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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

How to inspire the next generation of researchers

The University of East Anglia (UEA) and Lancaster University are amongst 12 institutions to receive funding as part of the School-University Partnership Initiative (SUPI), it was [announced earlier this week](#).

The £3.5m scheme will take university researchers into local high schools and bring high school students into leading research labs. The project is co-funded by Research Councils UK (RCUK), universities, and industry.

RCUK hopes that the initiative will inspire a new generation of students from a diversity of backgrounds to become academics—as well as deepen the public’s understanding of research and help enhance early career researchers’ skill sets.

The 1994 Group has been a long-time supporter of public engagement: world class research ought to inform cultural dialogue, excite the public, and drive political and industrial innovation. This is why we were thrilled by the mass public interest in

the [identification of Richard III](#) by the University of Leicester earlier this week.

But, the initiative offers more besides.

Hands-on outreach is one of the best ways to widen participation at our leading universities. Widening the applicant pool ensures that talented students from a diversity of backgrounds can access our world class institutions, and that our universities are full of promising, self-motivated undergraduates who have the potential to go on to become leading researchers.

This is why The Rt Hon. David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science, expressed the hope that the scheme would encourage “young people from all backgrounds to pursue a career in research”.

Through SUPI, UEA and Lancaster will collaborate with over 20 schools in their local areas. Academics from UEA will teach students about the various research methods

used in the sciences, humanities, and arts; how they differ and intersect, and how difficult societal problems often demand a cross-disciplinary approach. And academics from Lancaster University, alongside sharing their expert knowledge, will train high school teachers on how to best to use groundbreaking research results in their lessons and courses.

As Prof. Trevor McMillan, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research at Lancaster and Chair of our Research and Enterprise Policy Group, said: “Society needs to encourage young people to become the next generation of researchers. From law and justice to the fight against cancer and global warming, the need has never been more urgent for young people to be inspired by research[.]”

Alex Bols

Previously, Alex called on the Government to open up the National Student Database, so that universities can track the effectiveness of outreach programmes. ■

1994 GROUP IN THE MEDIA

1994 Group welcomes general rise in university applications

Last week UCAS released figures showing that applications to UK universities had increased 3.5% on 2012–13.

Alex Bols, Executive Director of the 1994 Group, welcomed the positive trend on the *BBC* and in the *THES*. He said that, “[it] shows... the message that university is still affordable with the new loans system is beginning to be

understood”.

In *The Guardian* Bols added that the uptick in applications from disadvantaged students—which represents a 9

Read coverage in the The Guardian, the BBC and THES.

Prof. Paul Webley calls decline in language students “alarming”

Speaking to *The Guardian*, Prof. Paul Webley, Director of SOAS, University of London, highligh-

ted that this year-on-year decline was getting “ever more alarming”.

Although the applicant pool increased, the 1994 Group were the first to note a worrying decline in those applying for language courses.

Prof. Webley added that, “Our universities need to produce global citizens whose knowledge encompasses societies, cultures and languages beyond the UK. This is important for the diplomatic, business

and economic interests of the country.”

He went on to say that, “Linguistic ability enables individuals to develop intercultural understanding and sensitivity which benefits not just the individual but UK society as a whole.”

Alex Bols also highlighted the figures in *The Independent*, calling them a serious “cause for concern”.

Read coverage in The Guardian, The Independent, and THES. ■

1994 GROUP ACCOLADES

Essex and Royal Holloway awarded Regius Professorships

The University of Essex and Royal Holloway, University of London, have been awarded prestigious Regius Professorships to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. They join only 10 other universities to be bestowed with the honour this year, and only 2 others within the last Century.

Regius Professorships recognise "outstanding" universities for their contribution to the UK's research excellence. As they fall under the Royal Prerogative, all appointments have to be approved by the Queen on ministerial advice. The honours remind us, once again, that Essex and Royal Holloway are world leading research-intensive institutions that push the boundaries of knowledge and deepen our understanding of the world.

