1991
1992

NENE COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT

NENE
UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION in
NORTHAMPTON

Nene College

THE ANNUAL REPORT
of the **Director and Chief Executive**

for

1991-92

Director S Martin Gaskell MA PhD FRHistS

ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	THE DIRECTOR'S REVIEW	1
2.	STATISTICAL SURVEY	3
3.	ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS	7
4.	THE FACULTIES The Faculty of Design and Industry The Faculty of Education, Health and Science The Faculty of Humanities and Social Science The Faculty of Management and Business	8
5.	THE COMBINED STUDIES DEGREE PROGRAMME	11
6.	CONTINUING EDUCATION	12
7.	RESEARCH	12
8.	INDUSTRIAL LIAISON	14
9.	INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	14
10.	ACADEMIC SERVICES Learning Resources Information Technology Services	15
11.	STAFFING	17
12.	ENVIRONMENT AND BUILDINGS	18
13.	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES Central Services Corporate Affairs Finance Office The Personnel Department The Registry Student Services	19
14.	HEALTH AND SAFETY	25
15.	EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	25
16.	FINANCIAL REPORT	26

1. THE DIRECTOR'S REVIEW

1991-92 witnessed major changes at the national level in terms of the organisation and control of Higher Education.

The Further and Higher Education Act created a unified higher education sector responsible to the Higher Education Funding Council in England. The cessation of the binary line meant that the Polytechnics were designated Universities and the opportunity created for Colleges of Higher Education to follow suite. This possibility is of significant importance for Nene.

By the beginning of the year Nene had achieved the size and breadth of provision determined as a necessary pre-requisite for University status. This resulted from significant growth in student numbers in recent years which was maintained in 1991-92. The College thus benefited from the funding policies of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council which encouraged institutional enterprise and development in accordance with institutional goals and missions.

In 1990 the College Development Plan recognised that the original growth rates proposed of 10% per annum were likely to be surpassed consequential to student demand, Government policy and PCFC funding mechanisms. Consequently higher education FTE targets were revised upwards, resulting in growth rates in HE FTEs of 20% in 1990-91 and 17% in 1991-92.

Accordingly, the new Strategic Plan for the College prepared and presented in the course of this year involved revisions to the College's mission statement which reflected a clarification of Nene's teaching role and student focus rather than any adjustment to its raison d'etre. The primary aims of the institution remained unchanged, and the College has achieved a position whereby in terms of size, range of work, student profile and academic quality it may now legitimately aspire to independent degree awarding powers and thereby university status.

That Mission committed Nene to providing high quality higher education which is responsive to national education priorities and employers' needs. In doing so, Nene College accepts its responsibilities to develop students' capabilities and to empower them to achieve their fullest potential as individuals and members of society. To that end the College will provide for all its students: defined academic programmes with clear learning outcomes; committed and competent instruction; a caring and supportive academic culture; an attractive and facilitating physical environment. As an institution of higher education Nene College is determined to promote the values of a tolerant and democratic society, the ideals of scholarship and the benefits of life-long education.

In pursuit of this mission in 1991-92 the College placed particular emphasis on its building programme, increasing its staffing establishment, and enhancing the quality of both its programmes and facilities and the mechanisms for their monitoring and review.

The major building programme and consequential changes to the feel and appearance of the Park Campus in particular has been the most exciting and obvious feature of growth in this year. But of equal, if not greater, importance has been the constant and detailed attention to the development and review of courses, to the enhancement of quality control systems and to the improvement of course delivery. Alongside this, the extension of learning resources in the College through improved funding and the equipment of appropriate systems and services in the Library and Information Technology has been an integral policy.

All this was possible through the careful management of College resources and the delivery of highly successful financial returns.

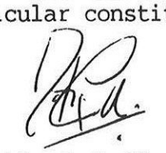
For all this I would wish to express my thanks and appreciation as Director to all the staff of the College who have responded so positively to significantly increased student numbers, to changing requirements and to different patterns of work, as well as coping with the inevitable disruption of a major building programme. I would also acknowledge the continuing contribution of Governors to the overall direction and policy of the College and their sustained faith in its future.

Of course the failure to secure degree awarding powers was a disappointmnent in this year. The College responded to the opportunity in the Further and Higher Education Act to secure such powers as a step to University status. The Secretary of State's Advisory Committee visited the College in March 1992 and was not able to recommend the allocation of such powers at this stage. However, the College has responded positively to the Committee's report and to its encouragement to re-apply, and I have every confidence that the College will be successful in that endeavour within a reasonable and realistic time-scale.

And to that end the College has addressed the specific nature of its higher education programme and provision. The distinctive and defining characteristics of higher education at Nene are essentially found in an institutional acceptance of responsibility for student learning and include structured academic programmes, an emphasis on teaching, supportive staff/student relationships that underpin academic activity and the maintenance of a favourable physical environment.

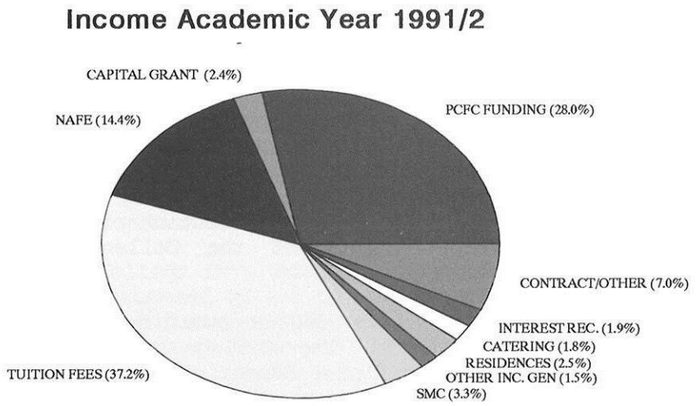
Nene College views higher education as a continuation of a student's previous personal academic experience. In its relationships and developments it is committed to the concept of all-through provision, and it will meet the challenge of providing the distinctive and defining characteristics of higher education whilst widening access.

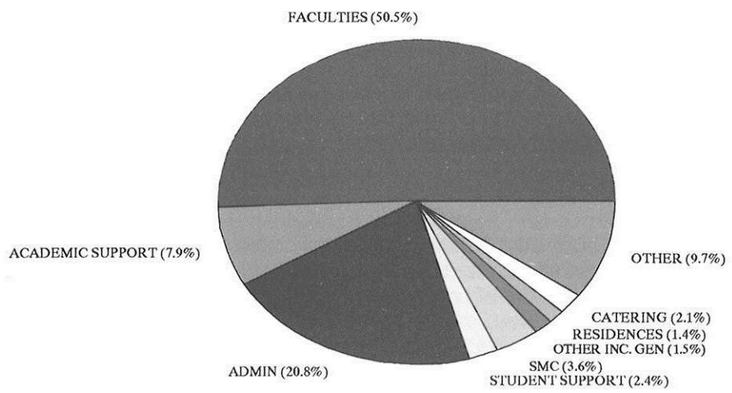
Nene's traditions, its current practices and its future policies derive from its roots in a College of Education and in the broader polytechnic context of a College of Technology and a School of Art. For the future it intends to become a new University of a particular constitution and character.

