels of education in rural communities and, in particular, increasing the local provision that is available. Provision is a huge issue – especially in Africa, where demand for higher education is set to increase significantly in forthcoming decades. Innovation – in what higher education is and how it is delivered – is required here.

Secondly, how can universities and municipal leadership in global cities in particular be encouraged to take ownership of access to higher education, as has happened to some degree in London and New York? The existence of collaborative HE organisations is important here, as are proactive municipal leaders. But national policymakers have a role as well. The path to global excellence for universities is defined in terms of research related achievements, which enable them to move up international league tables. For most countries, their leading universities reside in cities. National policymakers could be far more proactive in redefining what success means for universities and thus enabling them to focus far more on equity.

Finally, what is the role of international university networks such as the ACU in this area? There is an active global dialogue that enables the exchange of ideas, staff and students – equitable access can and should be an important part of this dialogue. There are also opportunities for the exchange of practice between global cities in tackling inequalities in university participation, which would feed well into the increasingly active dialogue between mayors of such cities.

University networks can increase their wider relevance, and that of higher education itself, by actively taking forward discussions about widening access. Inequality has been described as the greatest challenge facing the world in the early 21st century. Higher education needs to be seen as part of the solution to this challenge – and speaking about cities is a good place to start. ■

Dr Graeme Atherton is Head of AccessHE, a pan-London organisation that aims to support the progression of under-represented groups to higher education.

Charting Equity in Higher Education: Drawing the Global Access Map is free to download at www.pearson.com or by visiting www.bit.ly/2yWgClJ

Raising aspirations

Partnerships between universities and the community are crucial to ensuring that more young people have a choice concerning their further education, as well as the potential to succeed. Here, **Charles Flodin** explores the role of universities in supporting tertiary aspiration within traditionally under-represented communities.

Universities operate in an increasingly complex environment. Those that successfully respond to this challenge embody an agile and entrepreneurial stance towards the development of learning experiences and opportunities for their students. The forces in the environment have been termed VUCA which stands for volatile, uncertain, changeable, and ambiguous. Driven by factors such as globalisation, the knowledge economy, massification, and the radical pace of technological advancement, these forces are impacting on university funding, the development and delivery of learning and research, as well as the expectations of future students.

From probable to possible

Prospective students now face a less predictable education future, in which study options and pathways are ever broader and unbundled.

The way they consider their career pathways is also more ambiguous than in the past, and requires being comfortable with the broader implications of a changeable world.

For those considering higher education, a shift in mindset is needed – from working towards what is *probable* (e.g. I need to meet set requirements to enter a specific course and career pathway) to exploring what is *possible* (e.g. What choices are available to me to maximise the future I want to create for myself?).

For some, this can be an exciting scenario, offering new opportunities for positive and intriguing developments. For students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education, however, this volatile and uncertain environment creates new challenges, and may make the transition to university seem more daunting still.

It would be fair to say that these students in particular are confronted by a ‘wicked

problem’ – a term referring to a complex problem for which there is no single right answer – as they decide whether higher education will form part of their future. Wicked problems are increasingly difficult to solve because the information or requirements needed to solve them are either incomplete, contradictory, or constantly changing. Prospective students, for example, face huge amounts of information from many universities, and are expected to make a learning and career decision within the same formidable context as the institutions.

Empowering choices

Much of the great work that occurs in university-based community outreach is focused not only on supporting students in their academic outcomes, but also on empowering them to make informed decisions that are best for them. In the context of



Workshops in schools help to make higher education a realistic and achievable choice

university aspiration, this requires information about universities to be contextualised and made meaningful to individual students.

Rather than just informing prospective students what courses or pathways are available, it requires experiences that enable them to aspire to higher education by learning and experiencing what university life is like, what the expectations are, what support is available, as well as establishing that it is a realistic and achievable choice.

The special role of university-based outreach programmes that focus on raising aspirations is to leverage the many amazing and advanced facilities, technologies, students, and staff within universities to create pre-university learning experiences that build awareness and confidence for the important decision to go to university.

In 2008, the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education highlighted that previous policy and funding settings had not been successful in creating more equitable higher education outcomes in Australia for under-represented groups. The report concluded that social inclusion must be a core responsibility for all institutions that accept public funding.

Influenced by these findings, Curtin University – with the support of federal funding – began establishing partnerships with primary/secondary schools and community groups, which led to the creation of the Curtin Addressing Higher Education Access Disadvantage (AHEAD) Program.

Innovative approaches to inclusion

Curtin AHEAD is a collaborative outreach programme that aims to change perceptions and attitudes about higher education among under-represented groups and individuals in Western Australia. Through learning experiences that foster aspiration, awareness, and capabilities for higher education, the programme seeks to raise awareness and understanding of the long-term benefits of university, helping under-represented groups and individuals to reach their potential.

Since its inception, AHEAD has been able to design and deliver a diverse range of community-focused activities, and has found innovative ways to reach under-represented groups and individuals. These have included:

- Campus tours and educational workshops for schools, as well as ‘Campus Quest’ – an award winning virtual-reality game designed to give individuals, particularly those in regional areas who cannot visit a campus, an insight into university life
- An academic mentors programme – through which pre-service teaching

students provide educational assistance to schools located in low socioeconomic areas

- An academic mentoring and state-level rowing programme for students from Clontarf Aboriginal College, which has allowed Curtin to oversee the formation of the first ever all-Indigenous eight to row at any level within Australia
- A bike restoration, mentoring and sustainability programme for children from Parkerville Children and Youth Care – an organisation which protects and cares for vulnerable children and young people
- ‘AHEAD in Confidence’ camps for young people from a variety of regional and remote schools, which reinforce the aspirations, skills and confidence to attend university
- A series of prison-to-university engagement activities, carried out in partnership with the Department of Corrective Services. These are delivered in pre-release and maximum security prisons in Western Australia, and are designed to enhance participants’ transition, access, participation, and retention in higher education

Creating ‘tertiary affinity’

To develop appropriate learning experiences and resources for outreach programme participants, AHEAD is guided by a concept we’ve termed ‘tertiary affinity’. This concept represents an approach to outreach that is rooted in creating authentic and meaningful engagement through:

- The development of personalised learning journeys
- Fostering social belonging to tertiary environments
- Connecting past experiences to new tertiary learning and interactive experiences
- Normalising higher education focused discourse
- Introducing opportunities for school and community participants to connect and collaborate more formally with the tertiary system

The programme’s outcomes are best represented by the strong school and community partnerships it has fostered, which enable it to support over 4,000 individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds a year. Since 2014, AHEAD has assisted 1,041 students into university, and 41 prison residents through the Curtin UniReady Enabling programme, of which ten have made the transition into university.

In 2016, AHEAD collaborated on the ‘Humans of Curtin’ community engagement

campaign. This innovative campaign challenged university student stereotypes, through the use of storytelling and a non-traditional cross-platform strategy. It aimed to encourage positive dialogue relating to diversity and inclusion, and conversations about educational opportunities. The campaign was seen by over one million individuals in the first year, and achieved twice the industry average of click-throughs on social media platforms.

Outreach programmes = a valuable resource

It is important to emphasise the role that outreach programmes can play, beyond reacting to equity challenges. By designing innovative ways to develop the capabilities of prospective students, these programmes contribute to the success of those most at risk within the community.

For universities themselves, outreach programmes provide specialist equity knowledge that can inform strategy and policy, and keep pace with the changing needs of the community. They build authentic and sustainable relationships with schools and community groups in low socioeconomic areas, which are integral to breaking down the barriers to university.

For communities, these programmes provide expert knowledge of tertiary pathways, the future role of university study, and opportunities to develop university-specific capabilities. They also ensure an ongoing community dialogue capturing inclusive perspectives.

As universities redefine themselves and the student experience in an age of artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data, university community engagement programmes are more important than ever in promoting understanding of the exciting, if complex, opportunities that higher education presents. ■

Charles Flodin is Manager of the Addressing Higher Education Access Disadvantage (AHEAD) Programme at Curtin University, Australia, and a member of the steering committee for the ACU Engage Community.

The ACU Engage Community is a special interest group for all university staff working or involved in university community engagement and outreach. To find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/engage or email engage@acu.ac.uk

Greener narratives: creative responses to environmental challenges

In August, students from across the Commonwealth gathered at Bath Spa University for the 2017 ACU Summer School, which this year explored the role of the arts and humanities in shaping not only our understanding of environmental issues, but also how we confront them. **Kate Rigby** explains more about this emerging field.

In a prescient lecture to Canberra's National Parks Association in 1968, the Australian poet Judith Wright, co-founder of the Australian Conservation Foundation and tireless advocate for Aboriginal rights, observed: 'we must regenerate ourselves if we are to regenerate the earth'. For that to occur, she said, 'our feelings and emotions must be engaged, and engaged on a large scale'.

For Wright, as for environmental philosophers such as Val Plumwood, Richard Sylvan, and Arne Næss, the problems of pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion could not be solved by scientists alone. The underlying causes, they argued, reflected deep-seated cultural assumptions, attitudes and values, which positioned humans as separate from – and superior to – the rest of the natural world.

A 'self-proclaimed sovereign species'

In a landmark article published in 1966, the American historian, Lynn White Jr, argued that the 'historical roots of our ecological crisis' were bound up with the religious traditions of the west. Influentially, and controversially, White targeted what he felt was a prevailing notion within western Christianity: that humans were divinely ordained to gain mastery over nature and exploit it for their own ends – a notion that continues in contemporary secular notions of the earth as a storehouse of 'resources', valued primarily for its provision of 'ecosystem services' for a self-proclaimed sovereign species.

For White, as for Wright, the challenge was to 'regenerate ourselves': that is, to develop a new ethos of human existence in a more-than-human world; a world that is not a mere means to human ends, but has its own inherent value, diverse interests, and vibrant agencies. While Wright stressed the role of the arts in engaging our feelings and imaginations,

and the ecophilosophers highlighted alternative ways of thinking, White advocated a religious reformation in the recovery of a more animistic sensibility (something for which he found a model in the mystical spirituality, and prophetic witness, of St Francis of Assisi).

