

Update on University Status/University College Title

Good news on the University College title front. We understand, subsequent to high level discussions with the DfEE, that Dearing's recommendations on the use of the 'University College' title are likely to be followed almost to the letter by the government. In their simplest form, this means that only those institutions who are colleges of a federal university, or those who have undergraduate degree awarding powers in their own name can expect to gain - or keep - the title. When the long awaited Education White Paper is published in January, Nene expects to meet the criteria to be able to take its place within the titular University sector. The College governors have approved a name change in principle if the White Paper meets expectations.

Nene plans to apply for Research Degree Awarding Powers in Summer 1998, when we will have met the criteria of more than 20 Nene supervised students being successfully awarded PhD's. Current requirements imposed by the DfEE require Nene to continue to meet quality criteria for a period of three years after the award of research degree awarding powers before being allowed to make an application for the title of The University of Northampton.

Government Quality Experts Take A Shine To Nene's Leather

Close industry collaboration has led to the relocation of the Leather Conservation Centre to Park Campus.



Restoration work on a 17th century Chinoiserie screen in the LCC



(l to r) Mrs Cooke, Roy Thomson (Head, LCC), David Carter (current Master of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers), Mrs Carter, Dr Gaskell and Captain Jonathan Cooke, Clerk of the Leathersellers).

Nene's provision in Leather Technology training has been given one of the highest scores possible by a national quality audit. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) gave the College's British School of Leather Technology (BSLT) 22 out of a possible 24 points. This 'excellent' rating gives the School a distinction few others in the UK have achieved. Singled out for praise were the School's interaction with industry, excellent student support and unblemished graduate employment record. Head of School, Dr Dick Roy commented "This result is the culmination of many years of development of the School within Nene College of Higher Education towards our aim of being the premier School of Leather Technology in the world."

Since the new scoring system was introduced, Nene has had a number of other good to excellent scores. Sociology scored 20, American Studies 18 and 'Drama, Dance and Cinematics, Communication and Media Studies' 21 points, illustrating the underlying soundness of Nene's academic provision.

ACADEMIC News

Recruitment Update

We are in a highly volatile 'market-place' nationally - UCAS speaks of unpredictable swings and highly erratic patterns of application by way of contrast with the normal smooth, upward curve. They are therefore reluctant to make public statements (a reluctance which is probably much welcomed by the government). As of mid-November, the national figures, with a quarter of the expected applications in the system, showed a decline of between 5% and 6% in applications against last year. The national figure for the drop off has been as high as 16% and as low as 2% on a week by week comparison with last year, hence UCAS' reluctance to take a firm view until 16 December when the bulk of applications should have been received.

Nene has experienced the same kind of volatility in applications with a range of up to 60% variance from expected figures. Overall, Nene's recruitment has performed very much like other large Colleges of Higher Education with a decline in applications of around 15% (or 330 applications). Though by mid-November, things have improved and we are now 8% behind last year. Losses in the CHE sector have been reflected in the figures for the former Polytechnics where applications have shrunk by around 10%. Applications to the Chartered Universities are relatively stable but with a few exceptions such as Keele who have lost around 12% of applications at this stage. Historically, Nene has received most of its applications in the later part of the UCAS application cycle; we cannot extrapolate figures from the present position with any degree of confidence because of the level of uncertainty so it does not follow that the present decline will be that suffered by us as at December 16. That Nene is now in the mid range of CHE institutions in terms of recruitment is itself something of an improvement. We have seen significant increases in our applications over the last three years. Our current position is actually better in terms of applications received than in 1994 and 1995.

Government is clearly worried that the apparent decline in applications for HE will manifest itself in reduced enrolments for 1998 and David Blunkett has promised to write to all would-be applicants 'explaining' the position. We still await the White Paper and the legislative proposal for new loans and fees and there is still room for development in policy terms. We clearly live in interesting times.

Geoffrey Middleton, Head of CAMs

Bid for Funds - Refurbishing Research Laboratories

The HEFCE is inviting bids for funding in the financial year 1998/99 to refurbish research laboratories. Up to £30 million will be provided for the initiative, with funds targeted at improving the research infrastructure for high-cost laboratory-based subjects. Funding must be exactly matched by the bidders. Applications should be received by the HEFCE by 31 December 1997.

Library Cooperation

An agreement was formalised in early November between Nene and the County Council's Libraries and Information Service to provide better access to materials across the county. The agreement makes best use of the general and specialist collections of both organisations and means that those who live, work or study in the county will be able to use the libraries of both organisations for access to reference items, open access material and equipment and some audio-visual and computer-based resources. The new joint arrangements will commence in the New Year.

Tuition Fees

At the end of November, the DfEE outlined guidelines for the new funding arrangements for higher education in a letter to Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The main points are as follows:

- The present differential fees paid through mandatory awards will be replaced for all students by flat rate fees. Institutions will be expected to set a tuition fee of £1000 for all home full-time and sandwich course students on undergraduate, DipHE, HND and PGCE courses in the academic year 1998/99.
- All home new entrants in 1998/99 will be expected to contribute to the £1000 tuition fee, subject to assessment of parental income or the income of spouses in appropriate cases.
- Continuing students in 1998/99 will continue to be reimbursed in full from public funds.
- Students from other EU countries will be treated on the same basis as students from the UK with regard to tuition fees, with local authorities where the institution is situated determining levels of public support for fees.
- The Department of Health will continue to cover the full cost, including tuition fees, for diploma courses in nursing and midwifery and other healthcare courses including occupational therapy. From 1998/99, the full cost of degree courses in nursing and midwifery, podiatry and other healthcare areas, again including tuition fees will be met by the NHS.
- There is no change in the arrangements for institutions to set and collect fees for part-time students and funding arrangements for postgraduate students will remain the same.