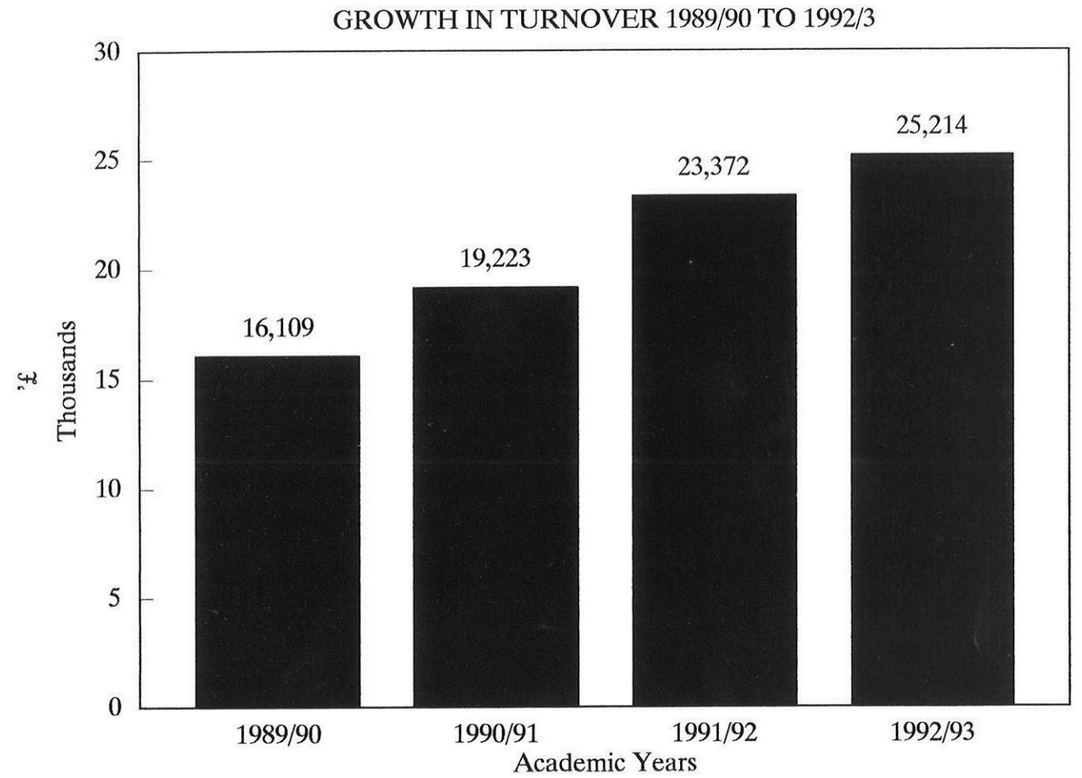


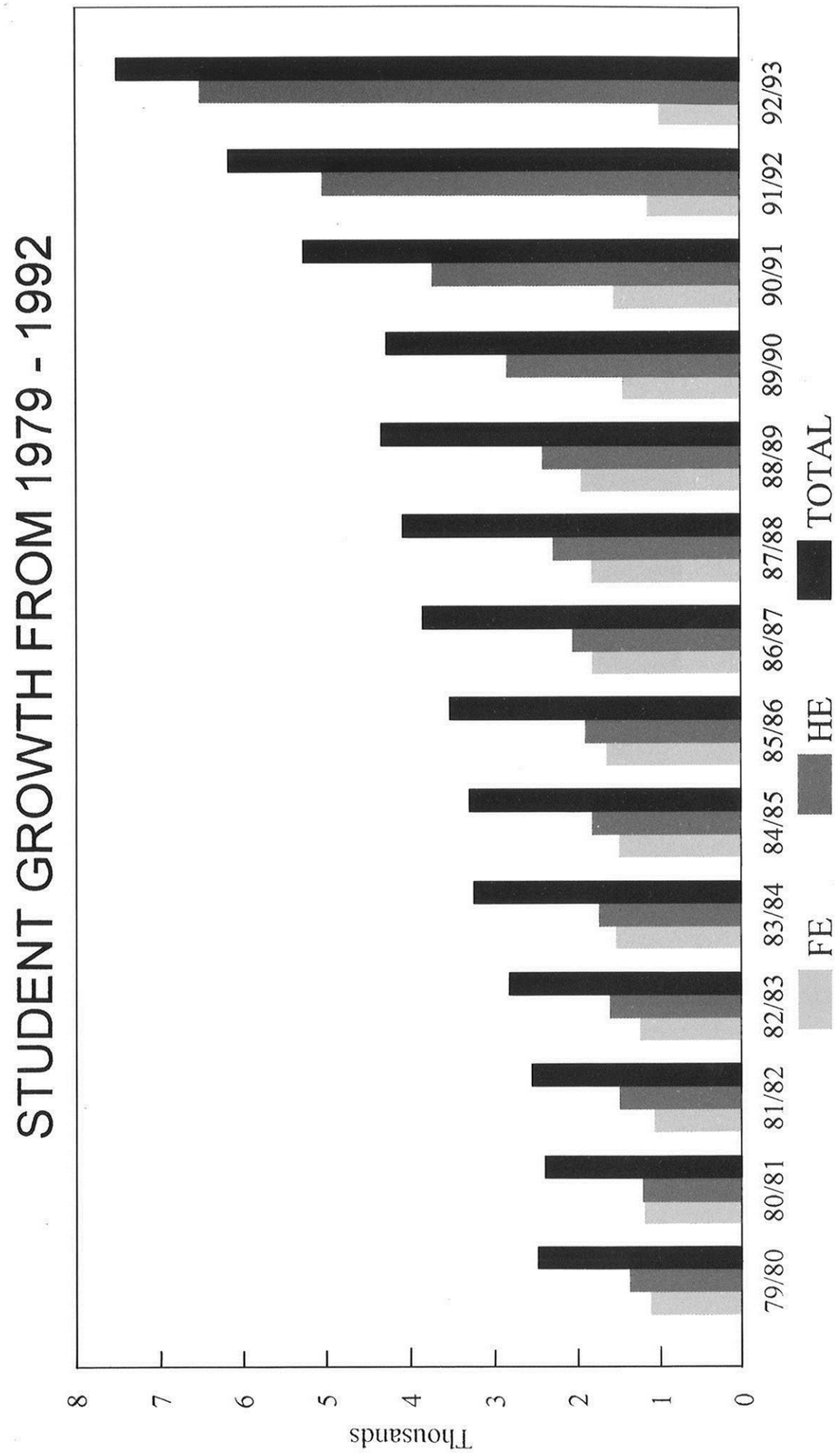
S Martin Gaskell

2. STATISTICAL SURVEY









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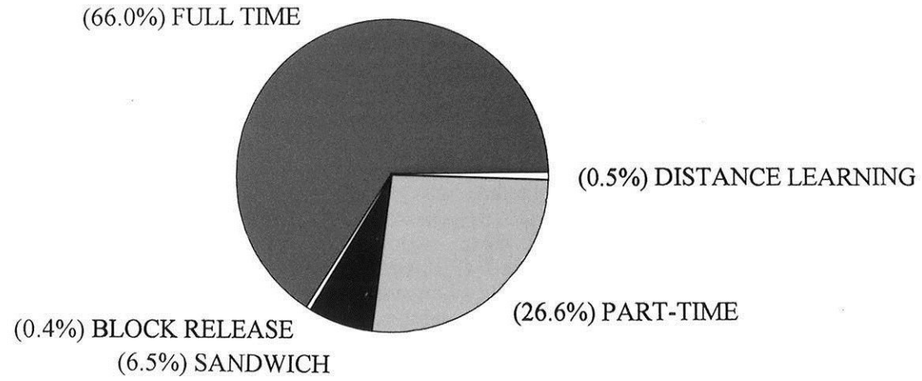