Over the decades that followed, these lines of thinking informed the development of new and ecologically-oriented strands of work across the arts and humanities. In addition to environmental philosophy, ethics and religious studies, these included environmental or 'land' art, nature writing, 'ecopoetics', environmental history, cultural geography, environmental anthropology, ecolinguistics, and environmental literary and cultural studies. Towards the end of the last millennium, these green threads began to be woven together into the new multi, inter and transdisciplinary field that has become known globally as the 'environmental humanities'.

Curiosity, uncertainty, and collaboration

One of the first research networks in this area was the Australian National Working Group for the Ecological Humanities, of which I was a member. Our manifesto in 2001 framed the 'ecological humanities' as a new interdisciplinary and intercultural endeavour, dedicated to rethreading the fabric of knowledge by building bridges between the sciences and the humanities, and between western and other ways of knowing, with a view to developing moral action in relation to the 'natural' world.

This undertaking was motivated by curiosity, uncertainty, concern, and a desire to collaborate with scholars and other experts from a diversity of cultures and traditions, along with a commitment to cultural, biological, and academic diversity. The scare quotes around 'natural' signalled also our keen awareness of both the cultural construction of concepts of 'nature' and of the

interrelationship between environmental degradation and social injustice.

In 2013, the environmental humanities were given a major boost globally by the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, which funded the creation of several regional Humanities for the Environment Observatories, of which there are now eight around the world. In the same year, the Swedish government called for a national research programme in the environmental humanities – now based at Linköping University. Importantly, this fledgling field also has a professional journal, *Environmental Humanities*, dedicated to exploring 'fundamental questions of meaning, value, responsibility and purpose in a time of rapid, and escalating, change'.

The Research Centre for the Environmental Humanities at Bath Spa University, founded just last year, is the first of its kind in the UK. Drawing together scholars from across the university, including conservation biologists, geographers, anthropologists, philosophers, historians, literary critics, creative writers, film-makers, and visual and performance artists, we are seeking to develop new insights and creative responses in the face of deepening socio-environmental concerns and crises.

Creating greener narratives at the ACU Summer School

The academic programme that Bath Spa developed for the ACU Summer School 2017 included an introduction to the environmental humanities, as well as talks and workshops focused on particular themes and approaches. These included lectures on different aspects of religion and ecology, beginning with an introduction to the work of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) – a secular body that helps the world's major religions to develop environmental programmes based on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices. ARC's Director Martin Palmer explained how



ACU Summer School students at Bath Spa University

past social-ecological collapses have been followed by the emergence of new forms of religious thought and practice, and – as my colleague Mike Hannis, Lecturer in Environmental Humanities, observed in the talk that followed – it is interesting to see how ancient monuments around Britain, such as Stonehenge and Avebury, are becoming revitalised as sites of earth-centred spirituality in the midst of our current ecological crisis.

While western ‘neo-pagans’ seek to recover forms of seasonal celebration and animistic sensibility, indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, who have retained such traditions, are still struggling for recognition of the ecological value of their knowledge, perspectives, and practices. This lies at the heart of the work of another colleague, Sian Sullivan, Professor of Culture and Environment, whose lecture on ‘cultural ecologies’ related to her work as an environmental anthropologist over some 20 years with a Khoisan people in Namibia. Participants also had an opportunity to learn more about Namibian religious traditions from our visiting speaker Martha Akawa-Shikufa, a historian from the University of Namibia. Meanwhile, it was encouraging to learn how an ecological ethic is now also emerging across the world’s religions, as we learned from another inspiring visiting speaker, Husna Ahmad, Founding Director of Global One – a charity that seeks to empower Islamic women and girls to become agents of

change in creating positive environmental futures.

In addition to discussions around religion and ecology, the programme explored the crucial role of the arts in engaging hearts, minds, feelings, and imagination. One example of this is a transdisciplinary project called ‘Hydrocitizenship’, led by Professor of Environmental Humanities, Owain Jones. The project, which involves artists, writers and performers, explores the ways in which individuals and communities interconnect with and through water – including oceans, coasts, rivers and wetlands. Participants also learned about the ways in which the construction of Avebury, to which we made a site visit, afforded certain acoustic possibilities that might have been used musically to induce forms of religious experience.

Crucially, participants were invited to explore the use of the arts to communicate about environmental issues in their group projects. They were supported in this by a choice of workshops in music and movement, visual art, and creative writing. This was quite a stretch for many of the participants, especially those without prior training in the arts and humanities. To see what they succeeded in developing for their wonderful final presentations, with very little time and minimal resources, was all the more remarkable, and indicative of the new insights and skills that they will be taking back to their home countries.

Seeds of hope

In her rousing opening address, Professor Irma Eloff of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, argued that progress towards sustainable development in Africa hinges on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all, and on the promotion of lifelong learning. What the environmental humanities bring to this agenda is the advancement of educational programmes that enhance social-ecological literacy through the integration of multiple knowledges, both across different disciplines and between different cultures.

On their departure, each of the Summer School students received a gift that had been hand-crafted by a PhD student at Bath School of Art and Design: a ceramic pod representing a ‘Seed of Hope’, inspired by natural seeds found in the UK, and individually fired with a collection of natural fruit and vegetable materials. Having had the privilege of meeting, working, and partying with the exceptional participants of the ACU Summer School, I for one was left more hopeful that a just, compassionate, and environmentally sustainable future might yet be possible. ■

Professor Kate Rigby is Director of the Research Centre for Environmental Humanities at Bath Spa University, UK.

Protecting our planet: CIRCLE in motion

Africa is among the continents hardest hit by climate change, yet there remains a critical shortage of African researchers working in this area. The ACU-led CIRCLE project (Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa) aims to address this shortfall, offering climate change research fellowships to emerging researchers, while working with their universities to build the institutional support available to them. Here, some of the CIRCLE fellows give a flavour of their vital work.

Safeguarding small-scale fish farming in Ghana



Climate change is a critical threat to sustainable fish farming in Ghana, and is already having a real impact. Droughts are increasingly prolonged, rainfall patterns are changing, floods are more frequent, and strong winds are becoming a common phenomenon. Farmers are feeling the impact, too: fish ponds are caving in, aquatic plants are taking over, water quality is declining, and poverty is increasing as fish farmers feel the pinch of lower revenues.

My research explores the economic and social impact of climate change on small-scale fish farming in Ghana, and possible strategies to adapt to these changes. A major part of this has been collecting and analysing field data in two important aquaculture regions in Ghana – Ashanti and Brong Ahafo.

To gather this data, I travelled to communities in remote parts of Ghana, through rain, sunshine, traffic, day, and night. Everywhere I went, I found the impact of climate change to be sharply evident. On a visit to

a fish farm in Sunyani, for example, the ponds had completely dried up due to prolonged drought and high temperatures. At another farm in Odumasi, ponds had flooded during torrential rains and the farmer was using fencing nets to retain his fish.

In order to get a complete picture of the impact of climate change on aquaculture, I worked with a diverse set of stakeholders, ranging from farmers and meteorological officers, to government institutions and religious bodies. The information I gathered was equally diverse, and included climate data – such as rainfall duration and intensity; data on aquaculture – such as the species farmed and cost; and water parameters – such as oxygen levels, pH and, turbidity. As well as the more obvious scientific data, I also studied social and economic factors, such as household size and dependency ratio, family structures, and levels of social protection and insurance.

I was also able to see the various strategies already being used to combat climate change, including the construction of concrete walls to protect against floods, raised pond dykes to curb flooding, ponds fenced with nets to retain fish during floods, and the planting of trees to serve as windbreaks and to provide shade. For many of the stakeholders I worked with, operational costs and overheads for fish farming have increased as they struggle to combat extreme weather.

My findings confirm the grave impact of climate change on fish production in Ghana. They also point to the need for improved policies for Ghanaian aquaculture, and a far-reaching multi-media education campaign to promote strategies for adaptation across the country. ■

Dr Berchie Asiedu is a lecturer and researcher at the **University of Energy and Natural Resources**, Ghana. His CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at the **University of Ibadan**, Nigeria.

Droughts are increasingly prolonged, rainfall patterns are changing, floods are more frequent, and strong winds are becoming a common phenomenon.



The significance of soil to global warming

Soil, and its ability to store and absorb carbon, has a major role to play in mitigating the impact of global warming. Carbon is vital to the quality and fertility of soil. While agricultural practices can degrade and erode the quality of the land, returning carbon to the earth can improve crop yields and make soil more resilient to floods and drought.

But the significance of soil to climate change research is greater still. With proper management, soil can soak up planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, potentially countering some of the impact of global emissions.

My CIRCLE research explores the impact of land use and management on levels of carbon in the soil, with a focus on several rural regions of Ghana. With most households reliant on the land for their livelihoods, I was also keen to understand how socioeconomic factors may affect the extent to which farmers adopt soil management practices.

One approach to replenishing the soil is the use of crop residues – the bits of crop left over after harvest. These residues are a valuable resource, with the potential to return nutrients to the soil, control erosion, and maintain its ecosystem.

Through interviews and surveys, and by collecting soil samples from farms, I studied the different soil management and crop residue practices of crop farmers – including woodland, maize, and cassava farmers – in their Greater Accra and Eastern regions of Ghana, as well as assessing their willingness to adopt new approaches to crop residues.

I found that the most common way farmers deal with crop residues is currently a 'slash and burn' approach. The possibilities for using crop residues to improve soil quality were largely ignored or poorly understood by the farmers I met, and few attempted to remove these

While agricultural practices can degrade the quality of the land, returning carbon to the earth can improve crop yields and make soil more resilient to floods and drought.

valuable residues from the field. The majority of respondents believed that allowing the crop residue to remain would interfere with tillage and increase labour costs. Only 20% were willing to adopt this practice without financial support, and the remaining 80% would only be willing if external funding was provided and they were able to see clear benefits.

My research points to a need to encourage small-scale land users to participate further in soil management schemes and to explore feasible, cost effective techniques for making the most of crop residues. But it is also clear that farmers need enlightenment and government support to make this happen. ■

Dr Folasade Mary Owoade is a lecturer at **Ladoke Akintola University of Technology**, Nigeria. Her CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at the **University of Ghana**.