Industry-Education Partnerships

Many thanks to all those who responded to the email concerning industry-education partnerships for publication in the Education and Training Parliamentary Monitor. The response was extremely encouraging and should improve our parliamentary profile greatly. Some of the partnerships which staff drew attention to included the following.

- Consultancy, research and training with Scania (GB) Ltd and KGH
- Over 700 teacher training students on contractual placements with schools
- independent educational advice and research with North Thames Regional Educational Development Group
- involvement in a partnership with the NHS Executive and the Royal College of Physicians inquiring into managerial and organisational barriers to learning from audit.
- work with the BBC into ways in which existing culture and practice diminishes or enhances opportunities for organisational learning and innovation.
- Performance Studies students have worked on 'pr' performances for Sheinman Ophthalmic Opticians and there are plans for them to work on police training and fire safety videos.
- consultancy work, translation assignments and language training for many local companies wishing to work in Spain.

If staff know of any more partnerships, please email amanda.black@nene.ac.uk or phone on ext. 2486.

RESEARCH CLUSTERS - What they are and what they mean

Research is seen as an important part of Nene's future development. The College's research strategy is aimed at building strong research foundations which can aid teaching and support the College's wider mission. A vital part of this strategy is the establishment and development of varied "research clusters". Research clusters is a term which most staff have heard about but very few can explain their nature and purpose. This article hopes to make the picture a little clearer.

A research cluster is defined as:

"a grouping of staff who share broadly similar or related research interests, who have a clear identity in the outside world, who can support each other in both undertaking and supervising research, and who can be resourced and managed as a coherent unit"

Twelve clusters have been identified which will form the framework for Nene's research strategy. These are not intended to be fixed and will evolve over time, any potential

changes to the list of clusters will be reviewed on an annual basis. At present 1997's list of clusters is as follows:

- Education
- Engineering & Technology
- Geography
- Health Care
- History
- Information Systems
- Leather
- Literary & Cultural Studies
- Organisational Studies
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Strategic Management

Research Clusters are open to anyone who is or can become research active within that area of activity. Membership of individual clusters will be agreed by the Cluster Steering Group consisting of the Cluster Leader and relevant Heads of School. Research clusters will be the main framework for research funding and therefore it will be in people's interests to join a cluster if they wish to have access to these resources. However clusters will be funded the majority of the time on the basis of performance and therefore membership brings with it the responsibility to deliver in terms of research outputs and external income.

Transpersonal Psychology

What is transpersonal psychology? Some members of the Division of Psychology have particular interests in this growing field of psychology. Anthony Edwards reports.

The Psychology Department at Nene has quite an active transpersonal group, with no fewer than seven members. Three of the group not only attended the Transpersonal section of the British Psychological Society Annual conference in September this year, but each presented a paper. Mike Lewis presented a paper on the question of music and peak experiences, tracing the history of music back to prehistoric times and using an alternative approach to science to assess his hypothesis. Malcolm Walley gave a talk on "self-less versus no self", using the insights and teachings of Buddhist monks. Anthony Edwards gave a talk on the terms "religious experience" and "mystical experience", indicating how they represent different states but referring to an experience of Dame Julian of Norwich as an example of both. Malcolm Walley also presented a workshop entitled "From compassion to understanding" and a poster entitled "Transpersonal aspects of human relationships" (with J.Pendleton)

Some curious minds may be still wondering what transpersonal psychology is. Transpersonal psychology concerns itself with topics such as the psychology of religion, spirituality, mysticism, meditation and the arts insofar as the arts may be inspired by transpersonal themes. ("Transpersonal themes" in the arts can be taken to be those in which the artist feels connected to a Presence or Power beyond the individual self). Experiences in which a person feels connected to something beyond the individual self - such as mystical experiences - are of particular interest to

transpersonal psychology. Probably more so than in most UK undergraduate departments of psychology, the department at Nene has quite a strong interest in this area of psychology.

In addition to presenting papers at conferences, members of this group have published on transpersonal themes in the *Transpersonal Psychology Review* (the flagship journal of the British Psychological Society Transpersonal Section). Mike Lowis published work on his "Is music a divine gift?" research earlier this year, while in a subsequent issue of the journal Anthony Edwards published a paper on ethical issues in transpersonal research. It is hoped that the group will flourish, and continue to be active throughout 1998.

Anthony Edwards, Psychology

HORIBA Donation

On 10 October Atsushi Horiba, the President of the Horiba Group of companies, presented Nene with a mobile air quality monitoring station to support the College's growing research activity into air quality, air pollution and health. This donation of around £75,000 of research equipment has already proved to be of great benefit to the College's research. The observations are being used in the Northampton Air Pollution Study (NAPS), a collaborative project funded by the EPSRC involving Nene, Leeds University and Imperial College. That study, which is being undertaken at Nene by Professor David Briggs and Professor John McClatchey, assisted by John Gulliver and Emma Livesley, is investigating whether air pollution in the northern corridor of Northampton can be related to health, particularly asthma. No results are available as yet but various surveys have already been made, including traffic counts and monitoring of CO levels on buses.

The mobile station effectively provides continuous observations of a range of pollutants, allowing both peaks and averages to be investigated. This level of detail is much better than is available from many air pollution monitors, some of which only provide two-week averages. In addition, the Horiba mobile station makes observations of ozone, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, nitrogen dioxide, NO_x and fine particulates called PM10s (particulates less than 10 micrometres in diameter). These observations allow analysis of a wider range of pollutants than is possible at many other stations in the UK and the Nene mobile station is therefore a powerful research tool for air quality investigations.