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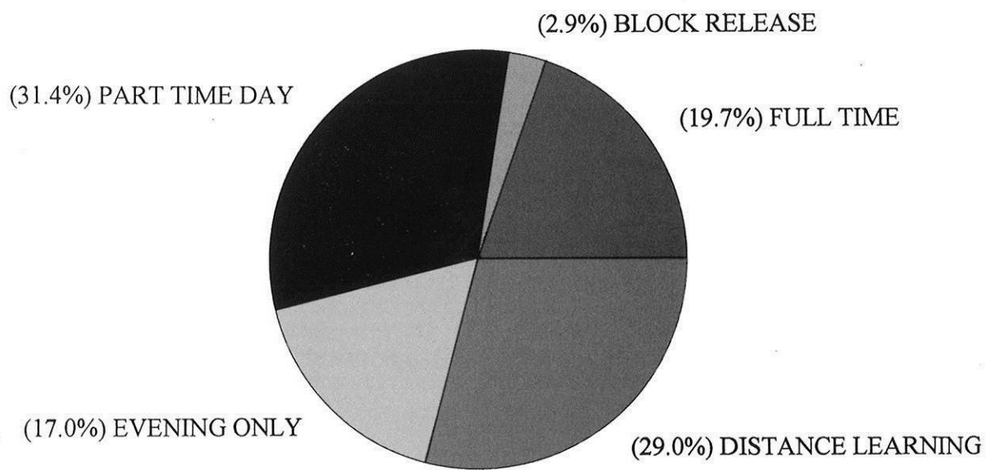

3. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS

The growth in student numbers has been reflected in the establishment of a number of new courses including an LLB, BSc Occupational Therapy (in conjunction with the St Andrew's School of Occupational Therapy), MA in Womens Studies, Euro MBA (in conjunction with the Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Poitiers), and new units in Philosophy and Environmental Science in the Combined Studies degree programme. Growth in student numbers has also engendered major changes in academic processes with emphasis on new teaching/learning strategies and a commitment to a more tightly managed student learning experience, with the improvement of assignment handling systems and the introduction of 'supplemental student support'.

The academic year 1991-92 also witnessed the first full year's operation of the restructured College Academic Board and the work of its committee for Academic Planning with its sub-committee for Credit Accumulation Transfer, and its committee for Academic Standards with its sub-committees for Admissions and Research. The Credit Accumulation and Transfer system has become fully embedded with the result that some 95% of students in the College are now following CATS calibrated courses and that clear guidelines are in place for the process of individual student rating and admission.

The development of quality assurance processes has been a major priority, and the annual monitoring and evaluation cycle provided opportunities for the continuous improvement of academic programmes. In support of this activity, 1991-92 witnessed the first year's operation of the Office of Public Management as the College's External Academic Auditors. That audit function has been extended in the course of the year to act as a major agent for change underpinning and enhancing the College's own processes of self-critical review.

The Admissions Sub-Committee was particularly active in the development of the College's admissions policy through the establishment of codes of practice for the admission of mature students and for students with special needs. Compacting and partnership with local schools was the subject of considerable debate and activity. At the same time, the College promoted its commitment to "non-standard" entry to courses through its lead role in the Northamptonshire Access Consortium.

All these academic developments were indicative of the College's commitment to the realignment of its mission and the underpinning of developments in support of that mission.

4. THE FACULTIES

The Faculty of Design and Industry

In the academic year 1991-92 the Faculty continued to offer a large range of both higher and further education courses, totalling 68 programmes across the Departments of Art and Design, Built Environment, and Engineering and Technology. Growth in student numbers in full-time higher education was of the order of 50%. Despite the recession affecting many areas of the faculty's work, part-time HE showed a limited increase, though recruitment to FE courses was adversely affected to a significant degree.

The Faculty launched its first honours degree, the BSc in Construction Economics and Management, and many new courses within the Combined Studies programme and at BTEC HND level were validated for inception in 1992-93.

Links with industry have continued to be fostered, and in particular the training partnerships in Engineering and in Construction, involving many major companies, provided industrial experience for students and valuable links between the College and local industry. In Art and Design links with "industry" resulted in major projects, exhibitions and consultancy for both staff and students.

This commitment to industrial links was reflected in the emphasis on staff development and research in the Faculty over the year; for example, a new approach to industrial secondment was developed in order to aid the establishment of clear career paths for staff.

Students across the Faculty have maintained their record of successful participation in both national and international competitions. Community involvement has been encouraged and overseas links and exchanges developed. Much effort has thus been expended in support of the Faculty's intention of broadening the student experience and optimising academic and vocational performance.

The Faculty of Education, Health and Science

In 1991-92 the Faculty continued a process of critical internal review begun the previous year in order to establish a clear focus for its activities, resulting in the cessation, addition and revision of courses.

During the year the School of Health and Life Sciences took over the new purpose built Brampton building on Park Campus as its headquarters and at the end of the year the School of Education, along with the Faculty office, moved into the Sulgrave building. With the consolidation of the Science Laboratories on the Park Campus this has meant the Faculty is now wholly operating in close proximity thus facilitating more effective links between the different Schools.

The School of Education has seen increased interest in teacher training reflected in applications and recruitment, and during the year partnership arrangements with local schools were consolidated in anticipation of Government requirements. In addition, the School has introduced a Philosophy unit within the Combined Studies Programme and has operated a major programme of training in the English language for Polish teachers under the EEC TEMPUS scheme.

The School of Health and Life Sciences has continued to develop its links with both the Sir Gordon Roberts College of Nursing and Midwifery and the Sir Andrew's School of Occupational Therapy. The former has resulted in the introduction for 1992 of a new community psychiatric branch in the Diploma in Community Nursing, and the latter led to the successful launch of the BSc degree in Occupational Therapy.

The Strategic Plan for the British School of Leather Technology resulted in the validation and introduction for September 1992 of the first honours degree of a British University in Leather Technology. This has resulted in worldwide recruitment and, along with the developing research programme, has promoted the School's mission as the premier centre in the world for education and training in Leather Technology.

The School of Environmental Science has promoted partnerships on the Combined Studies programme with the Faculty of Design and Industry in order to introduce Energy Management, and with the Moulton College of Agriculture to introduce Equine Studies. Meanwhile planning has proceeded for a new single honours degree in Environmental Science and research and industrial liaison has been significantly consolidated in that field.

The Faculty has maintained its international links, particularly in Health and Education with the College of Health and the University College respectively in Jonkoping, Sweden.

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

The overwhelming feature of the year for the Faculty was its continued expansion, involving considerable increase in numbers on existing courses and the beginning of new course developments intended to strengthen the graduate provision and steadily increase the programme of post-graduate work.