Women and rural entrepreneurship

Climate change affects the fundamental security, health and livelihoods of people – and is often particularly devastating for those already most vulnerable. My research focuses on the social dimensions of climate change for rural women in Nigeria – the challenges posed to their livelihoods, adaptive strategies to mitigate these challenges, and potential opportunities for entrepreneurial activity.

Women are already central to the rural economy, and their role as rural entrepreneurs has the potential to make a major contribution to socioeconomic development and resilience. Through small and micro enterprises, women can work closer to their homes and with more flexible hours, as well as having greater levels of autonomy, independence, and security.

Despite this, inequalities in the law and different cultural practices may inhibit the entrepreneurial development of rural women. Nigeria, for example, has diverse ethnic groups and cultural practices affecting both men and women differently. The extent to which these cultural practices have influenced entrepreneurial development has not been adequately explored.

Women may, for example, experience cultural restrictions to engaging in certain industries. Inequalities in rights and entitlements, whether economic or civil, may limit women's capacity to access resources – as shown by the low rates of land ownership among women.

My research also highlighted a low awareness of the impact of human activity on climate change – such as the pollution caused by the common agricultural practice of bush burning, for example – and a lack of training and information in this area. Entrepreneurial growth is also hindered by poor infrastructure – water supplies, electricity, roads – as well as the lack of intervention projects in this area.

As a result of my research, I am working with policymakers and other stakeholders to design and implement 'climate smart' projects within the community. This will raise awareness among women of the opportunities available and how best to use the resources around them, as well as training them in the use of eco-friendly methods and equipment. ■

Dr Catherine Abiola Akinbami is a researcher at **Obafemi Awolowo University**, Nigeria. Her CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at the **University of Ibadan**, Nigeria.



Developing drought tolerant maize

Maize is the most widely grown staple crop in Africa – more than 300 million Africans depend on it as their main source of food. When maize harvests fail as a result of droughts, floods or other extreme weather, the impact on lives and livelihoods is devastating. My research focuses on the development of drought tolerant varieties of maize, which are more resilient to the adverse effects of climate change.

Developing improved varieties of crops by conventional field-based methods takes a long time and can be hampered by bad weather and other environmental factors. Through biotechnology, however, it is possible to fast-forward this process. My CIRCLE fellowship brought me together with an existing tropical maize breeding programme at my host institution in Uganda, who were able to provide drought tolerant 'parent plants' for my research.

I was able to study the genetic and molecular characteristics of the drought tolerant maize samples, and use marker assisted selection (MAS) to select and target the specific genes which affect a plant's resilience to drought. I was then able to plant a number of lines of my specially bred maize for further analysis in four different locations in Uganda and Kenya.

The parental lines we identified will be used to develop new drought tolerant maize hybrids. I hope that these hybrid plants will later be released to farmers for better grain yield under drought conditions. Since my fellowship, I have also been promoted to Senior Lecturer in Plant Breeding and Genetics at my home institution. ■

Dr Abimbola Oluwaranti is Senior Lecturer in Plant Breeding and Genetics at **Obafemi Awolowo University**, Nigeria. Her CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at **Makerere University**, Uganda.



Rainfall patterns in rural Nigeria

As international scientists understand more and more about climate change, better awareness of the problem at a local level will be equally critical if rural communities are to plan for, and adapt to, its impact. Rural farmers in sub-Saharan Africa – particularly smallholder farmers – are particularly vulnerable to changes in climate, due to the compounding challenges of poverty, low infrastructural and technological development, and high dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

Studies have shown that rural responses to climate change are often based on perceptions of its impact. My research seeks to establish whether farmers' perceptions of climate change are consistent with scientific analysis of climatic trends, and how well they are able to adapt to these changes. My work focused particularly on farmers in the southwestern region of Nigeria, where much of the population live in rural areas, with agriculture as their main livelihood. Around 59% live below the poverty line.

What became obvious from my fieldwork was that climate variability was already having an impact on agricultural activity in the region, where most farming practices are reliant on rainfall. Interviews and focus group discussions revealed that the majority of farmers felt rainfall had become more unreliable in recent years, with prolonged dry spells and recurrent drought. Nearly all the farmers perceived that the onset of rainfall is much later recently than over the last 30 years, and that it now stops long before the normal wet season might otherwise be expected to end. These changes were already having a severe impact: crop yields were lower and livestock farmers struggled to find water and green pastures for their cattle.

The next stage of my work was to compare the farmers' perceptions of climate change trends with meteorological analysis, using meteorological archives and the World Bank's Climate Change Knowledge Portal. I was able to demonstrate that scientific evidence mirrored the farmers' perception that rainfall patterns have become significantly more unreliable in recent years.

The research also showed that socioeconomic factors – crucially income, level of education, and years of experience – have a huge influence on the coping strategies and adaption methods adopted by farmers, particularly their ability to adopt new practices such as new irrigation methods or drought resistant crops. I observed during my fieldwork that the farmers found it hard to identify adaptation options which go beyond those with which they are familiar.

As such, my findings highlight a need for more capacity development programmes to educate and inform farmers about the effects of climate change, and to help them develop greater resilience. This could include the use of mobile phone apps and other technologies with the potential to bring climate change knowledge to remote and rural locations. ■

Dr Ayansina Ayanlade is a researcher at **Obafemi Awolowo University**, Nigeria. His CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at the **International Livestock Research Institute**, Kenya.

Nutshells: a new fuel source?

My research explores the potential to convert agricultural waste into useful biofuels or other energy sources for industrial use. This would provide an important alternative to the current practice of burning agricultural waste, which itself causes air pollution and contributes to global warming and environmental damage.

I focused on two particular types of agricultural waste product: palm fruit fibre, which is generated in the processing of palm oil, and the nutshells left over from the processing of physic nuts. At my field sites – an oil palm processing centre and physic nut plantation site – these residues are currently dumped near the processing centres because there is no technology for the villagers to process them further.

My research involved extracting materials from these residues, and then exposing them to different temperatures and pressures to find the ideal criteria for converting them into energy. The bio-oil for each residue was then extracted and further analysis carried out using a GC-MS machine – an instrument which enables the user to separate and identify the different components of a sample.

My analysis found that the density, viscosity, and calorific values of the palm and nutshell residue oil were comparable to other common fuels such as gasoline, diesel, and coal. Converting these bio-oils into fuels could therefore offer a profitable and beneficial use for agricultural waste.

Safeguarding our climate and natural resources is a partnership between higher education, the public, and the government. It is clear from my research that stakeholders need to work together to ensure that these alternative ways of disposing and using waste products are readily available, profitable, and convenient. ■

Dr Onifade Tawakalitu Bola is a researcher at **Ladoke Akintola University of Technology**, Nigeria. Her CIRCLE fellowship was hosted at the **University of Nairobi**, Kenya.



To find out more about CIRCLE, visit www.acu.ac.uk/circle

Noticeboard

New Chair and members of ACU Council elected

Following a call for nominations, the ACU has announced its latest Chair of Council, along with nine new Council members – all of whom will serve a term of three years. As the ACU's overall governing body, the Council is collectively responsible for overseeing the association's activities and determining its future direction. A full list of all serving Council members and officials can be found on page 2, with new members as follows:

- **Professor Amit Chakma**, President and Vice-Chancellor of **Western University**, Canada (Chair)
- **Professor Nigel Healey**, Vice-Chancellor of **Fiji National University**
- **Professor Dhanjay Jhurry**, Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Mauritius**
- **Professor Mehraj-Ud Din Mir**, Vice-Chancellor of the **Central University of Kashmir**, India
- **Professor Abel Idowu Olayinka**, Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Ibadan**, Nigeria
- **Professor Nirmala Rao**, Vice-Chancellor of the **Asian University for Women**, Bangladesh
- **Professor Colin Riordan**, President and Vice-Chancellor of **Cardiff University**, UK
- **Professor Gamini Senanayake**, Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Ruhuna**, Sri Lanka
- **Professor Gabriel Ayum Teye**, Vice-Chancellor of the **University for Development Studies**, Ghana
- **Professor Wim de Villiers**, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of **Stellenbosch University**, South Africa



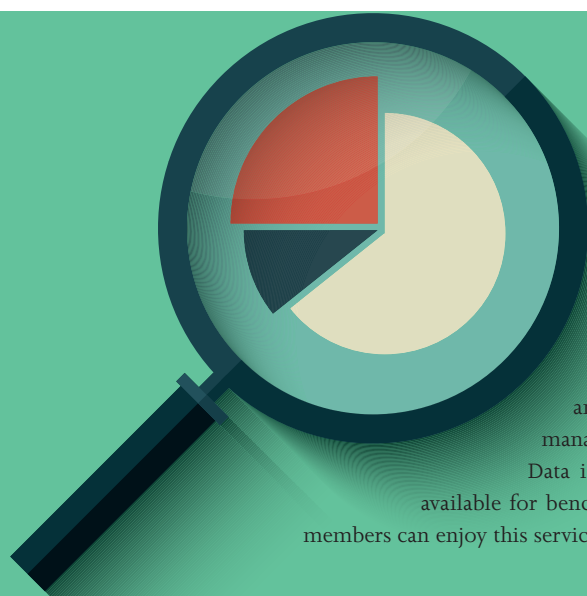
The ACU's new Chair of Council,
Professor Amit Chakma

ACU Titular Fellowships 2017 – the latest recipients

The ACU Titular Fellowships enable university staff and academics at ACU member universities to visit other universities across the Commonwealth to collaborate on research, develop skills, and share ideas.

This year, 11 Titular Fellowships have been awarded to staff from Botswana, Canada, Fiji, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Research topics include reproductive health, computer-assisted learning, palliative care, livestock breeding, and quality of life for family carers. To find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/titular-fellowships

- Professor Zulkifli Ahmad at the **Universiti Sains Malaysia**
- Dr Shamim Akhter at **Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University**, Pakistan
- Dr Heather Aldersey at **Queen's University**, Canada
- Dr Helen Yue Lai Chan at the **Chinese University of Hong Kong**
- Paul Denny at the **University of Auckland**, New Zealand.
- Professor Opha Pauline Dube at the **University of Botswana**
- Dr Suranga Kodithuwakku at the **University of Peradeniya**, Sri Lanka
- David Obada at **Ahmadu Bello University**, Nigeria
- Dr Nacanieli Rika at the **University of the South Pacific**
- Dr Godiraono Tatolo at the **University of Botswana**
- Professor Carmen Wickramagamage at the **University of Peradeniya**, Sri Lanka



ACU Measures: a confidential and non-competitive way to benchmark performance

ACU Measures is a unique opportunity for member institutions to benchmark their performance in key areas of university management. Rather than seeking to rank institutions, this online exercise helps universities to compare and contrast their practices and policies with their peers, supporting senior university management in decision-making and strategic planning.