Such a donation is unusual and it is worth providing some background as to why Horiba were prepared to make this generous contribution to research at Nene. The Horiba Group is comprised of a number of different operations in the USA, Germany, Korea and the UK, as well as in Japan where the parent company is based. Horiba manufactures scientific and analytical equipment. The UK arm of the company is Horiba Instruments Ltd which has been based in Northampton for 20 years, and the donation of the equipment

was part of the celebration of this 20 year presence in the town. However, the decision to make the donation to the College was influenced by a number of factors.

The School of Environmental Science had been developing relations with a number of local companies, of which Horiba was one, and Dr Paul Phillips who leads the commercial activities section of the School had already spent some time with Horiba discussing possible cooperation. Horiba had also supplied air quality monitoring equipment to Northampton Borough Council and David Briggs and John McClatchey had been working with the Council and were also members of the Northamptonshire Air Quality Group which has representation from all the Borough and District Councils and the Environment Agency, as well as Nene. John McClatchey had also worked closely with Portsmouth City Council who were also supplied with air quality monitoring equipment by Horiba.

An additional factor was the success of the consortium bid to NERC under the Joint Research Council Equipment Initiative. The Research into the Effects of Aerosol Characteristic on Health (REACH) project is a consortium of local authorities in London, Sussex and Portsmouth plus Nene, Imperial College, the South East Institute for Public Health (part of the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas's Hospitals) and the University of Brighton. As a result of its successful bid, the REACH consortium was awarded 187,000 to purchase air quality monitoring equipment and analytical equipment, with the former based principally at Nene (with some at Brighton, SEIPH and with the local authorities) and the analytical equipment based at Imperial College.

These links all reinforced the impression that Nene was an appropriate recipient of this generous donation from Horiba. The College is extremely grateful to Horiba for this substantial support for its research activities and it illustrates to all colleagues the importance of building links with a wide range of groups, as such links may well provide opportunities for new research projects, including financial support.

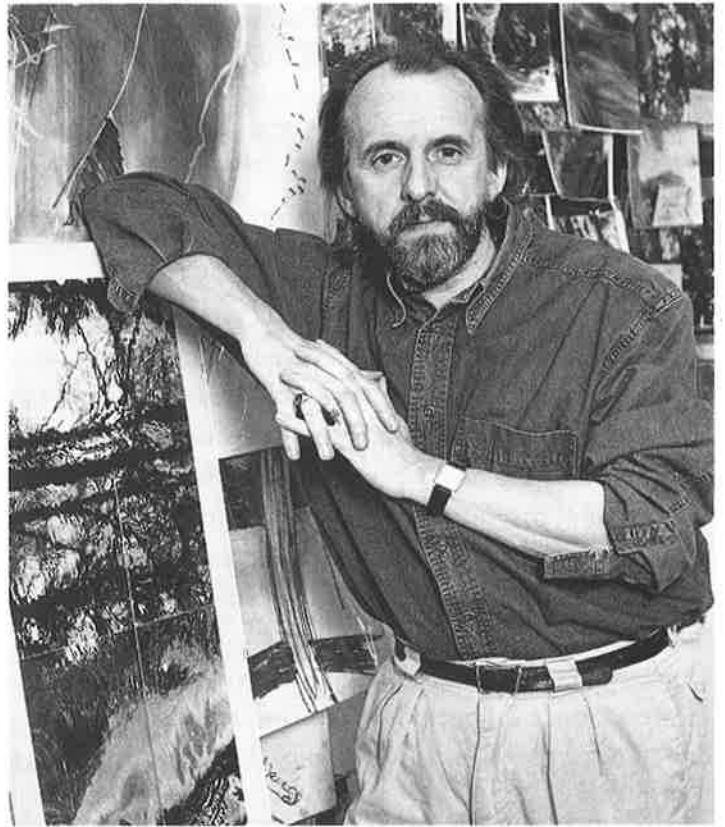
*Professor John McClatchey, Head of School,
Environmental Science*



The Air Monitoring station outside the Nene Centre for Research

Mappin Gallery Invitation for Nene Artist

John Harper from the School of Art and Design has been invited to create a new body of work to exhibit at the renowned Mappin Gallery in Sheffield. The exhibition will be part of 'Photo 98', a year long celebration of the art of photography. As a build up to the Millennium, every year from 1995 to 2000 has been designated to celebrate one aspect of the arts with the Visual Arts and the Dramatic Arts celebrated over the previous two years. Each project is organised regionally and financed partially through European funding. John has also been awarded two Arts Council grants and £3000 in sponsorship from Agfa UK, partly on the strength of the success of his last major international project 'The River'. There is considerable kudos in being asked to contribute as a solo artist to such an event, and it is greatly to his credit that John has been visible enough as an artist on a national scale to be invited. After the Photo 98 project is complete, the show is to tour the Watershed in Bristol and Ffotogallery in Cardiff and has definite international potential.



John Harper with his major international exhibit, 'The River'

ACADEMIC News in Brief

- The Common Academic Framework is headed for validation in February 1998.
- The White paper on Lifelong Learning is now planned for the New Year. Reasons for the delay (the paper should have been published in October) are unclear.
- At the Awards Ceremony on 23 November, honorary awards were given to Norbert Singer CBE, Mary Bromley OBE and A.C.Gallagher.
- The government, in its wisdom, is proposing an additional 500,000 students in further and higher education by 2002. Meanwhile, submissions of institution's strategic plans to the HEFCE show that the sector is planning to recruit slightly over the overall maximum set by the Council for full-time Home and EU students. Those same strategic plans, however, also forecast a reduction in staff numbers of 1.8%.
- There is a new organisational structure in the Faculty of Management and Business. Responsibilities for the courses and services provided are handled separately from responsibility for staff, subject groups and research. There are now three schools: Information Systems, Business and Management and Law and Accountancy.
- Members of the Directorate will assume the following responsibilities for this coming year. The Director will take overall responsibility for Research. Dr Berry will take responsibility for Regional Strategy. Dr Daniel will take responsibility for the development of the Graduate School and of Technology and Learning.