The normal cycle of course review in 1991-92 resulted in considerable revisions to many of the Faculty's substantial contributions to the Combined Studies Degree programme. At the same time the Faculty was involved in two innovations within that degree programme.

1991-92 saw the first intake of part-time evening students to a Humanities and Social Science programme taught jointly with the Leicester University Department of Adult Education. The second innovation involved the franchising of first year Combined Studies work to Peterborough Regional College, building on Nene's successful access links with that College.

The Faculty remained committed to professional training in Social Work and 1991-92 saw the introduction of the new Diploma in Social Work, provided in conjunction with Bedford College of Higher Education and a range of relevant employers.

At the post-graduate level, the MA in Womens Studies was launched and attracted considerable interest and recruitment. This has been followed by the validation of an MA in Modern English Studies.

Income earning activities have been maintained at a modest level given the other considerable pressures on the Faculty, and these have involved English as a foreign language, language consultancy, and short course work for the social services.

The growth in student numbers in the Faculty has brought with it considerable increase in staffing, and great emphasis during the year was placed on staff development, including the achievement of a creditable number of Doctorates and a significant production of publications.

At the same time the growth of student and staff numbers had major implications for accommodation, and dedicated 'subject' space was transferred to tutorial and administrative usage.

Growth has thus been stimulating but has required continued adjustment, not least in teaching and assessment styles.

The Faculty of Management and Business

By 1991-92 the course portfolio of the Faculty listed some 40 courses. Seventeen of those courses were offered to full-time students; nine of these being Faculty based courses and the other eight offered through the Combined Studies Degree; part-time courses accounted for the remaining 23. Whilst the number of students on part-time courses remained fairly static compared with the previous year, the number of students on full-time courses in the Faculty increased over the same period by some 50%.

In October 1991 the first students on the Euro MBA began their studies at the Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Poitiers in France. The course is taught in French and English, with the first third at Poitiers and the latter two-thirds taught at Nene.

The Sunley Management Centre became a licensed Crediting Competence Centre under the Management Charter Initiative; tailor-made qualification programmes were introduced for specific firms; courses in small business management was sponsored by the Northamptonshire TEC; courses were run for professional women returners; the Executive Lunch-time Seminar series entered its tenth successful year.

Having reviewed its former consultative committees, in 1991-92 the Faculty recruited a broad and balanced panel of advisors from local businesses, professions and public sector organisations who could support the Faculty in various and effective ways.

During 1991-92 23 new academic staff joined the Faculty, representing a major and significant growth in Faculty personnel, alongside seven administrative appointments. The growth in staff numbers reflected the determination of the Faculty and the College to respond positively and responsibly to growth in student numbers. The Faculty's emphasis on staff development for all staff was maintained throughout the year with particular support being given to the securing of additional academic and professional qualifications in accordance with the Faculty development plan. The Faculty has also funded from its own resources specific research projects in order to increase its involvement in such activity.

In resource terms, emphasis continued to be placed on improving the quality and quantity of information technology available for, and dedicated to, faculty staff and student use. A comprehensive rolling-programme for replacement was introduced.

During the year 1991-92 the office and classroom accommodation of the Faculty was under extreme pressure. Much tutorial accommodation continued to be in "mobiles". It was therefore a major advance for the Faculty to move into its purpose-built Cottesbrooke building at the end of the year.

5. THE COMBINED STUDIES DEGREE PROGRAMME

The degree programme continues to account for some 40% of the College's undergraduate student numbers. Over the year recruitment has increased 50% against targets and the vast majority of that recruitment has now been secured prior to 'clearing'. This trend has enabled the degree to attend to the academic level of its intake.

Reflecting the buoyancy of interest in the course was the introduction of new courses both as majors and three and two unit subjects; these included - American Studies, Art and Design, Chemistry and the Environment, Energy Management, Equine Studies, Management Science, Sport and Recreation. Given this scale of development, much attention has been given to ensuring that the requisite resources were available to sustain quality throughout the programme.

The part-time evening mode, taught in collaboration with the University of Leicester recruited well and student response was highly positive. This development raised the local availability of degree studies, as did the franchising of Combined Studies first year courses to Peterborough Regional College.

During the course of the year the programme underwent periodic review and this exercise prompted wide-ranging debate regarding the most appropriate structure for Combined Studies for the future in order to ensure appropriate and effective accountability for quality.

Examination results for the year continued the trend towards an increasing proportion of 2:1 awards, reflecting the excellent overall standards being achieved by students on the programme.

Overall, the Combined Studies degree programme has continuend to build on its University foundations and inheritance, and has increasingly evolved its own regulations, codes of operation, organisational arrangements and curriculum development deriving from tried and tested practices.

6. CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Northamptonshire Access Consortion (NORAC) continued to thrive in 1991-92 and to expand the regional framework of opportunity for disadvantaged groups. The participating colleges increased the numbers on their Access courses by a significant 30% during the year and the following new courses were validated at Northampton College - Access to Science and Technology, and a part-time evening Access Course. In addition, Access to teaching options were added to existing courses at Tresham College in Wellingborough, and such provision along with Access to Social Work was also introduced at the Link College Northampton.

The continuing education provision on the Combined Studies degree, both in terms of part-time day and evening provision, profited from the application of the College's CATS system. As many students on these courses are mature students with existing professional qualifications (for example in Social Work or Professions Supplementary to Medicine), they have been able to achieve 'partial credits' and thus progress at an advanced rate through the degree programme. Such accreditation of prior experiential learning has also benefited students in Social Work and on the Certificate in Management Studies offered under the Management Charter Initiative.

In all these ways the College in 1991-92 extended its outreach to people hitherto distanced from HE, whether financially, geographically or culturally.

At the same time, Continuing Education has maintained its programme of specialist provision (such as IT for Women Returners), has supported numerous cultural events in partnership with the community, and has taken responsibility for the College's public lecture programme which over the year has again attracted many well known names to Nene.

7. RESEARCH

During 1991-92 the future of research in a unitary higher education system has been widely debated. Nene College has participated vigorously in that debate, both internally and externally. Key issues for this institution have been the necessity to separate research from scholarly activity underpinning teaching, the prioritisation of the former through development of the post-graduate research programme, and the challenge of reconciling such developments with Nene's Mission as a leading College of Higher Education and future new University. The wide ranging discussions at national level have informed the direction of current College policy.

It was in this context that College Research committees have refashioned policy and procedures over this year and worked energetically with College and Faculty Managers to promote staff research and the growth of post-graduate research student numbers. Research capabilities became an increasingly important criterion in many appointments, especially in areas where research is already clustered. The research ethos has thus been signifcantly enhanced in many parts of the College. This was reflected not only in the significant increase in the number and quality of staff publications, but also in the development of staff research seminars and support systems.

Shortage of time for research, as student numbers rise and the unit of resource declines, has posed an evident threat to the fulfilment of staff potential as researchers and supervisors of research. Some staff have successfully used small internal research grants to fund additional research time. This has been important as only a minority have achieved external funding. A larger number though have benfited from other types of external support, including collorabation with other academic institutions or with industrial, commercial or public agencies whose activities form the object of applied research. Diversification of funding remains an important goal for the coming year. While Government funding identifies the status and quality of researchers in the institution, industrial and commercial funding can enable the College to strengthen its regional basis and to retain some breadth in its definition of research.