Data is collected online every year between February and May, and is available for benchmarking year-round using the ACU Measures platform. All ACU members can enjoy this service free of charge – visit www.acu.ac.uk/acu-measures to take part.



ACU conference on university human resources: save the date

The eighth conference of the ACU's HR in HE Community will take place at the University of Waterloo, Canada, from 23-27 September 2018. The theme will be 'Universities of the future: global perspectives for HR', and promises a dynamic international programme of speakers, as well as excellent opportunities to network and share best practice. Register for updates by emailing canada2018@acu.ac.uk

The ACU's HR in HE Community is a forum for all university staff working in human resources – from the most experienced HR directors to those looking to expand or develop the HR function at their institution. The community brings colleagues from across the Commonwealth together to compare good practice, showcase ideas and initiatives, and discover potential avenues for collaboration. To join the community or find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/hr-in-he or contact hrm@acu.ac.uk

Ten universities to receive ACU gender grants

The ACU's gender workshop grants help member universities to promote gender equality on campus by funding training and awareness-raising workshops. Ten such grants were awarded in 2017 to universities in seven Commonwealth countries. To find out more about the ACU's work in this area, visit www.acu.ac.uk/gender

- **Covenant University**, Nigeria
- **Ebonyi State University**, Nigeria
- **Eduardo Mondlane University**, Mozambique
- **Fatima Jinnah Women University**, Pakistan
- **Jinnah Sindh Medical University**, Pakistan
- **Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalaym**, India
- **The IIS University**, India
- **University of Asia Pacific**, Bangladesh
- **University of Guyana**
- **University of Malta**

Apply for new Commonwealth Scholarships in Singapore

Nanyang Technological University in Singapore is offering four fully-funded Commonwealth PhD Scholarships for students from other Commonwealth countries. Commonwealth Scholarships offer talented students an opportunity to gain a qualification in a different country, and benefit from international experience and cross-cultural exchange. Applications remain open until 31 January 2018. To find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/about-csfp



How does your university promote respect and understanding?

How do universities promote mutual respect and understanding between people of different faiths, beliefs, and cultures? How can they nurture the values of respect, tolerance and openness among their staff, students and communities? Taking inspiration from the diverse nature of its membership, the ACU is inviting member universities from across the Commonwealth to share and showcase examples of innovative programmes and initiatives in this area, allowing others to learn from their successes, experiences, and expertise.

Staff and students are also invited to join the 200+ individuals and institutions across the Commonwealth who have already demonstrated their commitment to promoting respect and understanding by signing up to a short statement of shared values. Visit www.acu.ac.uk/respect to take part or email respect@acu.ac.uk

The ACU's PEBL project: shared resources, shared benefits

An innovative new project will use blended learning to enable universities in east Africa to share teaching resources and capacity – not only expanding the range of courses they offer, but also easing the teaching burden placed on their staff. **Ben Prasadam-Halls** reports.

Higher education is booming in east Africa – or, at least, student numbers are. In Kenya, student enrolment has increased tenfold in a decade. 'The biggest challenge we've faced with managing growth in the sector is that increases in numbers of academic staff haven't been able to keep pace with the rise in student enrolment,' says Professor Jackson Too, Deputy Commission Secretary for Planning, Research and Development at Kenya's Commission for University Education. 'Most universities in Kenya are now facing shortages of academic staff, and in some of the private universities the shortages are particularly acute.' Indeed, a 2015 study carried out by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis found that about 50% of staff at public universities in Kenya undertake additional part-time jobs – mostly teaching in other universities.

The problem is not confined to Kenya alone. In neighbouring Tanzania, there is also a shortage of staff. At the State University of Zanzibar, Vice-Chancellor Professor Idris Rai reports having to rely on large numbers of part-time staff to cover the teaching load. But the challenge is not only about maintaining current provision. 'There are courses in new areas that we would like to offer,' explains Professor Rai, 'courses in artificial intelligence or data analytics – areas that will be of growing importance in this digital age. But we simply don't have enough highly qualified staff to design and teach those courses – either here at SUZA or across the university sector in Tanzania.'

In response to this challenge, the ACU launched PEBL – otherwise known as the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning. This exciting and innovative new project will create a network of east African universities able to share scarce teaching resources through the use of blended learning. Credit bearing and quality assured degree courses will be developed, in the first instance, by leading academics within six regional partner universities, and then shared across the network.

The courses that are developed – or adapted for this new form of delivery – will be offered to students enrolled in degree programmes within a larger group of participating universities across the region. They will be taught through blended learning – a combination of online delivery and face-to-face tutoring offered by academic staff or postgraduate students within their own institution.

The PEBL courses will form an integral part of a student's degree programme. They will be assessed by their home institution, and awarded degree credit in exactly the same way as other, traditionally taught, courses.

A new mode of delivery

Ensuring that the courses are recognised to be of the highest quality will be critical to the project's success. As Professor Paul Muyinda, Deputy Principal at Makerere University's College of Education and External Studies in Uganda, points out: 'Blended learning is a new mode of delivery in Uganda, so a lot of convincing will be needed for people to trust this approach. There are many online scams and people are quite wary about what they call online things.'

The partner universities will receive technical support from leading international experts to ensure that the courses are of the very highest quality. The University of Edinburgh, highly regarded as leaders in the field of online learning and course development, will provide support in educational technology and effective approaches to delivering blended learning. The Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) will train a cohort of partner university staff in how to lead educational and pedagogic change, and how to help their academic colleagues to create courses that lead to effective learning outcomes.

This initial cohort of staff will then offer training to others, including colleagues both in their own and other institutions. The Commonwealth of Learning, which has a long track record in both quality assurance systems and the use of open educational resources, will help to strengthen participating universities' own systems for quality assurance to ensure

that they are able to adapt to the provision of blended learning.

Content and development

Three batches of courses will be developed initially, with the first being offered to students in January 2019. In this first round, the project will prioritise modules in the areas of business, education, health and allied sciences, and ICT. The six initial participant universities will each propose courses to be developed, with selections made through an internal peer review process.

Each course will be developed by a leading academic with extensive subject expertise, but they will be supported by a subject-specific working group to include academic peers from across the region and, where possible, employers and industry representatives drawn from the university's alumni base.

As well as developing the intellectual content and guidance on assessment criteria and approaches, academic leads will be expected to articulate the learning pathways that students will follow in order to achieve clearly stated outcomes. This will involve interactive activities and assignments designed to develop a student's critical thinking, presentation skills and team working, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Besides representing good practice, this approach will also serve a secondary objective for the project: helping to enhance the soft skills and 'job readiness' of graduating students. A 2014 study by the Inter-University Council for East Africa highlighted a dire lack of job market preparedness among graduates from across east Africa. The study found that 51% of Kenyan graduates lack the skills needed for the job market, with the figure rising to 52% in Rwanda, 61% in Tanzania, and 63% for Ugandan graduates. When asked what job readiness means, many employers in the region referred to these so-called soft skills.

A supportive approach

PEBL's approach to course development may be relatively new to many academics in the



region, so the project will provide close technical support throughout. For the first round of course development, our technical partners will directly support the academic leads, working hand in hand with a team of three from each of the six partner universities. This same team of staff will be trained by SEDA in how to lead pedagogical change within their institution so that in subsequent rounds, they themselves will take the lead in supporting their academic colleagues. They will also be engaged in training colleagues in other institutions to do likewise.

On the other side of the fence, tutors – who could be academic staff of any rank or even doctoral and postgraduate students – will lead the face-to-face component of the blended learning model within participating universities. Potential tutors will be trained by PEBL in how to tutor effectively – a distinctly different skill to teaching.

Quality and accreditation

Before any course is offered to students, it will be quality assured – and quite possibly twice. At the very least, each course will be submitted to the quality assurance processes within the partner university at which it originated. It may also then be subject to quality assurance within each of the universities that intend to offer it, although an emerging credit transfer framework for east Africa may help to streamline this process.

However, quality assurance – while vital – is not in itself enough, as Professor Too points

out. ‘Students’, he reflects, ‘need to have confidence that they are not wasting their time and effort, and that courses will count towards their degrees. And universities will be unlikely to want to take part if they think it means that they will need to send their programmes back for re-accreditation.’

To mitigate this risk, Kenya’s Commission for University Education (CUE) will provide guidance and reassurance to Kenyan universities regarding the approval of courses and the extent of changes that are permissible without triggering the need for re-accreditation. The ACU and the Commission are also actively engaging regulatory bodies in Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda to provide similar guidance to universities in those countries.

Thinking ahead

For the project’s partners, the value of PEBL extends far beyond its more immediate benefits. ‘Online and blended learning will continue to increase in importance for the higher education sector in Kenya,’ explains Professor Too. ‘We see PEBL as an opportunity for CUE to learn more about the process of appraising and guaranteeing the quality of courses offered in this way. We will almost certainly need to develop frameworks for auditing the quality of online and blended learning provision in future, and this project will set us up well for that task.’

The State University of Zanzibar also has an eye on the digital future. ‘PEBL is perfectly aligned with our mission and priorities,’ says

Professor Rai. ‘We aim to provide quality and locally relevant teaching and research that will equip society to respond to the challenges of the 21st century and beyond. A key challenge for our university is to make use of new technologies to enable a wider community to gain access to higher education. PEBL will start at a comparatively small scale, but the idea is to prove that it works, and to change mindsets in the process.’ ■

PEBL is funded by the UK Department for International Development through the SPHEIR (Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform) programme.

Ben Prasad-Halls is Director of Programmes at the ACU.