Praise for Awards Ceremony

A letter sent by Hilary Cox of Management and Business to the Chronicle and Echo in her 'other' role as proud parent, congratulating staff involved in the Awards Ceremony, was printed in the paper. It is reproduced in full below.

'My daughter has just received an award at the Deragate, Northampton, from Nene College of Higher Education. The ceremony was the third that day, but the directorate, lecturers and senior staff gave no hint of how exhausted they must have been feeling. Every student was made to feel special as all the academics on the platform enthusiastically applauded every one of the hundreds of students individually. The director took time to speak personally to every few students obtaining their awards in a particularly jovial and friendly manner, despite the very formal proceedings.

The even ran like clockwork, so it is hard to imagine the complexity of the organisation required to stage such an event. The college should be very proud of itself for making the day a memorable occasion for these students, in recognition of their hard work and achievements.

My daughter is now studying for a higher award at Manchester Metropolitan University. The fact that she chose Manchester is no reflection on Nene College and her comment at the weekend was: "It is good to be back at Nene."

The campus is green, open and safe with excellent facilities on site - compared with Manchester where she is reluctant to attend any lectures that finish after 4pm, as she is afraid to walk home in the dark.

Many parents may not be aware of the excellent institution we have on our doorstep and, with the ever-increasing costs of students studying away from home, I strongly recommend them to take a look.

STAFF News

Liaison in Utrecht

Simon Terrington, Recruitment Liaison Officer, gives a brief account of his experiences recruiting students in Utrecht.

I only found that I was going to Utrecht in Holland about two weeks before the date of departure. I was informed that I was to represent the College with two other staff at the 'Study Beaus' Exhibition. At the initial meeting, I was beginning to get excited about what airport we were due to fly from and was then told that we had been booked onto a ferry. For an unseasoned traveller like myself, this was a bit daunting. However, once I'd been down to Boots and sorted myself out some 'Quells', I felt slightly better.

The fair ran from Thursday until Saturday. When arriving at the venue, which was one of the biggest conferencing centres I'd seen (nearly as big as the NEC), we were quite surprised to find that only two British Higher Education institutions had ventured out for the event. I'm also glad to say the other was Aberdeen, who are hardly a close competitor in the market!

International recruiting was a new experience for me and I quickly realised the rumours I'd heard about it being tiring were true. Instead of a 5 minute consultation with students like in England it was not uncommon to consult a student for 30 minutes about the benefits of studying at Nene. I am pleased to say that we all thought the event was extremely successful and don't be surprised to see some Dutch visitors soon. We also collected approximately 200 evaluation forms from prospective students which will be sent to relevant course tutors so that other information can be sent out.

Each evening, we went out to eat and I even found myself trying to speak Spanish in a restaurant in the middle of Amsterdam! My two colleagues kept commenting on my eating habits, but after a hard day's work, you need a healthy meal.

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to Utrecht and I'm confident that some Dutch students will be studying at Nene next year.

STEP Update

The last edition of Nene News contained an article about the STEP programme. The successful students from Nene won six of the thirty places available for the county, not the country as previously stated. Roger Prout, Head of Careers and Educational Guidance would like to inform students that the STEP programme will be going ahead this year and application forms are available from Careers.

*and for those of you still blissfully unaware....
Year 2000 and the Millennium Time bomb*

You can scarcely open a computing publication lately without finding at least one article labelled 'YEAR 2000'. Opinions vary with criticism of some reports for scaremongering, and others for under-rating the effects of the millennium bug.

The message for Nene staff is 'Don't be caught out, don't panic, but Do something.' the 'Do something' includes making sure you find out more about the Year 2000 problem now if you're a computer user and the possible effect on your computer, software applications and data.

A reference copy of the College Year 2000 strategy has been made available on the Web at http://www.nene.ac.uk/its/its_guide.html. An open discussion list is available for self-subscription called NENE-2000. The IT Services MIS-Information newsletters will be used to share knowledge with all College staff.

We cannot change the deadline. Providing we start now, we'll be in control of the detonator and not looking for a bomb-shelter as our clocks tick over to 1 January 2000.

*Pauline Jewell
Head of Management Information Systems*

Memorial Service for Ryan McEwen-King

Dr Gaskell, Director of Nene College addressed the congregation at the memorial service for Ryan McEwen King at All Saints church on Friday 24th October. In his speech he reflected on Ryan's life as a student and part of the community, paying tribute to someone who had contributed so much and was indeed "a student of whom we can all be proud". Following this Dr Gaskell talked of Ryan's love of music and musical talent which was celebrated in the service, describing Ryan as both "powerful and stunning" in her character. Dr Gaskell hoped the service had assured everyone of the affection held at Nene for Ryan and had "re-asserted the grief and the guilt of our whole community that she should have met her tragic and untimely death here in our town".

- On 21 October, six members of the College rang a quarter-peal in memory of Ryan. Caroline Davies, Janet Wilkins, Jennie Care, Tony Williams, Alan Cozens and Owen Battye rang the quarter-peal at the Church of St John the Baptist in Kingsthorpe.

Environmentally Sound

Nene's Environmental Management Executive working group have been making considerable progress. Outlined below are some of the current key issues.