Institutional aims, as well as national research directives, clear the way to the prioritisation of basic and strategic research leading to publication and research degree completions. However, diversified funding will enable larger numbers of staff to undertake more research and allow internal funding to concentrate on pump-priming further worthwhile initiatives across the College and so mitigate inevitable variations in practice.

Against this background, the development of research at Nene College gathered considerable momentum during 1991-92. Research planning has posed difficulties and dilemmas, but these have not prevented the emergence of a far stronger, more focussed research policy and strategy which commands widespread support within the College and befits Nene to continue its progress towards University status.

Research management objectives set early in 1992 are already being met in several important areas. College and Faculty Research committees have critically reviewed their role in preparation for the next stage in development. The efficiency of financial and administrative systems has been improved. Faculty research seminars and the newly published Nene Research Bulletin are fostering growing staff interest and expertise in the research field. Most importantly, a substantial investment in the expansion of post-graduate research degree work has demonstrated the College's determination and commitment towards establishing a substantial, if selective, research base during the next few years. The College's expanding research community has greeted the accelerating development with enthusiasm and the potential for development was to be demonstrated in the achievements in the UCFC research selectivity exercise in 1992-93.

8. INDUSTRIAL LIAISON

In 1991-92 the depth of the recession was not conducive to expanding industrial contacts across the College generally. However, in order to maintain our existing levels of involvement in this important area of activity with its potential for local liaison and profit-earning capacity, considerable promotional efforts were required.

Responsibility for such promotion overall was vested in the Corporate Affairs and Marketing section, and regular mailings to over 2000 companies across the region, and several intensive rounds of visits to Milton Keynes, Wellingborough and the trading estates in Northampton provided some business of substance and insight into the difficulties of trading in this recession.

Attention was given to improving the industrial liaison data base, and there was renewed consideration of strategic issues in order to facilitate action when economic recovery offers new opportunities.

During this year the development and implementation of a complete in-house training programme for the entire Carlsberg workforce was a major success story and involved the establishment of a sponsored distance-learning centre based in the Timken Centre.

Opportunities for future developments of mutual interest to both the College and local business and industry were established.

9. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

At the beginning of 1991-92 the International Matters Executive Working Group was established to replace the European Development Working Group. The continuation of such a focus within the College reflected the importance given to the international dimension of higher education. The year that followed was a period of both consolidation and advance.

For many years some schools and faculties have had good international links in the interests of both recruitment and course requirements. The Group felt it was necessary to encourage other courses or faculties to develop such links if they were appropriate or reflected student demand. A strategy document incorporating this approach was approved by the Academic Board.

In April 1992 an agreement was signed in Jonkoping, Sweden in order to promote student and staff exchanges with respect to the University College in the fields of education, humanities, sciences and business, and with the Health College in the fields of nursing and the professions supplementary to medicine. This built on the well established exchange in teacher training.

In 1991-92 the College became a member of TEXT (Trans-European Exchange and Transfer Consortium), with its numerous subject networks designed to promote partnerships for TEMPUS or ERASMUS applications and to facilitate exchanges. Networking has already been initiated with Scandinavian institutions through this means.

The EEC funding for TEMPUS projects in Eastern European countries has been under intensive pressure in all member states. It is therefore all the more satisfying to report that in this very competitive area the College's existing programmes with Poland, involving approximately £200,000 per annum, were renewed for two more years. These programmes have been enhanced through the involvement of Learning Resources, which has worked closely with institutions in Poland.

Under the European Social Fund, three new projects for the Faculty of Management and Business were successful - Women Returners Course in Computing Skills, the provision of vocational guidance and counselling, and support of places on the European MBA. Support also continued for existing projects in the faculty of Design and Industry in relation to innovatory training in product design, and to the Engineering and Construction Partnerships.

This year saw not only the promotion and development of new initiatives, but also the more rigorous internal selection and scrutiny of overseas projects.

10. ACADEMIC SERVICES

Learning Resources

Overall, throughout 1991-92 there was an active thrust towards support for student learning through a gradual improvement in the staff:student ratio, an extension of library space per full-time equivalent student, and an increase in revenue funding on an fte basis. The general movement was towards meeting the mean provision across the HE sector generally.

Much of the effort in this direction was, however, partially offset by increased student numbers. But despite this, the emphasis was directed towards improving the quality of service and increasing the effectiveness of student support generally, which included the introduction of more effective feedback mechanisms to test student satisfaction.

Improved services coupled with increased access (through early morning and Saturday opening) had a marked effect on library use, with an increase in loans of around 40%. Development of greater access also focussed on the greater need to overcome some of the constraints of place and time, through the networking of services. Included in this was the review and assessment of the current automated systems and the networking of functionality of information generally. As a result of this review the College decided in the course of 1991-92 to fund a major development in this area.

Academic support improved through strengthened faculty links and a more consistent pattern of involvement between the services and faculties which helped to sustain the quality of support for existing courses and secure adequate resourcing for new ones.

The well-established user education programme in Learning Resources was developed even further, but there was obviously a growing need for more workshops on information handling skills as assignment and project work increased.

Media Services took an active role in the development and support of a more integrated resource-based, student-centred learning facility, which during the course of 1991-92 brought a shift in emphasis for technician staff who are now providing greater student support at the point of contact through the establishment of an enquiry and support desk. This expressed need for user support also became apparent in the pressure on library enquiry point manning.

1991-92 was a year which brought new challenges for Learning Resources, but which provided the opportunity to focus on service quality and to lay the foundations for future development, supported by College commitment to improved resource income.

Information Technology Services

1991-92 was a year of expansion and support of institutional growth as an independent organisation. New staff in all sections were employed and resources enhanced with major capital investment. The name of the department was changed from Computer Services to Information Technology Services to reflect better the work and remit of the department.

Provision of new academic systems and hardware, new communication systems, new administrative installations and associated software allowed for continued utilisation and integration of computer based resources across all College departmental activity. This was supplemented with a Director's Development Fund post for general College IT training. Extra computer centre accommodation was provided at both sites with the Avenue computer centre moving to a more central location. A phased programme of integrating voice and data on the campuses and a fibre optic network was initiated to allow easier and faster access to computer facilities for all students and staff. This was complemented by the installation of a new digital telephone system. Towards the end of the period under review, eight new satellite computer rooms were established in and around the sites to provide computer facilities local to departmental activity. The student:workstation ratio was reduced from 11.6:1 to 10:1, which allowed for significant growth in student numbers.

Greater sophistication, with increased standards to enable a variety of requests to be met in shorter timescales, characterised the work of the Management Information Systems Section, and in order to provide the required functions new hardware was introduced.

All validation and review events made reference to the use of information technology across all disciplines with the inherent need for all staff to become familiar with the wide-ranging aspects of many different software functions. To support this process an active IT Services staff development programme was undertaken along with formal qualification training.

Operationally, systems to give security, faster fault diagnosis and repair were further developed. The department continued with its research activity and involvement in a wide variety of national and international enterprises. Throughout the year many formal evaluations of the work of the department took place by audit inspection, student evaluation, reports to Directorate and committee reports, utilising agreed performance indicators.