The ACU is currently recruiting universities in east Africa to take part in this exciting project. To find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/pebl or email pebl@acu.ac.uk

Sporting futures

The 2018 Commonwealth Games are set to be Australia's biggest sporting event this decade. And, as an official partner, Griffith University will play a key role in their success. But Griffith is also playing its part in creating winners – working with students who are also elite athletes and helping them to integrate their sporting and academic aspirations. Olympic gold medallist, **Duncan Free**, tells us more.

Whether you're looking to play sport or study it, keep fit or compete professionally, universities play an important role in nurturing sport. This might include community engagement with or through sport. It might mean cutting-edge research, physiotherapy, or exercise science. And, for some institutions, such as Griffith University, it also includes creating and supporting elite athletes.

Getting active

As more and more is known about the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle, universities clearly have a role to play in maintaining and increasing interest in sport among their students. This could be through social sporting events and competitions such as fun runs or swim-a-thons, hosted on campus and open to all. It could also include voluntary work with community sports programmes – such as hosting sports clubs for kids – which also fosters skills that can complement a student's academic studies.

Sport is a great way to engage with the local community. Griffith University's sports clubs are open to everyone – you don't need to be a student to sign up – and offer a great way to meet people and make friends in the community. We run and manage clubs in everything from power boxing to quidditch. If a student can't find the club they want, we can help them create it.

For community clubs themselves, engaging students can have an extremely healthy effect on participation and membership growth. Universities can also offer assistance to community clubs through educational workshops to upskill volunteers, coaches, and administrators. Universities can even take other elements of their expertise into the community – such as training around nutrition, physiotherapy, biomechanics, and so on.

Hitting the big time

High performance sport is described as sport at the highest level of competition, and is distinct from recreational or social sports. Globally, universities vary in the way that they

engage in high performance sport. In some countries, universities may have multi-million dollar business models that bring television rights, sponsors, and maximum capacity grandstands at events. Perhaps the most well-known examples of this are the 'big-time' commercial sports played in American universities.

However, universities in other regions also contribute to the development of high performance sport by providing facilities, expertise, research, and other support to sporting bodies and professional clubs. And there is great potential for universities to partner up – with other universities or with government or the sports industry – on research and high performance support.

Universities also contribute through cutting-edge research, and are often industry leaders in areas such as sports engineering and technology, sports science, physiology and health, biomechanics, injury prevention and management, and much more. At Griffith, this spans disciplines from engineering to medicine, and ranges from research into movement monitoring and wearable technologies, to understanding the motivations and psychology of doping.

Elite athletes

It's extremely important that elite athletes have a balanced life – in other words, something else going on outside of sport. And in many cases, this means tertiary study.

For an elite athlete, having a balanced life has a three-pronged benefit. First, studying while competing allows an athlete to switch on and switch off as and when appropriate from their sport into another interest. Having the capability to do this allows the athlete to remain mentally fresh for training sessions, recovery, and competition. I believe this ability to switch on and off provides greater results than if the athlete is eating, sleeping, and breathing sport 24/7.

Second, having that balance in life brings longevity to an athlete's sporting career – again, by encouraging other interests and lessening the risk of an athlete feeling stale or sick of their sport.

Finally, the proportion of one's life spent as a professional athlete is relatively short. Statistics suggest the average professional athlete's career may be over by the age of 33. For other sports, it may be as young as 28. However, regardless of how long an athlete's sporting career may last, university study and a balanced life will make the transition into retirement a lot easier. If an athlete has other things going on, retiring from sport will be a far smaller adjustment than if sport was pretty much the only thing in their life.

So, while an elite athlete will always have sport as their priority, university study and support can both enhance and complement their athletic ability. Meanwhile, university research and sporting activities can have far-reaching benefits for students, communities, and society as a whole. ■

Duncan Free is Director of Griffith Sports College at Griffith University, Australia.



It's just not cricket! Sports science and international collaboration

Sports science is increasingly seen as key to sporting achievement. But there's far more at stake than just winning trophies – sports science is an area of intense research, a great career choice, and offers exciting opportunities for international collaboration. Here, **Martin Toms** reports on a partnership between Birmingham University and the Sports Authority of India, and explores the huge potential of this fast-growing field.

When it comes to sport, there's no doubt that India is a sleeping giant. As I write this, the Indian cricket team have returned to the top of the International Cricket Council one-day rankings, as well as maintaining their dominance of the Test match rankings. But then cricket has always been perceived as a religion in the country – despite field hockey being the national sport.

At the University of Birmingham, we have had the great pleasure of working alongside the Sports Authority of India to create a partnership which allows us to share and link expertise in sports, exercise and rehabilitation sciences. And we hope to build on this relationship – using collaboration in sport and sports science to

pool expertise and strengthen international bonds.

The impact of sports science

The quest for the development of sport in India is no surprise, with governmental focus upon sports participation, health, and well-being – as well as medal winning – becoming central to recent national strategies. India's cricketing success has been astronomical and, with the increasingly high-profile Indian Premier League now being compared to Premier League football in the UK, cricket remains on a high in the country.

While sports science as a discipline may be relatively new in India, its impact is becoming key. The Indian cricket team and Indian Premier League already involve sports science and medicine professionals, who engage with

players to help support and develop that competitive edge. And this edge is crucial to success – as numerous nations and sports have identified as they clamour for success on a global stage.

The impact of sports science on professional sport is immeasurable, with many international Olympic (and non-Olympic) programmes embracing technology and science to support the development of their athletes. More recently, increased investment in elite sport – through the likes of the Australian Institute of Sport (especially prior to the Sydney Olympics) and the English Institute of Sport (prior to the London games) – has followed the approach taken by East Germany and Russia, which championed the use of science on athletes during and beyond the cold war period.

In India's universities, sports science is increasingly recognised as a valid area of study, a possible profession, and an area of ever more intensive research. Historically, the serious study of sport and physical education may have been frowned upon, not unlike the development of the field in the UK in the latter quarter of last century. However, the acknowledgement that the more traditional disciplines of medicine, business, and engineering can be sports focused – as well as the emergence of sports-specific approaches to physiology, biomechanics, psychology, and coaching – mean that the sector is a huge potential employer.

A very important aspect to all of this is that participation in sport is directly linked to the health, exercise, and wellbeing agenda, with physical activity recognised as vital not only to keeping nations healthy and productive, but also to reducing the strain on healthcare resources. Through exercise and sport, the idea of a healthy and active lifestyle can become embedded within a national culture.



A multi-million dollar industry

Modern sports science is a far cry from the early days of measuring tapes and stopwatches. With ever more complex computer simulations, medical advancements, and technological developments, the science behind sport is now a multi-million dollar industry worldwide.

At the top end of the scale, there are teams of physiologists, psychologists, medics, physiotherapists, and biomechanists leading cutting-edge research on the 'techniques' of performance, as well as an increasing number of social scientists and coaches exploring the wider social contexts of athletes' lives and performances. But it's not just at the elite level where we find the fundamental principles of sports science being applied: sports science graduates are often also volunteer coaches, meaning these principles are now reaching junior levels and grass roots organisations.

The development of sports science itself is a huge area of possibility for India – a country with the potential to dominate the world's sporting rankings. To achieve these sporting

goals, and to develop a sports strategy which is nuanced by the many demographic and geographical challenges, is no mean feat. But through the development of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and by sharing expertise through partnerships, India's ability to grow its own expertise is clearly the beginning of a quiet revolution. And, in sport, the opportunities to cross-fertilise the subject from many areas – business, engineering, and medicine to name but a few – are immense.

The science behind the game

As a former professional cricket coach with a PhD in the field, cricket in India has always been fascinating to me. The science behind the game is captivating, and the biomechanics, physiology and psychology of performance, at an interdisciplinary level, are hot areas of research.

The cricketing arms race means that the value of sports science is not just about winning, but also about understanding and creating new techniques. The use of engi-

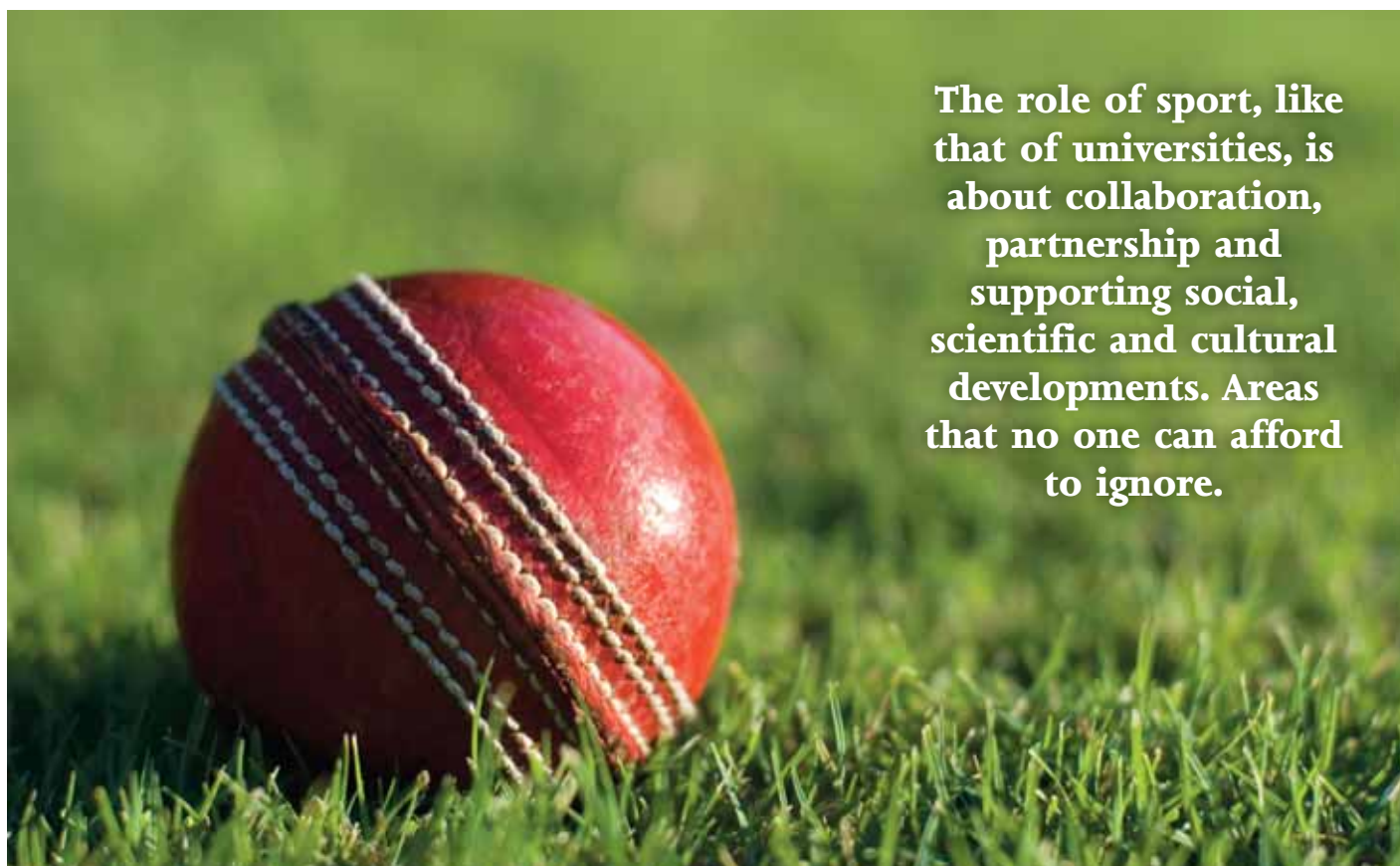
neering and biomechanics, for example, spans a multitude of areas – including the careful study of the movement and swing of a cricket ball under different conditions. (The way a ball swings is believed to be based upon a number of factors, including pitch condition, the biomechanical motion of the bowler delivering the ball, the grip on the ball at delivery, and weather conditions.)