*Recycling/waste disposal

At present a successful waste disposal system is in operation at Park Campus. Staff are reminded that different coloured bags are colour coded for different waste.

Red Bags	=	Glass
Orange Bags	=	Plastic
Green Bags	=	Paper
Black Bags	=	General waste

Avenue Campus has a green bag initiative which has been well received. All coloured paper, card and booklets should be placed in these for recycling.

*Car Parking

The group feel the College would benefit from issuing guidelines on good practice to all students. When the main students' car park at Park Campus is full, students have been invited to use the facility at Kingsthorpe Upper School but many are declining despite the direct access route to College and new lighting.

The initial response to the car sharing scheme has proved disappointing. A database will be made available in the autumn term initially for the use of staff.

*Waste/Purchasing

The College has become a member of EMAGE (East Midlands Action Group for the Environment) and EAUC (Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges)

*Avenue Campus

A joint initiative is to be set up by the College representatives and members of St George's Residents group aimed at protecting and enhancing a wildlife area in the vicinity of the halls of residence building at Avenue Campus. Concern was also expressed about the newly installed speed ramps along St George's Avenue. Vehicle emissions are increasing as motorists reduce speed causing obvious problems for the environment. Discussion is to take place with the Borough Council.

Campus tours

The increase in the number of prospective students interested in visiting Nene has grown significantly from last year. As well as the September Open Day being the most successful to date, the amount of people coming to look around the campus is ever increasing. Speaking from first hand as the person who is largely responsible for campus tours, on average we have at least one party visiting the campus every day. The marketing department has recently extended the programme of tours up to December the 19th (no rest for the wicked!!) Coupled with this, a new campus trail guide, masterminded by Architecture lecturer Dominic Kramer has been produced and is now available from Top Lodge. This allows the reader to journey on their own tour of the campus provided with details on wildlife and historical background to the College. If you are asked about guided campus tours, they run daily at 2pm but should be prearranged by calling Ricky Butler on ext. 2484.

Ricky Butler

Nene in the News....

Keith Oates, Deputy Chairman of Marks and Spencer spoke at a Lunchtime Seminar at the Sunley Management Centre on October 9th. The occasion saw the opening of the newly refurbished Sir William Shapland Lecture Theatre. Seating up to eighty people the conference room has a fresh look boasting state of the art equipment including data projection facilities and a new PA system.

Business Times Oct 97

Dr Mike Lewis, of Psychology, was quoted on his research into the nature of spiritual experiences in an article on the appeal of the garden centre/superstore for a Sunday afternoon trip. Whilst Sunday churchgoing is in decline, one in two people, he says, still claim to have spiritual experiences. "They still think there is something other than the physical world. They say spiritual experiences can happen anywhere, but very often it's when they're surrounded by flowers or trees."

SHE magazine, October 1997

Nene student Patrick Ferns has won the Charles King Prize for construction. Patrick received the award for achieving the best results in a BSc Construction, Economics and Management degree. The award was presented by Mrs Claire King in memory of her late husband.

Chron & Echo 26/09/97

Nene has a new visiting professor in the Faculty of Applied Sciences. Professor Charlie Brooker has written and edited more than a dozen books tackling subjects as the clinical effectiveness of mental health nurses and health care at her majesty's prisons.

Times Higher Education Supplement 7/11/97

Nene in the News....

A green bus could be bought by Northamptonshire County Council to promote recycling. It is proposed that the bus will be used to provide general education for schools, the public and businesses acting as a focal point for raising awareness. Equipped with a variety of displays and interactive exhibits on waste management the proposed bus is a three year project expected to cost £450,000. The project is likely to be operated by Nene and managed by a steering group consisting of local authorities.

Chron & Echo 7/10/97

Over £1,000,000 of European money has been invested in the county from the European Social Fund to support local businesses. The project called MicroLink will provide this support through information technology and will be led by the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with its partners. This partnership includes Nene and the Sunley Management Centre

Business Times Oct 97

Nene College students Kate Featherstone and Tammy Carter have been awarded a £1,000 scholarship grant by hamburger giants McDonalds to go towards paying for their courses and fees. Kate and Tammy collected a certificate from British athletics team captain Roger Black and education under secretary Alan Howarth at a ceremony in London.

Chron & Echo 6/11/97

Environmental Seminar

On Wednesday 3rd December Nene held a seminar, in conjunction with Samuel Rose and the Forestry Commission on the restoration of mineral and landfill sites to woodland.

The seminar was sponsored by the Environmental Science department and included a formal address by some of the leading authorities in the field. Restoration to woodland is an area of growing importance and this event tackled topical issues such as forestry best practice, site suitability and based discussion around different case studies. These case studies were conducted by Nene's research students and centred on the local area.

Investors In People Award For Nene

On Friday 3rd October 1997 Nene was formally recognised as being an Investor in People. A plaque was presented by Mr John Thorpe, Chairman of Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Training & Enterprise to Air Marshal Sir John Sutton, Chairman of Nene's Board of Governors. This award indicates that Nene has achieved the National Standard for effective investment in the development of its employees.

Nene is only the fourth large Higher Education Institution to achieve this standard on a "whole organisation" basis. The assessment for the award was conducted by two representatives from the Investors in People network.



Andrew Castley (L) and Dr Daniel celebrate more informally after the presentation.

A written portfolio was submitted by the College and face to face interviews with 94 separate members of College staff formed the basis for assessment. The findings were detailed in a report and transferred verbally to the Director's Advisory Group. Dr Michael Daniel, Assistant Director (Academic Quality) commented on the report's findings. "Overall, the report is very complimentary to the College and particularly recognises what all staff of the institution have achieved during a period of tremendous change. There is, of course, still much to do, but this is a good start to ensuring that Nene continues to be a successful organisation on the basis of the quality and achievements of all its staff".