The challenges throughout the year in response to curriculum enhancement and technological change, coupled with phase one of the College communication strategy and phase two of the corporate administration information strategy, meant a great deal was achieved by the department.

International links, national and regional involvement, and generation of external funds, as well as provision and support of software and hardware across the curriculum have been undertaken. A solid infrastructure is in place and next year will be the year to move towards quality University standards for both staff and equipment performance.

11. STAFFING

The financial security of the College enabled the Governing Body to enhance the academic staff establishment in advance of increased student recruitment in 1991-92, in order to maintain acceptable staffing levels. A total of nineteen new academic posts were established across all faculties, with the majority in the Faculty of Management and Business which has experienced the most sustained growth of recent years.

The commencement of the 1991-92 academic year coincided with the introduction at Nene College of the nationally negotiated new contract of employment for all academic staff. The reduction in class contact hours for lecturers meant that extra teaching resources had to be employed in the form of part-time staff. Successful local negotiation within the College allowed for flexibility in the interpretation of class-contact hours through individual agreement. All academic members of staff accepted the new contract of employment.

In 1991-92 the number of senior staff who were transferred from nationally negotiated salary scales to individually determined senior management pay was increased to 28 staff.

In order to reduce the amount of time teaching staff spent on non-academic activities, a policy decision was taken to strengthen the administrative base in all the faculties. The College APT&C staff establishment increased by 23. The Faculty Administrative Officers assumed managerial responsibility for these non-academic staff within the faculties.

A small increase by four fte posts in the College's manual staff establishment was made mainly to provide support services in the new buildings that became available during the year. The College continued to assist and encourage the PCEF national survey to harmonise manual staff's conditions of service with those of the APT&C staff.

The Administrative Information System was developed to incorporate computerised comprehensive personnel details for all staff.

1991-92 saw the introduction of a formal staff appraisal and development review programme for all full-time academic and APT&C members of staff. Part-time staff were enabled to participate if they wished. Internal training in staff appraisal was provided in order to promote the scheme's intention of assisting individual staff development against agreed objectives.

A further significant development during the year was the introduction of a College policy on 'Recruitment and Selection of Staff' which positively determined that no direct or indirect discrimination would be applied within the College's recruitment and selection process. In support of this intention comprehensive guidance and training was provided for all those involved in the recruitment and selection of staff.

12. ENVIRONMENT AND BUILDINGS

Through the year four major new buildings were in progress at Park Campus. The first of these, the Brampton building, which houses the School of Health and Life Sciences, was completed in February 1992. The largest of the new buildings, the Cottesbrooke building, was under construction throughout the year and was completed on schedule in order for the Faculty of Management and Business to begin work in the new building in September 1992. The building houses 110 staff and has 35 teaching rooms, including two large lecture theatres; it cost £3.85m to build with a further £350,000 being spent on new equipment and facilities within the building.

The new Students Union building at Park Campus was commenced in the Spring of 1992 with a view to completion by the end of 1992. Lastly the contract for the new restaurant was agreed at the end of this year and the building is scheduled for completion in the Summer of 1993. At the end of the year two new car parks were also constructed at the Park Campus. During all these building works considerable efforts were made to keep the overall environment as pleasant as possible and to minimise the disruption to staff and students.

At the same time, considerable care was taken to preserve existing trees and the new buildings have been surrounded in landscaped areas to enhance the overall appearance of the site. The overall landscaping of the Park Campus as new buildings are constructed is constantly under review, and comprehensive plans have been drawn up to enhance further the environment for the future.

As well as major buildings, various refurbishments and improvements have been carried out during the year, including work on the senior common room at Park Campus, the Avenue Students Union building and the Avenue boilers. There has been upgrading of the ventilation system to the Information Technology Services Department. On the security front new alarm systems have been installed in all student residences and closed circuit television cameras have been provided to cover car parks at both campuses. At the end of the year, a considerable number of internal moves took place which resulted in a large amount of minor refurbishment and improvement.

The major moves related to the changing over of buildings for the Education, Health and Science Faculty and the Management and Business Faculty. In addition both the Faculties of Humanities and Social Science and Design and Industry carried out considerable internal moves, and such varied areas as the Personnel Department, the College Bookshop and the Sir Gordon Roberts College of Nursing and Midwifery were provided with new bases.

At the Avenue Campus the end of this year saw the beginning of a three year programme of improvements which will take effect in summer 1993 with the refurbishment of the Reception area.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Central Services

Maintenance. Progress continued to be made against the background of the accumulated inherited maintenance work on buildings, grounds and service equipment. This has been achieved by the addition of professionally trained staff to the existing teams, and the effective use of local contractors and the direction of substantial funding for this work. The release of PCFC funds allocated under the Hunter II survey allowed a programme of major roof repairs to be undertaken.

Catering. The College catering service continued to meet the requirements of an increased number of customers under difficult circumstances. The new restaurant at Park Campus is due for completion by September 1993. During the course of the year the Board of Governors decided that the College would meet its objectives for catering through private contract provision.

Reception. This continues to be a centrally managed service at the Park Campus and the post rooms and switchboard have been located in the same area. Customer care training for the staff involved has been undertaken. A streamlining of the postal service was initiated and this was designed to provide a more efficient service within the refurbished Holdenby building. Attention began to be given to the reception services to be provided at the Avenue Campus in relation to the refurbishment of the entrance area at that site.

Security. Contract security is now supplementing the 24 hour staff teams. Patrols of grounds and buildings are made on a frequent basis throughout the night at both sites. Increased steps were taken to protect College property and improved lighting and surveillance equipment was installed in order to reduce attacks on cars. Preparation of a College-wide policy and security programme was initiated in co-operation with the Police and their Crime Prevention Officers. Emphasis continued to be placed on security awareness and personal vigilance.

Caretaking and Cleaning. The large new buildings at Park Campus led to a review of these services, and the first faculty based caretakers were introduced, in order to provide a service for the whole of the working period. This will improve security and the general well-being of the fabric of the buildings and allow caretakers to be immediately on hand both for portering, minor maintenance and personal security purposes.

Telephones. The Ericsson switchboard and system became fully operational during the year. The institution gained from the new central switchboard in terms of the speed of handling both incoming and outgoing calls. The logging equipment also provided valuable management information and enabled the service to be kept under constant review.

Transport. The requirements for transport were met during the year by a combination of College vehicles and contract services. There was sufficient usage during the year to ensure that the service met its financial targets despite the fact that the vehicles available no longer match the increased size of student groups.

Reprographics. Increases in student numbers and the changes in teaching methods have been reflected in the massive increases in the volume of photocopying - 63% on 1990-91 and some 15% during the course of the year. This increase has been achieved by the introduction of more sophisticated equipment rather than additional staff hours. This new technology will enable the service to improve in quality, in addition to meeting the demands of volume increase.

Corporate Affairs

The new Corporate Affairs Office was established at the end of 1990 and for the 1991 recruitment operation a radically new design approach to prospectuses was launched. The content of both the 'national' full-time prospectus and the 'local' one aimed at part-time and vocational students was fully reviewed in 1992. During this period the distribution of both prospectuses effectively doubled with positive responses to the new designs.