Researchers are also exploring the biomechanical efficiency of the batting stroke, as well as the need for injury prevention for bowlers – and we haven't touched on the physiology of fitness, reaction times, or psychology yet!

Changes in the game – particularly the advent of T20 (a shorter form of cricket) – have brought about a revolution in science and applied performance, where coaches use high-speed cameras to analyse the most minute part of a player's performance. The level of detail this can reveal, and the adjustments that can be made in performance, make this approach exceptionally valuable within a sport where margins are so very, very tight.



Cricket practice for university students in New Delhi



The role of sport, like that of universities, is about collaboration, partnership and supporting social, scientific and cultural developments. Areas that no one can afford to ignore.

So, when we watch the next instalment of cricket – be it the Ashes tours, the World Cup in 2019, or even just a match played at grass roots level – consider the science that underpins every part of each player’s performance. It is fitting that academics and practitioners should have a part to play in these developments, and that partnerships – such as that between the University of Birmingham

and the Sports Authority of India – will play a central role.

The role of sport, like that of universities, is about collaboration, partnership and supporting social, scientific and cultural developments. Areas that no one can afford to ignore, and that can bring benefits to everyone, far beyond the field of play. ■

Dr Martin Toms is a Senior Lecturer in Sports Coaching at the University of Birmingham, UK, and leads the university’s partnership with the Sports Authority of India.

The Commonwealth Games...

- The first Commonwealth Games took place in **1930** in Hamilton, Canada, with just 400 athletes from 11 countries.
- They’ve grown enormously since then....the **Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games** in Queensland, Australia, will involve more than 6,600 athletes and team officials from 70 nations and territories.
- The 2002 Games in Manchester, UK, was the first major international multi-sport event to include **elite athletes with disabilities** in its main programme and medal table.

- Although a message from the Monarch has been read at every Games, the tradition of the **Queen’s Baton Relay** didn’t begin until 1958. The Baton contains a ‘message to the Commonwealth and its athletes.’
- Not *everyone* at the time was convinced by this mode of delivery. ‘What message could the Queen have in mind that requires such a circuitous route for its conveyance?’ asked Auberon Waugh in *The Times*. ‘One cannot help feeling that it had better be **something pretty meaty** to justify the effort.’
- The Baton for each Games is designed by the host nation, and in 2018 has been made from **macadamia wood and reclaimed plastic**, sourced from Gold Coast waterways.

- The 2018 Queen’s Baton Relay will be the **longest** in Commonwealth Games history. Covering 230,000 kilometres over 388 days, the Baton will make its way across Commonwealth regions in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, and Oceania.
- **Beach volleyball, paratriathlon, and women’s rugby sevens** are all set to make their Commonwealth Games debut in 2018.
- The 2018 Games will also be the first in the history of major multi-sport games to have an **equal number of medal events for men and women**, including seven new women’s events across weightlifting, boxing, and cycling.

Harnessing the power of partnerships in Tanzania

Where resources are strained, how can universities compete on an increasingly global stage?

In October, the ACU joined the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Provosts in Tanzania to explore this challenge, and the importance of partnerships to globalisation and growth. Here, **Idris Rai** explains how collaborative approaches lie at the heart of expansion at the State University of Zanzibar.

For years, the Zanzibar archipelago – a semi-autonomous territory of Tanzania – depended entirely on mainland Tanzania for higher education services. As its population grew, however, it became apparent that Zanzibar needed its own universities to meet growing demand. More importantly, there was a clear need to develop Zanzibar's human capacity in specific priority areas if the government was to realise its vision for national development.

As such, when the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) began operations in 2001, its primary mission was clear: to build Zanzibar's workforce in line with the national development agenda. Although clearly an important aim, this meant the institution's initial mission was *locally* focused, as opposed to having the more *universally* relevant mission expected from a higher learning institution. It is possible that this locally focused mission may have led to the institution's stagnant growth in its first decade.

In 2010, however, a new government promised to establish Zanzibar as a regional hub of excellence in knowledge, focusing on higher education delivery. Making this vision a reality was my major assignment when I took office as SUZA's third Vice-Chancellor in 2011. I realised that to achieve this agenda, the university would have to undergo major reforms.

If SUZA was to become a regional centre of excellence in higher education, it needed to be comprehensive and relevant nationally, regionally, and globally. It must provide globally competitive quality education that empowers Zanzibaris to respond to increasingly complex and dynamic socioeconomic challenges. In essence, to be a regional leader, the university needed an *international* outlook.

'It's time to grow'

When I joined SUZA, preparations to commemorate its tenth anniversary were underway. It was the perfect moment to reflect on a

By capitalising on our core areas of specialism – such as our expertise in the Kiswahili language, history, and Swahili culture – we have been able to attract international collaborations and increase student mobility.

future strategy for growth. We dissected our context and came up with the motto: 'It's time to grow'. To date, our staff proudly continue to live by and pursue the motto we enthusiastically created back then.

In keeping with this motto, the university underwent holistic reforms that touched on every institutional aspect, including its mission, vision, values, strategic plan, structures, systems, and priority focus areas. Our new vision – aspiring to be the preferred university in the region – is supported by the four key pillars of our mission: quality, broad relevance, knowledge-based society, and 21st century challenges and beyond.

Since that time, SUZA has grown rapidly from a small teaching institution to a medium-sized comprehensive university. Our student numbers have soared – from around 1,000 to 6,000 – and the number of staff has grown from 250 to over 550. The number of programmes we offer has increased, too – from eight to 50, including PhD and Master's degrees. Formal partnership agreements have also increased – from just six in 2011 to more than 70 – and externally mobilised resources have grown from a total of around US\$3

million in the institution's first ten years to an estimated \$20 million in the past six. Crucially, we attribute much of this growth to collaboration, both with internal and external partners.

The need for internal support

Primary collaboration – i.e. collaboration with the university's governing board, the campus community, and internal support from government – cannot be taken for granted. We have seen universities around the world be torn apart due to misalignments of vision and resistance to change from within.

When I joined SUZA, I was pleased to find internal stakeholders in support of the reforms for institutional growth. A slow start and stagnant institutional development in the first ten years of the university had been so vivid that the university community and the council immediately supported reforms for growth.

This primary collaboration is vital to the development of a university, regardless of the economic status of the country in which it's located. In resource constrained environments, however, it is almost impossible to achieve progress without it. In such situations, vice-chancellors may be tasked to look elsewhere for support. However, in the absence of effective collaboration and support from government and the institution itself, mobilising resources becomes a very daunting task.

Looking outward

For any university to realise ambitions of growth, developing links with other institutions and organisations must be a key objective of its strategic plan. For SUZA, our new vision to be a regional leader has compelled us to look outward for inspiration and to benchmark our core functions and practices against those of other institutions.

Our strategic areas of collaboration – and some 70 partnership agreements to date – have focused on staff development, academic programmes and research, study abroad programmes, and student and staff mobility.

These collaborations have contributed to our growth by promoting quality, excellence, and cultural transformation. Some of these partnership areas are outlined below.

Partnerships to build university capacity

When I joined SUZA in 2011, only 10% of its academic staff (which, at that time, was around 110 people) had PhDs. One of my immediate personal objectives was therefore to upgrade the staff. Training staff at PhD and Master's level is, however, both expensive and time consuming. The need to develop a critical mass of staff in a short time clashes with the demands of institutional growth – as an institution expands, more staff are needed, which in turn limits them from leaving the institution for further studies.

Nevertheless, through various strategies, we have gradually been able to build our staff capacity at the same time as our expansion. Of a current academic staff of about 280, around 32% now have PhDs, with a further 15% in the process of pursuing them.

International collaborations have played a pivotal role in staff development, and the university has been able to mobilise a significant amount of resources to support

our capacity building activities. Examples include two north-south-south grants from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, a grant from the Danish government's Danida Fellowship Centre, and a partnership with the Finnish government's international development cooperation programme for higher education (HEI-ICI). Along with the University of Rwanda, SUZA is also a key partner in the World Bank's African Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project. All these partnerships involve collaborations with consortia of more experienced universities from Europe and Africa.

Currently, more than 70 staff and potential future staff are pursuing further studies inside and outside the country through support from one of these institutional collaborations. Through these grants, we have also observed an increase in the number of published research papers by our staff.

Some of our collaborations have focused on strengthening and modernising learning and teaching in specific areas of global, regional and national relevance. We are proud, for example, to be among the first participants of the ACU's Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) programme (see page 18 of this issue), which uses blended learning to enable universities to offer courses in subjects they might not otherwise have the capacity to teach.