Partnership Grant Award

A Science-Education Partnership Grant has been awarded to Northampton High School in conjunction with Nene. A grant of £1,000 will be used for research by 6th formers into radon gas and a restoration of the environment project. The research conducted will be original and should lead to papers on both subject areas. The award is considered to be very prestigious in the education sector because very few schools in the country have their applications approved. Dr Paul Phillips of Commercial Services at Nene will be directing the research with his team of post graduates. Dr Phillips is also a member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and is involved at the highest level with similar schemes. Commenting on the award he stated that for Nene "It is a sign that we are active and vibrant in the local community and that we do care for academic things". The award was established by the Royal Society/Esso Science-Education Partnership Grants Scheme.

Dyslexia Support

Sheila Blankfield, Dyslexia Support Tutor would like staff to contact her if they are working with any student who is having difficulties that they suspect could be due to dyslexia. Sheila is a member of the WARBL (Widening Access - Removing Barriers to Learning) team within Student Services. She is establishing procedures for screening and assessing students who may be dyslexic and can provide advice and support to these students and the staff who work with them.

Sweden Sociology trip

Why are there no pubs in Sweden? And why, given the tranquil and sensible nature of the Swedes, do they become a frenzied and hysterical mass when watching the gentle national pastime of ice hockey? These were some of the urgent questions posed as we progressed through our fifth annual visit to University College, Sweden. With two colleagues from the Sociology department at Nene, I took ten undergraduates majoring in Sociology to the sleepy town of Jönköping where they would undertake their final year dissertation research into various aspects of Swedish society. The support provided by the tutors at HLK was first class. The students attended early morning lectures on various aspects of Swedish society. This gave them invaluable background information which formed a crucial backdrop for their research projects.

Unlike my two more experienced 'Swedophile' colleagues, I was visiting Sweden for the first time. I was overwhelmed by the hospitality of our hosts who invited us into their homes on several occasions and introduced me to 'haute cuisine' Swedish style! Next year, we will be joined by two new parties of students from Nene. A group of BA Sociology degree students will merge with students majoring in Education. We hope in time that this exodus of students from Northampton will be matched by tutors and students from HLK visiting Nene.

Michael Wyness, Sociology

World Mental Health Day

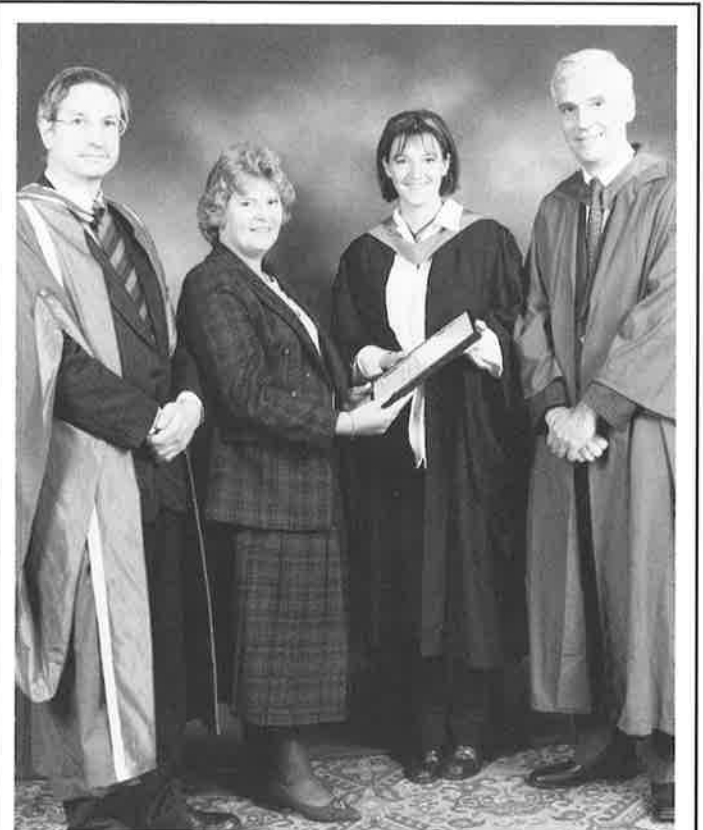
Ann Mitchell and Erneita Bhebhe of the Nene Centre for Healthcare Education were invited by Northampton and District Mind to give a lecture on Women and Mental Health. This was in aid of the sixth annual Sarah Gibbs Memorial Lecture as part of World Mental Health Day on 10 October. The lecture was given at the County Cricket Ground to Health and Social Services Managers, users of the Mind service, psychiatrists and local voluntary groups. The key theme was the over-representation of women in mental health statistics. Whether or not services are adequately meeting the needs of women is an area of research that Ann and Erneita are proposing to undertake. The topic and its presentation were very well received and a great deal of interest was expressed in the proposed study.

Ann Mitchell

On the same day, members of East Northants MIND launched 'Dovedale's Dreams', a book of poetry written entirely by sufferers from mental illness and carers. Thanks to a positive response from the people of Northamptonshire, 120 copies of the book were sold and a small profit was made. Launch organiser Michael Vaughan, a Sociology lecturer at Nene was pleased with the response. "People certainly feel that it has raised the profile of mental health. One of the abiding memories for me is a female student who looked at our leaflets. The relief from this student was almost audible - to find out there was somewhere she could go." Copies of 'Dovedale's Dreams', and more information about MIND are available from East Northants MIND Group, 'Dovedale', 1 Herne Park, East Road, Oundle, PE8 4BX. Tel (01832) 275020.

Congratulations to...