In a rapidly changing market, with an extensive and varied range of courses and with ambitious expansion plans, effective means of gaining insight as to the College's customers was a high priority. To this end the Corporate Affairs office undertook and commissioned a number of surveys. This market research actually provided an agenda for change both in terms of College publicity materials and more substantively in terms of institutional priorities.

Because the nature of the student body is changing rapidly and significantly both nationally and at College level, monitoring of student concerns and satisfaction has been a strong feature of the unit's work.

Prior to the establishment of the Corporate Affairs and Marketing Office there had not been a central budget or strategy for the promotion of courses; nor had there been an effective relationship between recruitment, advertising and overall promotional goals. The unit has sought to identify key positive messages, to gain financial returns from unifying expenditure on advertising, and to plan advertising activity properly across the College. Joint planning and funding between the centre and the faculties has encouraged the identification and achievement of College-wide advertising objectives alongside departmental marketing goals.

Visits to schools and attendance at the ever increasing number of higher education fairs has been a high priority in achieving greater national awareness on a cost effective basis. From a previous figure of around 30 predominantly local events, the College participated in over 70 events in the course of 1991-92. As a result of this activity, guidance and advice on higher education was offered to something like 7000 potential students, with a further 3000 being addressed through lectures and seminars.

This activity has begun to change the recruitment profile of the College, with far less dependence on 'clearing', with greater emphasis on a national catchment for students and with enhanced minimum requirements on many courses.

Finance Office

During the course of the year five new appointments were made to the office. In April 1991 the Financial Services team moved from Avenue campus to the expanded Finance department accommodation at Park Campus thus bringing the operation together for the first time. Though the unified accommodation has been restricted pending the new building programme, the benefits of much closer working between the three sections of the department became apparent over the year as more effective systems were introduced.

The Finance Office was able to meet all national and internal deadlines for presentation of budgets and financial information. In particular, it has been able to provide highly effective monthly financial data for cost centre managers and for the Governors Finance Committee, and it was successful in the early invoicing of local authorities in order to maximise cash flows.

The beginning of the financial year saw the implementation of 'in-house' ORACLE accounting system, replacing the use of certain financial services hitherto purchased from the Northamptonshire County Council. This implementation completed a six month development period, and in operation the software has proved robust in meeting the College's requirements, though the reporting facilities have had to be supported by other software.

The College's major building programme required a review during the year of the management of capital expenditure accounting. The Finance Office also established financial liaison procedures with all the Cost Centres on a regular basis. Following a value-for-money report by the College's Internal Auditors and the subsequent advice of the External Auditors and the Audit Committee, a professional Purchasing Officer was added to the College establishment, and as a result a professional support system has been introduced for Cost Centre Managers.

The Finance Department was able during the year to assist a considerable number of Further Education Colleges as they prepared for independence from their local authorities in 1993 and to contribute to national conferences in this respect.

The recession and general student hardship has had a marked effect on the service and necessitated the implementation of more effective and professional means of debt chasing.

During the year all the principal systems within the Finance Office were audited by the College's Internal and/or External Auditors and though there were many practical recommendations for development, there were no critical reports and the Office was widely complimented on its service.

The Personnel Department

The College's central Personnel Department entered its third year of operation and was able to build on its operational experience since incorporation. Its establishment was raised to seven fte and this necessitated relocation to new accommodation within the Avenue Campus.

The establishment of many new posts posed heavy demands on the department in terms of recruitment and selection, and its staff provided professional assistance to cost centre managers in the drawing up of job descriptions, job specifications and advertisements for posts, and the organisation of subsequent interviews.

The ORACLE database computer system was implemented for the maintenance of personnel records for all staff and the access of comprehensive control information.

In terms of salaries and wages, the Department continued to act as the liaison between the College and the Northamptonshire County Council Salaries and Wages Section which provides a service to the College on an agency basis.

Training and development was given a high priority during the year and the Department organised bi-monthly induction courses for all new staff, in addition to the training on job selection and staff appraisal.

Increasingly the Department provided welfare advice on occupational and personal pensions, retirement benefits, long service awards, maternity leave provision and sickness benefits.

Many new or revised policy and procedure documents were produced during the year and this involved proper consultation with the recognised trade unions and professional associations through the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee.

The Registry

The Admissions process operated by the central Registry covers all PCAS admissions, and 1991-92 inevitably represented a major increase in this aspect of the Department's work. Likewise, the substantial increase in student numbers was reflected in the workload involved in the various statistical returns to funding bodies and Government departments.

The handling and operation of examinations in this year was particularly challenging owing to the building work and other changes in accommodation use.

The Registry assisted in the organisation of the summer graduation ceremonies of the University in Northampton, and in November 1991 was responsible for the successful organisation of the first College Awards Ceremony for HND, HNC and similar successful students.

Student Loans constituted a considerable increased demand on the department, with the uptake being considerably in excess of student number growth. This is a reflection of the continuing pressure on student finances. The department has kept the cost of loan administration to a minimum and was satisfactorily audited by the Student Loans Company.

1991-92 was the first full year of Registry staff acting as officers to the Academic Board and its committees, and as a result the Registry has instituted a professional and knowledgable adjunct to the committee processes of the College. In this respect the Registry was able to make a particular contribution to the development and implementation of both research degrees arrangements and CATS procedures. A comprehensive Academic Policies and Procedures Manual was introduced in a format allowing for regular updating and providing a summation of all the College's academic procedures.

The professional involvement of the Registry in support of validation and review was established in the summer of 1991 and with the procedures embedded in the course of the year, the professional support of the Registry was a major input to the enhancement of quality control across the College's academic programmes.

The Registry has contributed to the co-ordination of staff training in respect of quality assurance, and at the national level has participated in the development of new student records systems.

Student Services

The academic session 1991-92 was one of significant change in the development of Student Services at Nene College. Three influences in particular precipitated the need for new ways of thinking and working. Firstly, the continued substantial growth in student numbers placed considerably increased demands upon the mainstream services provided for students. Accommodation, Welfare and the Careers Service all experienced unprecedented pressure of additional requests for help and advice. These were met successfully through the hard work and commitment of Student Services staff and increased College resource provision founded on a policy of raising the profile of student support provision.

Secondly, the College undertook major steps to relocate physically Student Services into a "one stop shop" provision on the Park Campus where all the services are now related to a dedicated reception area. The Playgroup was also moved to a new location close to the central Students Services.

Thirdly, the nature of Student Service provision has also expanded with the introduction of the College Student Counselling Service and the appointment of both a male and female College Counsellor. In co-operation with the Students' Union the volunteer bureau was established in 1992.

A particular emphasis on the needs of overseas students was also a feature of the 1991-92 session. Inaugural receptions for overseas students were initiated and a comprehensive handbook was produced and distributed.

Financial support for students was a matter of considerable concern during the year. The Governors agreed a policy whereby there would be three main elements of support: Access Funds through national funding; the Extreme Hardship Fund for loans to students; and a Director's Student Support Fund financed from within the College budget. The Extreme Hardship Fund had been established by the County Council and served students well for many years; the opportunity was taken this year to reconstitute the fund as a College-based activity, which in the changed circumstances of the College would take forward the important initiative of the County Council for which the College is most grateful.

