Kingston University Alumni

July 2014
Kingston University alumni newsletter
www.kingston.ac.uk/alumni

Alumnews

A message from Kingston

As I write this message, Kingston upon Thames looks stunning. New cafes and restaurants are opening up along the waterfront, and staff and students are enjoying a drink, snack or ice cream down by the river. Do you remember that wonderful period after exams? Why not come back for a trip down memory lane? We'd love to see you.

You may also remember that we sent out a survey with the last issue of *Kingston* magazine in January – both hard copy and online versions – asking for your views on the magazine and whether it was meeting your needs. A big thank you to all those who responded: your feedback has been really useful in helping us understand how we might better communicate with you and how you want to be involved with Kingston University in the future.

We have decided to produce a short newsletter this summer – instead of a full magazine – while we analyse the survey findings and review our range of communications. We want to ensure we keep in touch in a way that suits you best. If you have any further thoughts, please email me.

A few things you told us:

- You like hearing about your fellow alumni.
- You're interested in University news and new buildings.
- Most importantly, you want to know more about the support the University offers its alumni and how we can help each other.

This short newsletter touches on each of these areas. Remember that you can always find out more at www.kingston.ac.uk/alumni. And, if you haven't already done so, please do sign up for our regular email newsletters.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Helen Trott, Head of Development,
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Community welcomes plans for landmark building

The local community, staff and students have welcomed the University's plans to replace the old Town House building (pictured, top right) at our Penrhyn Road campus with a new £55million landmark building.

The current Town House is a temporary building that was built in the 1980s to provide additional teaching facilities. Its replacement is long overdue, and we have now commissioned the award-winning Grafton Architects, through a Royal Institute of British Architects competition, to design an innovative, exciting building befitting Kingston's reputation for excellent teaching.

The new building will transform the ways people learn and how the University interacts with our wider community. It will also be the University's most sustainable development to date, reflecting our commitment to being environmentally conscious. Our plans also include landscaping the front of the campus along Penrhyn Road.

Subject to planning permission, construction is likely to begin in late 2015, with completion in 2017.

Grafton Architects' impression of the proposed new building (and image bottom right).

The new building will enhance the visual image of Kingston as well as providing an exciting and stimulating educational and civic environment.

Lebara mobile and Kingston: Partners in enterprise

The multi-award-winning Lebara Group is a global mobile telecoms network operator. Named after its three founders – **Le**on R Ranjith, **Ba**skaran Kandiah and Kingston alumnus **Ra**theesan Yoganathan (Aerospace Engineering, 1999) – Lebara's mission is to make it easier for migrant communities to stay in touch with friends and family all over the world. Its ambitious vision is to be the brand of choice for one billion around the world by 2020.

Kingston University and Lebara are working together to nurture entrepreneurship and enterprise in the UK. During the past three years, the Lebara Seed Fund has provided small grants to more than 50 talented Kingston entrepreneurs, enabling web and app developers to achieve their MVP (minimum viable product); filmmakers and freelancers to buy vital tools and equipment; product designers and inventors to work up prototypes; and service developers to run smallscale trials.

Lebara has now committed £30,000 over the next three years to enable some of Kingston University's most promising entrepreneurs to pitch for bigger investment opportunities. The funding will support entrepreneurs like Neomi Bennett, whose Neoslip products, which help to apply anti-embolism stockings, are now being sold worldwide; and Tom Harrington, whose online estate agency WeSold now employs six full-time staff. This is a great vote of confidence in Kingston enterprise.

"Investing in young people and their future is hugely important to me," said Ratheesan. "We need to support entrepreneurs, as it is only through them that the economy can continue to recover and grow into the future. We have a responsibility to nurture and help young people as they begin their working life, and encourage them to realise their full potential. I am honoured to be able to help give back to the talented entrepreneurs and students at Kingston University."

Take your business to another level...

- Kingston University is home to a wealth of knowledge, resources and expertise.
- Our services for business include consultancy, research, knowledge transfer and access to grants and funding.
- We offer continuing professional development through a range of short and long-term courses, bespoke training and flexible learning options.

Contact us now to find out how we can help your organisation.

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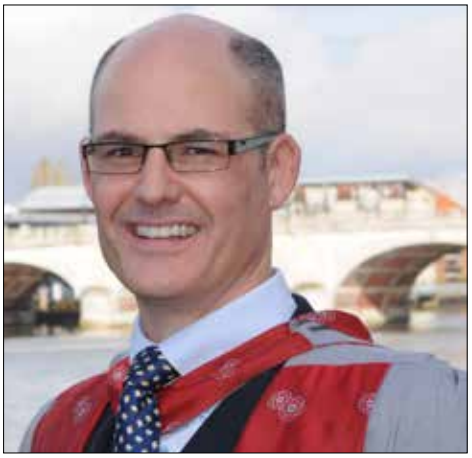

Bioscience Teacher of the Year

Dr Nick Freestone has been named the Society of Biology's Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year.

Nick, who is course director for undergraduate pharmaceutical science at Kingston University, collected his award at the 2014 Heads of University Biosciences (HUBS) spring meeting earlier this year. The judges were impressed with Nick's commitment to placing students at the heart of teaching and providing them with high-quality feedback.

Nick's passion for ensuring his students get the best out of their time at university stems from his own experiences. "I was the first in my family to attend university and remember how it felt not knowing how the system worked," he said.