The Regius Professorship of Political Science at the University of Essex recognises its world-renowned [Department of Government](#); the Department has topped every research assessment for research quality since the in-

stitution of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1992.

The Regius Professorship of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London, recognises its internationally leading [Department of Music](#). In RAE 2008, 60

Alongside their enviable research records, these departments are astute and articulate contributors to the public discourse, and provide top quality educations. The Government Department at Essex hosts 3 research centres, co-ordinates 2 public sentiment surveys, and, last year, recorded a student satisfaction score of 96%. The Music Department at Royal Holloway hosts 6 orchestras/ensembles, co-ordinates 3 choirs, and recorded a student satisfaction score of 94%.

These departments are concrete examples of research excellence informing teaching excellence. The importance of research excellence for teaching excellence is a value all our members share: Studying at a

research-intensive institution means working in the same environment that new knowledge is being created and groundbreaking discoveries are being made. It means that the curriculum is informed by these discoveries, and that the researchers making them are involved in teaching. It means that undergraduates have opportunities and the support to undertake their own research projects. And it means that faculty staff collaborate across departments in line with the multidisciplinary nature of world class research.

Royal Holloway, Essex, and [the other world class universities awarded Regius Professorships](#) are worthy of congratulations.

Read coverage of Royal Holloway's success on the BBC or on [their website](#).

Read coverage of Essex's success on the BBC or on [their website](#). ■

OUR UNIVERSITIES IN THE MEDIA

University of Leicester verify King Richard III remains

The University of Leicester have verified that the remains found under a Leicester City Council car park belong to King Richard III, the last Plantagenet King of England. When the remains were discovered in September, 2012, signs of both battle trauma and scoliosis suggested that royal identification was a live possibility.

The final verification comes after a battery of scientific tests. Academics in the [Department of Genetics](#) matched DNA from the skeleton with two li-

ving relatives of Richard III; radiocarbon dating placed the individual's death between the mid-1400s and early-1500s, and similar spectral analysis showed that the individual had eaten a diet that was high in seafood, suggesting he was of high status.

Richard Buckley, archaeological lead for the project said, "The search has caught the imagination of not only the people of Leicester and Leicestershire but beyond and has received global media attention. It is a measure of the power of archaeology to excite public interest and provide a narrative about our heritage."

Goldsmiths to aid UN investigation into legality of drone technology

Academics within the [Centre for Research Architecture](#) at Goldsmiths, University of London, will play a key role in the United Nations inquiry into drone technology. The inquiry will address the civilian impact and human rights implications of the use of drones for purposes of counter-terrorism.

[Forensic Architecture](#), hosted within the Centre, specialise in modelling sites of violence and war. Alongside Ben Emmerson, the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism, the

team will develop an online platform to visualise drone strikes over Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Palestine.

Dr. Susan Schuppli, a Senior Research Fellow, said: "Forensic Architecture tackles cases in which human rights violations are complicated by legal questions that have a specifically spatial dimension. Our work on drone strikes in FATA Pakistan is no exception, however, these violations occur in places where access to evidentiary materials from eyewitness reports, local maps, images and video is sparse at best and/or difficult to obtain." ■

HE AGENDA

12/02/13 - BIS Select Committee meeting: 'The Heseltine Review'

13/02/13 - Commons debate: 'Science, Engineering and Technology information in schools'

15/02/13 - HE Academy workshop: 'Developing culturally capable staff and students'

19/02/13 - HE Academy and SHEEF

workshop: 'Teaching development grants'

19/02/13 - UUK immigration workshop: 'Retaining highly trusted status'

26/02/13 - UUK conference: 'Efficiency in higher education'

27/02/13 - **Guardian Future of Education Summit**

27/02/13 - HE Academy workshops: 'Impact of employment during study on graduate aspirations and employability'

27/02/13 - Lords debate: 'Amending the Freedom of Information Act 2000'

28/02/13 - UUK immigration workshop: 'Sponsoring international students' ■