In addition to these activities, students have continued to have access to support from a number of Bursaries which have been established in the interests of students through the generosity of local people: T D Lewis Bursary; the Leslie Church Bursary and the Eric Ogilvie Bursary Awards supported by the Robert Horne Group. These Bursaries provided support for students on a number of different grounds - local students, academic excellence, students seeking to pursue post-graduate study and those wishing to study abroad. In 1991-92 some 30 students were successful in receiving financial assistance fromn these bursaries with total allocations in excess of £23,000.

The year saw the initiation of a major debate in the institution about the nature of Students Services and the organisation and management most appropriate for those services in an expanded institution. This debate will be taken forward into 1992-93 for implementation.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

In 1991-92 the College Health and Safety Team comprised a Safety Advisor, COSHH Adviser, Occupational Health Nurse and Fire Officer.

The annual programme of inspections led to detailed reports with advice on those issues needing priority action. The implementation of such advice is closely monitored.

The Service devoted much attention to disseminating information and advice regarding the new legislation which applies from January 1993 in accordance with EEC requirements. The College Safety Advisors attend and contribute to all staff induction programmes. At the beginnning of the academic year the Safety and COSHH advisers provide extensive advice and training for all full-time and part-time students. The Health and Safety team also used 1991-92 for the purpose of planning and promoting an integrated programme of training and advice across the College.

Following the introduction of British Standard BS 7258 which made recommendations for the construction, siting and specifications of fume cupboards, a bid was successfully made to PCFC for sufficient funds to replace all laboratory fume cupboards. In the process of implementation the current usage was rationalised and the revised provision upgraded. In relation to COSHH regulations a programme was initiated and implemented during the year with regard to the assessment of hazardous substances with a view to all very hazardous substances having been assessed for the year 1992-93.

The Service recognised the need to review fire evacuation procedures in light of the major building and development programme in the College.

The year was successful in improving the expertise of those with specific responsibilities for Health and Safety.

A review of inspections in 1991-92 provided evidence to show that there was far greater awareness of the need for health and safety policies and there implementation, and that there had been a genuine improvement in all aspects of Health and Safety within the College. The implementation of new regulations and the application of best practices constantly presented new concerns and challenges for the Health and Safety team.

15. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Equal Opportunities Executive Working Group has formal responsibility for advising the Director and the Academic Board on developing and maintaining the implementation of the College's Equal Opportunities Policy. The academic year 1991-92 saw significant developments in three key areas: staff recruitment and appointment; special needs and disabilities; student admissions.

A revised policy and procedures document on the recruitment, selection and appointment of human resources was approved by Governors in December 1991. This made explicit the commitment to ensure equal opportunities policy in the staff recruitment process and to work towards a more balanced staff profile in terms of the representation of women, people of ethnic minority origin and people with disabilities at all levels of the organisation. This policy has been implemented through a review of current practice on staff appointments and an extensive training programme.

An Equal Opportunities (Special Needs and Disabilities) Policy Statement, together with an Implementation Plan drawn up by the Equal Opportunities Working Group received formal approval from the Academic Board and the College Governors in late 1992. This sets out the College's intention to implement actively its equal opportunities policy in relation to both staff and students with disabilities and special needs. The number of students with disabilities continued to increase. The Margaret Bondfield Hall of Residence, opened in September 1991, could cater for up to eight students with physical disabilities plus helpers.

The opening of the Brampton and Cottesbrooke buildings at Park Campus, both of which have lifts, provided a greater degree of access, as do the new Student Union buildings at both campuses. Much minor works activity was commissioned during the course of the year in order to increase accessability to buildings.

Commitment to equal opportunities and widening access for under-represented groups remained central to the College's student recruitment strategy and admissions policy. In particular, the College sought to increase the recruitment of women to traditionally male dominated courses, to increase proportionately the recruitment of students of ethnic minority origin and mature students without traditional entry qualifications. The monitoring of student admissions with reference to equal opportunities is an established part of the annual course review process.

Since its establishment in October 1991 the College Admissions Sub-Committee took on responsibility for this monitoring and much work took place on developing both consistent procedures and effective training. This reflects the strategic importance of good practice in implementing the equal opportunities policy.

16. FINANCIAL REPORT

The College's audited and approved financial statements for the year ended 31 March 1992 show that, on a revenue income of £22.895m, a surplus of £1.147m was achieved before adjustments for interest receivable, exceptional items and technical accounting matters.

Overall, College activity resulted in a transfer to specific and revenue reserves at the year end of £1.477m and, after allowing for expenditure against sums already held, principally for construction work, these reserves stood at £2.953m at the balance sheet date.

The above reflects another extremely successful year for the College with the surplus exceeding budgeted expectations. Additional resources received from the Polytechnics & Colleges Funding Council (PCFC), and the tuition fees of the students recruited over and above targets, were the principal contributing factors to the better than projected out-turn.

The main sources of income during the year were:

Source	% of Total Income
Tuition Fees	34%
Recurrent Funding from PCFC	25%
Education Contracts (including the Local Authority contract for Further Education)	17%

In the previous financial year, these percentages were 26%, 30% and 22%, respectively.

The percentage changes demonstrate:

(i) the effect on income of increasing full-time Higher Education student numbers;

(ii) the shift from central funding to tuition fees funding for Higher education as a matter of Government policy;

(iii) the change of balance within the College itself between Higher and Further Education provision.

After exclusion of the provision for depreciation, revenue expenditure can be analysed in two ways:

(i) Between Pay and Non Pay

	1991-92	1990-91
Pay	60%	67%
Non Pay	40%	33%

(ii) By expenditure areas

Expenditure on	1991-92	1990-91
Academic Departments & Academic Support Services	58%	61%
Premises	12%	8%
Administrative, Central & Other Support Services	15%	16%
Other (including debt charges)	15%	15%

Both these sets of figures demonstrate the effect of significant spending during 1991-92 on the maintainance and restoration of the College estate, the provision of a substantial programme of minor works improvements and the servicing of the new buildings coming into use.

In addition to the revenue expenditure detailed above, the College spent £952,000 on the purchase of capital equipment for use throughout the institution. As in previous years, the most significant proportion of this went on the provision of additional or replacement computer equipment. This expenditure is capitalised within the accounts and a provision for depreciation made. PCFC provided £763,000 of the total as a specific allocation.

The College's major building programme continued apace and the accounts show that, during 1991-92, £5.206m was spent on completed buildings and work in progress. Details of the projects involved are given in section 12 of this annual report. Of this sum, £1.815m was contributed by PCFC.

As at the end of previous financial years, 31 March 1992 saw the College in a strong financial position. The level of reserves held, however, need to be seen in the context of the College's committed contribution towards the remainder of the building programme.

Of the £2.953m held in total in the specific and revenue reserves at the year end, £2.018m related to the balance on the specific construction reserve. With the College's contribution towards the major project in 1992-93 alone being £2m, the level of reserves can in no way be regarded as excessive.

The College can reflect on a financial year outcome which demonstrates its efficiency, prudence and budgetary control. As such, the institution looks forward to a new year from a secure financial base and able to invest further in its staff, its buildings and, most importantly, its academic future.

Nene College, Park Campus, Northampton NN2 7AL Tel: 0604 735500

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