The award is the latest in a run of recent accolades for Nick. Last year, he was named the University's most engaging lecturer. This year, he became a senior fellow and academic associate of the Higher Education Academy, and a fellow of the Society of Biology.

The Hogsmill revival

The Hogsmill river, alongside the Knights Park campus, is being revitalised as a haven for wildlife, thanks to a project involving Kingston University, South East Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency. Alumni donations to the Opportunities Fund have helped to partially fund this project.

Kingston students and staff have a close connection with the river. Artists and designers have taken creative inspiration from it; science students have monitored its flow as part of their coursework; and volunteers have removed litter and invasive plants, and monitored eels for the Zoological Society of London. Sadly, the river today offers little in the way of habitat.

The Hogsmill, after some tlc!

The river has been heavily engineered in the past, is flanked by concrete and lacks a natural meandering form. Now, with the help of a team of volunteers who have been staking timber into the riverbed to create a new riverbank, and new plants being added to the bankside, the Hogsmill will once again become a home for our local wildlife and a sight to admire for those who live, study and work nearby.

Classmates: where are they now?

We catch up with four of our alumni, living overseas, to find out what has shaped their lives and what they've been doing since graduating from Kingston.

Sherry Weir, Information Systems, 2002

Sherry started out as a US Marine, receiving her initial information technology education during her six years of military service. After the military, she worked at Northern Virginia Community College, where she installed their first computer lab. Stints with Sperry Corporation, which became Unisys – a Silicon Valley start-up – and consultancy work followed before Sherry joined her current employer, Kearney & Company.

"I decided to go back to studying because my British friends were starting their Information Systems MSc at Kingston, so I just followed suit," said Sherry, who studied part time for her masters, returning to the US between blocks of work. "The style of study was very different to the USA: more-progressive ideas and greater emphasis on group work. It was a great programme. The hardest part was finding A4 paper in the USA!"

Now a partner at Kearney & Co., Sherry directs their financial management and information systems consulting business within the departments of the treasury and veterans' affairs. "I believe this is entirely due to the knowledge and international perspective I gained at Kingston. And it was lots of fun too!" added Sherry, who is so proud of her Kingston MSc in Information Systems that she has her degree certificate displayed on her office wall.

Michael Officer, Applied Social Science, 1988

Born to Jamaican parents, Michael grew up in Battersea with his identical twin brother and his sister. The family didn't have much money and could afford few luxuries.

Michael didn't do well at school and, at 16, his careers teachers told him he should train as an apprentice butcher. "I was written off," he said. But this was the moment his determination to succeed started to emerge. Michael enrolled for an A-level in politics at the local college and taught himself sociology and law in four months. "Against the odds, I passed them all and passed them well, giving me the grades to study social science at Kingston.

"I received great support from my tutors at Kingston. I remember Trevor Sheldon giving me one-to-one coaching in maths and statistics at home to help me through my exams."

On graduating, Michael moved to the USA, securing work as a lobbyist in Washington DC within two days of his arrival. His career has focused on US employment policy, lobbying for funding to implement programmes that change the lives of the poor. He is now director at ResCare Workforce Services.

"I know what it is to be poor; without skills and hope," Michael said. "I am passionate about providing counselling, training and job opportunities to help the unemployed into the workplace."

Ian Garlant, Fashion, 1985

Ian was born in London to an English father and Norwegian mother. After childhood years growing up on the edge of Hardanger Fjord, in south-west Norway, Ian was awarded a fine art scholarship to Marlborough College in south-west England before studying fashion at Kingston University.

"The pressure on the course was intense: the deadlines were tight and critiques from both sponsors and tutors were tough; but great training for everyday life in the fashion industry," Ian said. "Kingston was known for turning out hardworking, professional employees."

At Kingston, Ian was introduced to fashion designer Hardy Amies and spent his holidays working for him.

After graduating, Ian went to New York, later returning to work in Savile Row; and, in 1989, he became assistant to Amies in the company of the same name. Following Amies' death in 2003, Ian became the company's creative director.

Ian's career has taken him all over the world, introducing him to a wide range of cultures and environments. However, it is to the mountains and fjords of Norway that he has returned, to pursue his primary vocation as an artist.

Georgina Baker, Mechanical Engineering, 1984

When Georgina arrived at Kingston, she was one of only three women in a class of 100 studying engineering. "Initially, I felt I missed out on the real university experience," she said. "I didn't make very close friends with the girls on my course or in halls (Clayhill), and friendships with boys just aren't the same!"

When the chance of an industrial placement in France with Compagnie Industrielle de Montage (CIM) came up, Georgina jumped at it. "This international work experience during my time at Kingston provided the springboard for the rest of my career," she said.

After graduation, Georgina took a job as an engineer in Jakarta with a subcontractor of CIM for two years. Returning to the UK, she worked at Sellafield, where she was the only woman on site.

Following the completion of an MBA at London Business School, Georgina joined the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector arm of the World Bank Group. Twenty-three years later, Georgina is now IFC's global head of trade and supply chain solutions.

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Get discounts from our gym and libraries or **hire** a campus venue

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GIVE SOMETHING BACK...

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Make a **donation**

Offer students **work** experience **opportunities**, placements or jobs

Advise students by joining the Ask Kingston Alumni (AKA) group on LinkedIn

Mentor a student

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