- The School of Technology and Design for winning accreditation from the British Computer Society for their Computer Engineering courses. All graduates from the programmes will now automatically gain graduate membership of the British Computer Society.
- Anne Longley, Personnel, on her appointment as Equal Opportunities Coordinator.
- Nene's SOLAR Centre on admitting its first group of 10 PhD students in September. The students come from as far afield as South Africa and primarily have a background in education and health care.
- Facilities and Estates for their commitment to environmental matters. The new travel and subsistence claim form now has an entry for bicycle mileage. At 3p/mile, you may well be on your last legs by the time you can claim for a new pair of brake blocks, but what a great idea!
- The BA Fashion course, whose students were invited to submit designs to Weetabix to promote their new 'Advantage' cereal which is soon to be promoted within health and fitness centres and national retail outlets. Three second year students, Beverley Halfhide, Sharon Kralj and Nikki Barron, won the top three prizes.



The BTEC Student of the Year, Joanne Horne, receiving her award from Yvonne Johns of BTEC with Nick Boule (far l) and Dave Hubbard (far r) of Technology and Design

STUDENT *News and Sport*

Architectural Award

Former HND Architectural Technology student Richard Torkington was awarded the Gotch, Saunders and Surridge Architectural Award for academic merit at the Awards Ceremony on 23 November. Richard gained four distinctions and four merits in the final year of his course and is now working as an Architectural Technologist in Bury St Edmunds. His final design project was to design a band practice room for the Moulton based '77' Brass Band who currently practice in the former Nationwide HQ and who wish to put in a lottery bid for bespoke practice space. This bid will include the designs and scale model prepared by Richard. Course leader Dominic Kramer commented. "I'm delighted to see two years of hard work rewarded. It's nice to know that a student has gained a qualification that has prepared him so well for the world of work."

Students Contribute to 21st Century Travel

Northampton's population and household formation has seen a steady increase of nearly ten times the national average in recent times. Northampton currently has a population of 188,000 and with present trends this is set to increase to circa 206,000 by 2006. The welcomed growth in population, however, has led to the obvious problem of road congestion. The Henley Centre for Research predicted that by the year 2000 road congestion in Northamptonshire will be "unacceptable". The proposed solution to this expanding difficulty is the Rapid Transport System - 21st century travel for Northamptonshire.

Rapid Transport International Plc were set up to provide a Rapid Transport System which can be up and running by the year 2000. This system hopes to provide a sustainable transport alternative to the private car in Northamptonshire. The vehicle used in the transport system is based on the latest low floor and gas powered technology. It will operate primarily on a segregated guide way but will also be able to run on the public highway adapting to the needs of Northampton. With low emissions and friendly passenger access, the vehicle looks to be the way ahead, boasting Real Time passenger information, electronic ticketing systems and quality park and ride locations.



The Proposed RTV Vehicle outside Northampton Business Park in Brackmills

As part of the consultancy team Nene has been involved with the project since its beginnings. After interviewing potential students from many other institutions, RTI asked two Nene students to design their brochure and promotional literature for the transport system. Adrian King and Robert Wilmot both studying BA Graphic Communications were selectively chosen and worked over a period of three months for RTI. Both have since graduated but still work part time when required for RTI designing newsletters and other promotional material.

Nene is indirectly involved in the project as well. One of the proposed routes for the transport system is called the 'Campus Corridor'. This option is set to run from Park Campus all the way into the town centre. According to Mr William Powell, a representative from RTI this is a long term proposal. "The campus corridor route is being looked at from a 20 year perspective. At the moment it is not a feasible option. We are firstly concentrating the core network and then we will go on from there."

The core network will run from Whitehills all the way down to Grange Park. This network is the first phase of the Rapid Transport System and has been approved by Northampton Rapid Transport Steering Group. Commenting on the system Alex Robinson, Chief Executive for RTI stated that "Our proposals will revolutionise public transport providing a high quality, modern, reliable system which will reduce the effects of future road congestion and directly contribute to the environmental quality of the urban area."

College Merchandise

A limited range of new College merchandise is finally on sale in the Students' Union. To date redesigned sweatshirts, polo shirts and College scarves are available to staff and students. The sweatshirts and polo shirts have been made in two colours; green and blue, each having their own embroidered Nene logo upon them. Other merchandise is currently in the pipeline. A College tie available both Satin and Reppe should be on sale by Christmas together with quality ball point pens and baseball caps. Any staff interested in purchasing any of the merchandise should contact Dave Cook in the Students' Union.

Access Funds

For the academic year 1996/97, £127,298 was received in Access Funds by Nene. 401 applications for awards were received and 292 awards made (1995/96, 473 applications were made for 292 awards). Some students were allocated additional funds due to general financial hardship or the need for extra expenses including childcare, travel, compassionate reasons and special resources for disability.

For the academic year 1998/99, the Access Fund, currently administrated by Student Services and assessed by an independent board, will be increased in the light of the greater number of students likely to be facing financial hardship due to the imposition of tuition fees. A discretionary loan of £250 will also be made available to students with particular difficulty.

Part-time work for students

Student Services have recently set up a Student Job Service to help students apply for part-time work. This centres around vacancies sent in by local employers. Vacancy boards are up in both Students' Unions, in Student Services at Park Campus and advertisements are placed in the student newspaper. If any staff are in need of part-time help, call Val or Roberta on ext. 2251.

Spectrum Press History Prize



History lecturer Matthew Seligmann (r) presenting David with his award.