Other examples include a partnership with the international energy company Statoil, which aims to build capacity

by developing skills in the environmental sciences – particularly the management of coastal and marine areas. Another such partnership focuses on using geospatial information in planning and management.

We also have a number of partnership agreements with individual universities that focus specifically on staff development and exchange, including agreements with Manipal and VIT Universities in India, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Partnerships to expand academic programmes

A key element of a university's growth is the expansion of its academic programmes, which in turn leads to greater student numbers. Through international partnerships, we have been able to develop a number of new programmes, most of which have been jointly developed and sometimes jointly run. These include new postgraduate degrees in climate change, in youth, gender and development, and in teaching Kiswahili as a foreign language; new degrees in environmental health, geoinformatics, and early childhood education; and two Master's and PhD programmes in the 'internet of things', run jointly with consortium partners at the University of Rwanda.

Partnerships for study abroad

One of SUZA's unique selling points is its expertise in the Kiswahili language, history, and Swahili culture. Kiswahili is an international language and is undoubtedly one of the most widely taught of African languages worldwide. By capitalising on our particular areas of expertise, we have been able to attract international collaborations in Swahili studies, and increase student mobility.

In summary, SUZA's growth over the past six years is intricately intertwined with institutional collaboration and support. As any experienced higher education leader will agree, achieving significant university expansion in a short time is impossible without encountering obstacles. Nevertheless, however big and destructive the challenges, university leaders in resource limited countries must embrace partnerships and collaborations as key to achieving their strategic goals. ■

Professor Idris Rai



Professor Idris A Rai is Vice-Chancellor of the State University of Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Honorary Treasurer of the ACU.

Avoiding a lost generation – higher education and the refugee crisis

Conflict and persecution are driving more people from their homes than ever before, with more than 60 million people displaced worldwide. Here, **Holly Finch** outlines how King's College London is working with international colleagues to provide displaced students with access to education.

The Syrian refugee crisis has had a devastating impact upon millions of people, not only affecting them as individuals, but damaging the peace and prosperity of the communities in which they live. Among these are many young adults, whose education has been disrupted and their employment opportunities shattered. But by working together, and by sharing and transferring knowledge, higher education institutions and contemporary organisations across the world can help to mitigate the risk of a 'lost generation', who may otherwise have few prospects and little hope. The youth population is simply too great to not be educated, inspired, and transformed into a generation of future leaders.

According to the UNHCR – the United Nations Refugee Agency – legal documentation, high student fees, a lack of capacity in educational institutions, and language are the main barriers preventing refugees from entering higher education in regions outside of Syria. These barriers are then intensified by specific legal and political contexts, and the fact that many students are unable to pay even the most modest of fees.

In response to this, King's College London – together with Al al-Bayt University, the American University of Beirut, Kiron Open Higher Education, and FutureLearn – have brought their knowledge and expertise together to initiate the Partnership for Digital Learning and Increased Access (PADILEIA). The programme aims to provide access to higher education for displaced refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, and, in the longer term, support and inspire a generation to help rebuild post-conflict Syria.

Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin, Vice President and Vice Principal (International) at King's College London, is leading the PADILEIA programme. 'Partnerships with both local and international institutions and organisations are central to the university's aim of increasing access to education,' she explains. 'King's has a vibrant hub of multi-disciplinary scholarship with ambitions to actively contribute towards solving the most pressing issues facing our rapidly globalising world today. It is only

through combined expertise with international partners that we can properly address matters that concern us as an institution and as a society of global citizens.

'We live in an era where uncertainty, distrust and cynicism seem to contour geopolitical interaction. There is no more crucial time for King's, its partners, and higher education institutions around the

world to act as a community of international scholars and thinkers that are willing to challenge any march towards isolationism.'

PADILEIA is designed to recognise each individual's circumstances by offering tailored digital learning with internationally recognised qualifications, providing students with the transferable skills they need to continue their education around the world.



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The project, set to run for at least the next four years, will provide a number of blended academic programmes, including massive online open courses (MOOCs) and targeted online and classroom-based learning, all of which will extend its reach to more young adults – both Syrian refugees and young people from local disadvantaged communities.

By taking part in the programme, it is anticipated that these young people will not only improve their opportunities to enrol at higher education institutions around the world, but will also become the employable, socially-conscious, and entrepreneurial graduates needed to develop and build inclusive societies.

The programme officially launched in May 2016, after receiving a funding grant from the UK Department for International Development under its new SPHEIR (Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform) initiative – a scheme designed to catalyse innovative partnerships in low income countries to improve the performance, governance, and influence of higher education systems and institutions.

‘As a university, we are passionately committed to working actively, and internationally, with educators, researchers and innovators to deliver a safer, peaceful and sustainable future,’ says Professor Olonisakin. ‘The purpose of our education and research is to inspire and innovate for the benefit of society, both locally

and internationally, and King’s has a history of using our world-leading expertise to shape and transform the world. PADILEIA is just one example.’ ■

Holly Finch is International

Communications Officer at King’s College London, UK.

PADILEIA is part of the King’s Sanctuary Programme, the collective response of the university’s community of staff and students to the millions of refugees fleeing from Syria and other conflict zones.

Al al-Bayt University

Al al-Bayt University is a public university in Jordan, located less than ten kilometres from the Syrian border. It is also in close proximity to the Zaatari Syrian Refugee Camp, which hosts 80,000 refugees. The university hosts Syrian refugees as graduate and undergraduate students, and as trainees.

American University of Beirut

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut is a teaching-centred research university in Lebanon, with around 800 instructional faculty and a student body of around 8,000 students.

FutureLearn

Founded by the Open University, FutureLearn is a social learning platform offering free and paid-for online courses from world-leading universities, as well as from organisations such as the European Space Agency, the British Council, and Cancer Research UK.

Kiron Open Higher Education

Kiron Open Higher Education is a non-profit, educational technology organisation based in Germany, which uses digital innovation to provide refugees with access to quality higher education.



Recent publications

Nick Mulhern, ACU Librarian, summarises the latest titles in the field of international higher education.



At a Crossroads: Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

[Ferreyra, M. et al; World Bank; 2017]

www.openknowledge.worldbank.org

A World Bank study on the rapid expansion of higher education in the region, with particular reference to quality, equity (access), and the variety of institutions, programmes, and fields of study available. Its potential is shown in the increase in the average gross enrolment rate 'from 17 percent in 1991 to 21 percent in 2000 and to 40 percent in 2010'. However, it also notes issues familiar elsewhere – the need to balance access and completion since 'one has the potential of undermining the other', and the importance of an 'enabling environment' to foster and satisfy graduate careers.

CIHE Perspectives

[Center for International Higher Education; 2017]

www.bc.edu/cihe

The freely accessible *Perspectives* series, published by the Center for International Higher Education (based at Boston College), presents research findings and analysis on current issues and developments in higher education around the world. Recent titles in the series include *The Challenges of Academic Integrity in Higher Education*. Meanwhile, its *Year in Review* summarises recent research, both national (China, Russia, Mauritius) and thematic.

Education at Glance: OECD Indicators

[OECD; 2017]

www.oecd.org/education

The OECD's detailed and influential statistical analysis has introduced, this year, a study of subject choice ('business, administration and law are the most popular careers'), and the comparative response to the SDGs and their targets ('the disparities across OECD countries are substantial'). It argues that 'education systems need to do a better job of explaining to young people what studies offer the greatest opportunities for life'. Updated evidence of international student mobility is included, noting that 'pools and flows of mobile talent remain very concentrated' and, in subject terms, the 'highest share, almost one-third of

those studying in OECD countries, [are] doing so in a science-related field'. The long-term growth in foreign enrolment in tertiary education worldwide is confirmed, 'rising from 0.8 million in the 1970s to 4.6 million 45 years later'.

The OECD Science, Technology and Industry Scoreboard 2017

[OECD; 2017]

www.oecd-ilib.org

A valuable biennial summary of comparative science-related data, including data on the internationalisation of research.

English as a Medium of Instruction in Indian Education: Inequality of Access to Educational Opportunities

[Boroah, V.; Sabharwal, N.; Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education; 2017]

cprhe.nuepa.org/publications

A research paper considering the levels of studying in English in India (in comparison with Hindi and other languages), the benefits this could confer, but also the inequalities which can follow.



Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships in the Field of Higher Education

[European Commission; 2017]

www.publications.europa.eu

A report profiling projects funded as part of the European Union's partnership scheme, summarising their aims and impact. Employability, inclusion and tolerance, and new technologies are among its themes.

Global Forecasting, Scenario Planning, and Collaborative Action in Leading Campus Internationalization

[NAFSA: Association of International Educators; 2017]

www.nafsa.org

A recent paper in NAFSA's *Trends and Insights* series speculates on the implications for higher education and leadership as national and global priorities shift.

Global Perspectives on Higher Education

[Center for International Higher Education; Sense Publishers; 2017]

bit.ly/2g7KsJ0

New titles in this book series include *Understanding Global Higher Education* and *Understanding Higher Education Internationalisation: Insights from Key Global Publications*.

Higher Education Research: A Compilation of Journals and Abstracts 2016

[Hertwig, A.; International Centre for Higher Education Research-Kassel; 2017]

www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/en/incher

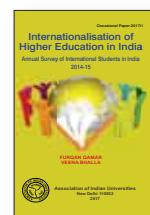
A bibliography of core higher education related journals. In summarising their recent coverage, the compilation provides an index of recent research, as well as emerging issues and trends, on higher education.

International Students, Immigration and Earnings Growth: The Effect of a Pre-immigration Canadian University Education

[Hou, F.; Lu, Y.; Statistics Canada; 2017]

www.statcan.gc.ca/pub

A comparison of earnings trends showing that 'Canadian-educated immigrants on average had much lower earnings than the Canadian-born population but higher earnings than foreign-educated immigrants both in the short term and in the long term'. Such research could contribute to debates on the impact of education – at different stages and levels – on immigrant selection policies.



Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: Annual Survey of International Students in India

[Qamar, F.; Bhalla, V.; AIU; 2017]

bit.ly/2g62EpA

Statistics on international students in India – where they are from, where they are studying, and the facilities and barriers that exist. Comparatively, these numbers are low – of a total enrolment of 33 million, there were only 30,423 international students (September 2015). The number of countries from where international students come, nevertheless, has 'consistently risen'. This annual analysis includes further detail both as statistics (gender, level) and context (perceived provision) for international students. Greater cooperation between HEIs, regulatory bodies, and government is recommended.

Learning Abroad: Insights from the Canadian K-12 sector

[Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE); 2017]

www.cbie.ca/what-we-do/research-publications
Summarised analysis of CBIE survey data on studying abroad at school level, confirming the ‘collaborative role that educators, parents and other influencers have in instilling enthusiasm for learning abroad at a young age’. Another recent title, *Special Feature: Education Abroad*, includes coverage of a Canadian survey on outbound student mobility.

Leading in Uncertain Times

[Leadership Foundation for Higher Education; 2017]

A series of papers commissioned ‘in response to political change and disruption that is having a profound effect on higher education’. Recent papers have addressed reactions to the ‘multiple threats’ facing universities, which require ‘a different set of responses [and] the ability to listen to a range of voices’; research collaboration (‘the contribution of universities to global wellbeing does not need to detract from national responsibilities’); and globalisation (the need for the university to ‘re-articulate its commitment to the public good’). New titles include:

Leadership in the Fault Lines

[Hall, M.]

www.lfhe.ac.uk/HallLI15

Leading Collaboration to Solve Global Challenges

[Naidoo, R.]

www.lfhe.ac.uk/NaidooLI16

What does Global Higher Education Mean for University Leaders?

[Hazelkorn, E.]

www.lfhe.ac.uk/HazelkornLI15A

Learning to Realize Education’s Promise



[World Bank; 2018]

www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018

This year’s World Bank Development Report is the ‘first ever devoted entirely to education’. It addresses the learning crisis (‘schooling without learning’), arguing for better assessments of education systems, better use of evidence, and the importance of supportive environments. The crisis can, in practice, amplify inequality, denying those who would benefit most from a good education. Although demands for skills will change, ‘people will require a solid foundation of basic skills and knowledge’.



Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Academic Staff – 2017

[European Commission; 2017]

www.publications.europa.eu

A profile of academic staff in Europe – qualifications, recruitment, and working conditions, but which also includes a section on internationalisation and staff mobility. Many higher education systems have defined strategic objectives for internationalisation, but academic staff are often mentioned explicitly only in relation to mobility. Further incentives for staff are required, it concludes, if they are contributing to such strategies.



Open Educational Resources: Global Report 2017

[Commonwealth of Learning; 2017]

www.col.org

A survey-based assessment of open educational resources internationally. A related title – *Open Educational Resources: From Commitment to Action* – presents practical ways of endorsing their use.

Open Universities in the Commonwealth: at a Glance

[Mishra, S.; Commonwealth of Learning; 2017]

www.col.org

An overview of open universities in the Commonwealth, based on collated responses from 27 open universities serving 4.4 million learners. ‘Social sciences, humanities and education programmes dominate’. Open universities are represented as ‘dynamic organisations and able to respond to local as well as national priorities quite quickly’.

The Effects of Internal Quality Assurance on Quality and Employability: American International University, Bangladesh

[Lamagna, C. et al; UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning; 2017]

publications.iiep.unesco.org

A case study of a private university in Bangladesh, prepared as part of a project to promote quality assurance. It includes a summary of the national/institutional context and the main problems faced, as well as incorporating some general conclusions – the need to promote awareness of quality assurance internally, and also that such systems ‘should

be internationalised in order to keep abreast of new trends in internal and external quality assessment’.



The Shape of Global Higher Education (Volume 2)

[Ilieva, J. et al; British Council; 2017]

www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe

A comparative study, across 38 countries, of government support for policies in international higher education engagement. Openness of education, quality assurance, and access are its main reference points, while student mobility, transnational education, and research engagement are its recurrent contexts. Among its conclusions, it notes the importance of research collaboration – ‘many countries which are building their research capacity have funding earmarked for research produced with international co-authors’.

The Wider Benefits of Transnational Education to the UK

[Mellors-Bourne, R.; (CRAC) for the UK Department for Education; 2017]

www.gov.uk/government/publications

An analysis of benefits – to students, institutions, the UK, and home countries – based on surveys/interviews with alumni and universities. One recommendation for institutions was the ‘need to review critically the full mix of support that they (and their partners) offer to students undertaking transnational programmes’.



Worldwide Educating for the Future Index: A benchmark for the skills of tomorrow

[The Economist Intelligence Unit; 2017]

educatingthefuture.economist.com

A new index which aims to measure links between education systems and skills development, to make them ‘more relevant and effective in a high-skills information age with more demanding labour markets’.

ACU membership update

The current membership total (as at 20 November 2017) is 508.

New members

We are delighted to welcome the following institutions into membership:

Career Point University, India

Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences, Malaysia

GlobalNxt University, Malaysia

Greenwich University, Pakistan

Manipal International University, Malaysia

Saint James School of Medicine, Saint Vincent and The Grenadines

Southern University Bangladesh

University of Fiji

Returning members

We are delighted to welcome the following institutions back into membership:

City, University of London, UK

RMIT University, Australia

Sharda University, India

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Executive heads

Professor Soumendra Mohan Patnaik has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Utkal University**, India, as of 17 July 2017.



Professor Karen Cox has been appointed Vice-Chancellor and President of the **University of Kent**, UK, as of 1 August 2017.

Professor Sarim N Al-Zubaidy has been appointed President of the **University of Trinidad and Tobago**, as of 7 August 2017.

Professor Dr Jaspal Singh Sandhu has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Guru Nanak Dev University**, India, as of 14 August 2017.

Professor BS Ghuman has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Punjabi University**, India, as of 14 August 2017.



Professor Barnabas Nawangwe has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Makerere University**, Uganda, as of 1 September 2017.



Professor Philip Plowden has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Birmingham City University**, UK, as of 1 September 2017.



Professor Susan Lea has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Hull**, UK, as of 1 September 2017.



Professor Geraldine Mackenzie has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Southern Queensland**, Australia, as of 4 September 2017.

Professor Felix Salako has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta**, Nigeria, as of 19 September 2017.

Professor Stephen Toope has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Cambridge**, UK, as of 1 October 2017.



Professor Shearer West has been appointed Vice-Chancellor and President of the **University of Nottingham**, UK, as of 2 October 2017.

Professor Sulyman Age Abdulkareem has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Ilorin**, Nigeria, as of 16 October 2017.



Datuk Ir (Dr) Abdul Rahim Hashim has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Malaya**, Malaysia, as of 1 November 2017.

Calendar

2017

December

11-12
The Observatory on
Borderless Higher
Education: global forum

**Ready or not – the role
of online learning in higher education**

London, UK
www.obhe.ac.uk

2018

January

21-24
Education World Forum
London, UK
www.theewf.org

February

5-7
THE Asia Universities Summit
**Connecting cities, changing the world:
research universities building Asia**
Shenzhen, China
www.theworldsummitseries.com

18-21
Association of International Education:
annual conference
**The internationalization imperative
in turbulent times**
Washington, USA
www.aieaworld.org/2018-annual-conference

19-23
Conference of Commonwealth Education
Ministers
**Sustainability and resilience:
can education deliver?**
Nadi, Fiji
www.thecommonwealtheducationhub.net/20ccem

28 February-2 March
Universities Australia
2018 Higher Education Conference
Canberra, Australia
www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au

March

10-13
**American Council on Education:
annual meeting**
Washington, USA
www.ace2018.org

14

Universities UK International:
international forum
Thriving in a shifting global environment
Nottingham, UK
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/events

April

5-6
European University Association:
annual conference
**Engaged and responsible universities
shaping Europe**
Zurich, Switzerland
www.eua.be/events

16-20

Commonwealth Heads of Government
Meeting
Towards a common future
London, Windsor
www.chogm2018.org.uk

23-26

Scholars at Risk: global congress
**The university and the future of
democracy**
Berlin, Germany
www.scholarsatrisk.org/event

May

2-4
British Council: Going Global 2018
**Redesigning excellence: higher education
for global societal impact**
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
www.britishcouncil.org/going-global

27 May-1 June

NAFSA Association of International
Educators: annual conference
Diverse voices, shared commitment
Philadelphia, USA
www.nafsa.org

June

4-7
International Network of Research
Management Societies
**Global pathways to professional
recognition**
Edinburgh, UK
www.inorms.net

July

1-9
ACU Summer School
Sustainable cities and communities
Hong Kong
www.acu.ac.uk/commonwealth-summer-school

2-5

Higher Education Research and Development
Society of Australasia: annual conference
(Re)valuing higher education
Adelaide, Australia
www.herdsa2018.aomevents.com.au

September

11-14
European Association for International
Education: annual conference and exhibition
Facing outward
Geneva, Switzerland
www.eaie.org/geneva

23-27

ACU HR in HE Community conference,
held with the University of Waterloo
**Universities of the future: global
perspectives for HR**
Waterloo, Canada
www.acu.ac.uk/hr-in-he

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

About us

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is the world's first and oldest international university network, established in 1913.

A UK-registered charity, the ACU has more than 500 member institutions in over 50 countries. We bring together many of the most prestigious and well-funded universities internationally with relatively new institutions in some of the world's least developed countries. What binds us together is a common belief in the value of higher education to society, the conviction that this value is enhanced by international collaboration, and a passion for rigour and excellence in everything that we and our member universities do.

With three distinct but interconnected areas of work – member services, programmes, and scholarship administration – supported by robust infrastructure and governance arrangements, the ACU combines delivering value to its members with achieving impact on the world of higher education and wider society.

Our mission

To promote and support excellence in higher education for the benefit of individuals and societies throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our vision

Vibrant and exciting universities that use their transformational power to:

- Create opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential
- Increase understanding through international partnerships – both inside and outside the higher education sector
- Contribute to the cultural, economic, and social development of every nation

Our values

The ACU's set of values help guide the organisation in its mission. Our values reflect our aspirations, who we are, and how we do things, and are brought alive in everything that we do:

- Quality
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Respect
- Inclusion

Join us

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