The annual prize awarded for the best History dissertation, sponsored by Spectrum Press was won this year by David Magasiner for his analysis of Chamberlain's relationship with the press, entitled 'Who do you think you were kidding, Mr Chamberlain?: Appeasement, the Press and Public Opinion'. David looked at the notion that, in order to further his policy of appeasement, Chamberlain manipulated the press. He also assessed whether this manipulation had any marked effect on public opinion. At the presentation, David spoke of the huge amount of time and effort he had to put in to the project - "there were times" he said "when work almost went flying out of the window and times when you never want to do any more study ever again." He offered some advice to students undertaking their dissertation this year. "Do keep in touch with your dissertation tutor - they do on the whole know what they are talking about!"

ALUMNI News

Former Combined Honours (History) graduate Denise Poynter has been called upon by the government and Royal Army Medical Corps to undertake research into Gulf War Syndrome, whilst in the middle of her PhD at Luton. Denise was focusing her PhD on shell shock after the Second World War.

SPORT

Rugby 1st team v Nottingham Trent (29/10/97) Final score: 34 -18

On a day that displayed the first signs of winter Nene's Rugby First team faced a tough match against an in-form Nottingham Trent. Displaying their new green and white kit sponsored by JJ Gallagher, Nene ran out onto the frosty pitch looking determined to continue their good start to the season.

The first ten minutes of the match saw Nottingham Trent take the upper hand and pressurise well. With the run of play Trent scored first and converted their try quickly to take an early lead. However it didn't take long for Nene to stamp their renowned authority on the game and begin to pick up the pace. Within five minutes Nene had levelled the match and most of the play centred around Trent's half. The Nene forwards worked hard pushing their opponents into their own half and feeding the ball well to the backs. It came as no surprise that Nene followed this pressure with another try midway through the first half, securing their lead and dominance in the game.

The second half wasn't as electrically charged as the first, the flurry of tries which had been on display for the first 40 minutes simmered down. Nene still held possession well and worked the ball all round the pitch making it difficult for the opposition. The moment of the match came when Faulkner, running on from a pass, side stepped two players and easily placed the ball between the posts for a well deserved try. Bollard confidently guided the ball through the posts with a well converted kick.

A consolation try at the end of the match for Trent didn't take the shine off a solid performance from Nene. If this game is any indication of things to come, Nene should be gunning for promotion by the end of the season - a warning to any opponents who cross their path. Watch this space!



NEWS *in* BRIEF

- The Academic Study Group is offering 20 modest, individual, travel bursaries for academics who wish to study in Israel in 1998/99. The ASG is a British charitable foundation which promotes collaboration between British scholars and their Israeli academic counterparts. Priority will be given to first time visitors to Israel who have academic contacts there. Applications will be considered in March 1998. Further information is available from John D.A. Levy, 25 Lynsdale Avenue, London NW2 2QB Fax 0171 794 0291. email foi_asg@msn.com.
- Bucking the current received wisdom, national applications for 1997 entry undergraduate degrees in science increased by 16%. Conversely, applications for arts and humanities courses declined by 26%.
- Hugh Matthews and Melanie Limb have established the Centre for Children and Youth. The CCY is a multi-disciplinary research centre and has attracted membership from across the College. The CCY has been recognised and endorsed by the National Youth Agency, who are collaborating with Hugh and Melanie in a proposal to the ESRC's 'Youth, citizenship and social change programme'.
- The Communications officer of the Students' Union has resigned from her full time post. Rebecca Wise was primarily responsible for the redesign and launching of the new SU Paper - Phenomenene. The position is hoped to be filled in the near future.
- A plumb job was advertised in the THES last month. The Research Fellowship in "Intelligent Modelling of Brake Squeal" was brought to you courtesy of the University of Southampton.
- Alternatively, you could throw your hat into the ring for an 'Educational Scholarship in the Rough Diamond Industry'. Applicants should have reached their 13th birthday on or before 1 September 1998.
- All 10,000 copies of the 1997 entry part-time prospectus have now been distributed to local outlets. The 1998 entry part-time prospectus will out in early Spring. The 1995/96 Research Report has now been printed. Copies are available from the Nene Centre for Research. The 1997/98 College Calendar has been circulated. Anyone who has not received a copy can contact Lisa or Ros in Marketing on ext. 2017.
- Ken Bland, Education, is organising the Geographical Association's Annual Conference for 1998.
- The fifth Northamptonshire Banking Lecture, arranged by Allan Bowers of Management and Business, was successfully held at Nene on 18 November. The Lecture covered 'European Monetary Union and its impact on Banking and Finance'.
- ...and finally, the prize for the most gripping headline goes to 'Cutting Edge', the research journal of the British School of Leather Technology for 'Enzymic removal of dung from animal hides and skins'.

What's on

- '1998 - A Fresh Start : Positive Steps to Coping with Stress', is being organised by Student Services' Jo Lester and Caroline Beaumont from January 19.



Letters

I was interested to read Daniel Beames' 'Where do Staff Come from' (Nene News, Issue 38) observing how some 60% of academic staff at Nene College now live outside Northamptonshire. In some ways, this may be a good thing. In terms of population expansion, Northamptonshire is one of the most rapidly growing counties in Britain, so having staff live outside Northamptonshire is one way of preventing the county from growing too quickly. It would be interesting to see which counties staff actually commute from - at Nene, they must have quite a wide choice, given that Northamptonshire has borders with quite a few other English counties (and indeed, prior to 1974, held the record for having borders with more other counties than any other English county). In view of all these counties that border on to Northamptonshire, one might feel that we could advertise this choice of county of residence to do our piece to prevent over-expansion. Unfortunately, there is a snag. Two of the counties that border on to Northamptonshire are Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire - the two counties which, a couple of years ago, were reckoned to be the only two counties growing even more rapidly than Northamptonshire.

Anthony Edwards, Psychology

NENE News

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