


# Essex:Effect

Issue 2

The magazine for the alumni and friends of the University of Essex



Essex at the elections:  
the man with the  
electoral crystal ball



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# Welcome to *Essex:Effect*, the magazine for Essex alumni

2010 is shaping up to be a very significant year for the University and, although the higher education sector faces a very uncertain public funding environment, Essex remains steadfastly resilient.

This edition of *Essex:Effect* gives you just a flavour of the contribution our academics, students and alumni have made the world over in the past twelve months.

We were particularly proud of the award of a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Essex's pioneering role in advancing the legal and broader practice of international human rights. This well-deserved recognition of our world-renowned Human Rights Centre shows how far Essex has come in its relatively short, but nevertheless almost 50-year history. Our four new Global Challenges projects, focusing our research on major issues faced by humanity, give us every prospect of further success into the future. You can read more about the Queen's Anniversary Prize and our Global Challenges on page 6 and 14 respectively.

The newly launched alumni website, *Essex:Connect*, is bringing together our network of over 60,000 graduates from all over the world. Turn to page 16 to find out how you can stay connected with the University and your fellow alumni.

I do hope you enjoy this edition of *Essex:Effect*. The Development and Alumni Relations team always welcomes feedback from Essex graduates, so please do let them know what you think of the magazine and *Essex:Connect*.

Finally, please take the time to keep us updated with your contact details and achievements since leaving Essex. The easiest way to do this is via *Essex:Connect* or by contacting the Development and Alumni Relations Office directly.

Many thanks for your continued support.



Professor Colin Riordan  
Vice-Chancellor



## Essex has jumped into the UK's top 20 universities for offering the best all-round student experience

The University climbed 25 places to 15th in the *Times Higher Education (THE)* survey, published in January, which collected the views of more than 11,000 full-time undergraduates.



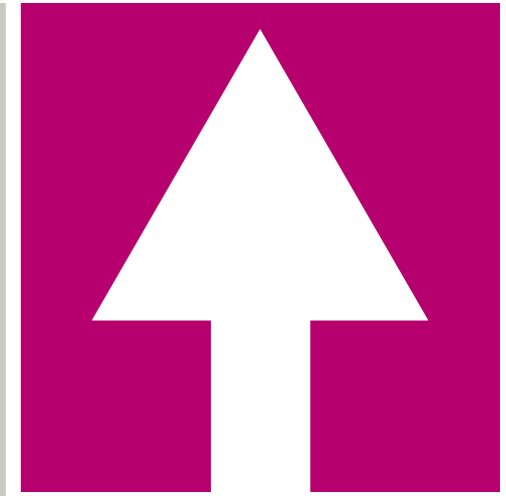
Essex scored strongly for its high-quality and helpful staff, good community atmosphere and campus environment, well-structured courses and good extracurricular activities.

The University was shortlisted in October's *THE* awards for most improved student experience, featuring in the top four highest climbers. Students themselves chose the categories which were most important to the overall student experience.

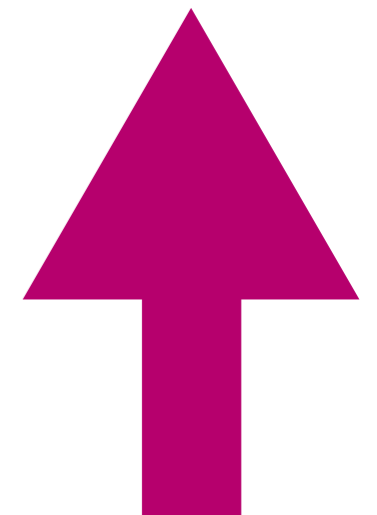
Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan said: "The University has grown significantly in recent years and we have recognised the

need to improve student facilities as well as maintaining our emphasis on high-quality teaching, informed by our research, and flexible degree structures.

"To achieve this ranking is a tribute to the hard work of our staff and our close relationship with the Students' Union. Students' Union venues have been completely transformed, and our multi-million pound investment programme is already delivering improvements to teaching and learning space, student accommodation and sports facilities."



The University's Students' Union was awarded the prestigious Investors in People Gold Award, in recognition of its first class people management.





Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan receives the award from the Queen



The Vice-Chancellor was joined by Human Rights Centre staff and students for the medal presentation at Buckingham Palace

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The Queen’s Anniversary Prize Award is a serious award. It has had a huge boost in terms of morale on both the staff and students involved as well as the University as a whole. We had the Queen’s Award for Enterprise for five years before it ran out this year. This one will seamlessly take over.

Professor Colin Riordan, Vice-Chancellor

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# How Essex won the Royal stamp of approval

As Professor John Packer and Vice-Chancellor Colin Riordan accepted the Queen’s Anniversary Prize Award for “world-class achievement and excellence” in human rights earlier this year, John tells how his thoughts were elsewhere.

“I was thinking of Essex’s achievements in human rights over the last 25 years, of all the committed staff who work passionately in this area and of our 1,500 students and alumni, from more than 100 countries, who have gone on to do such amazing things.

And I was thinking how important it was that human rights had been afforded such legitimacy – you can’t get further than the Queen and Buckingham Palace, in terms of establishment.”

Today, though, Professor Packer is looking forward rather than back. He remains proud of Essex’s successes, the longest-established and market-leading postgraduate degree in international human rights law in the world, the first inter-disciplinary masters degree in human rights, the first undergraduate programme and a new PhD.

And yes, there’s all those students excelling at the United Nations, at organisations like Amnesty International and in the world’s most challenging conflict zones.

Equally, there’s justifiable pride in the University’s multi-disciplinary human rights teaching programme and research, and in the team of academic human rights lawyers, philosophers, political theorists, sociologists and others who feed the Human Rights Centre with their expertise.

“But,” stresses Professor Packer, who is the Centre’s Director, “the Queen’s Prize Trust made it clear that this was an award... not a reward. Yes, it’s a recognition of achievement - but it’s mainly a stimulus for future activity. I see so many things that we can do better. Maintaining, let alone improving, our reputation will be hard at this time of funding cuts and intensifying competition, but there are real opportunities for us to build something very special here.”

Professor Todd Landman agrees. Building is currently one of his priorities – and one building in particular; the University’s proposed, 30,000sq ft flagship Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution. The Institute, due for completion by 2014, will form the heart of Essex’s new Knowledge Gateway, which will extend the University’s engagement with organisations working for the achievement of rights worldwide.

“The University has wanted a research park for many years,” says Professor Landman, the Institute’s Director. “This one though, will be unique.”

There are 77 university research parks in the UK, in sectors like bio-tech, dot-com, and pharmaceuticals. “But we excel in social

science, with top-rated Government, Economics and Sociology research arms. We already have the Institute for Social and Economic Research and the Human Rights Centre. It makes sense to do what we’re good at. If you want democracy research or statistical analysis, this will be the place to come.

“The Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution will also provide a portal for sharing and accessing knowledge and offer a variety of services, products and commercial opportunities that will become self-financing over the mid to long term. We know there is a demand for this service which will be of interest to practitioners and scholars in academia, inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations and businesses working on issues such as terrorism, degradation of natural resources and climate change.

The Institute has already established partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Our work with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy concentrates on parliamentary strengthening in new democracies in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. We are also part of the Network of Democracy Research Institutes hosted by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC.

“The idea is to create an iconic building that puts Essex – visually - on the map. The park

will also boast a major tenant and spin-out companies drawing on the many research strengths of the University. Working with regional and local authorities, businesses, the international community and our alumni group, we want to create something that hasn’t been done before,” adds Professor Landman. “It will be a home for projects and knowledge transfer activities – a bridge to the worldwide community.”

One thing it certainly will not be is an ivory tower; that is not the way Essex engages with the world.

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In terms of human rights, we are talking about changing things. Human rights are a reaction to injustice – often described as a shield against abuse of power, so it has this active and activist aspect to it. It is not just passively observing – it’s actively affecting. Law, similarly, does not exist for itself. It exists for a purpose – to help us organise and do things better. Ultimately, human rights are central to social justice.

Professor John Packer, Director, Human Rights Centre

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We attract committed, very passionate students right from the word go. With the help of scholarships, they come from everywhere – from the former Soviet Union, Palestine and Mongolia. Human rights students here can now go from the sixth form right through to a PhD.

Professor Todd Landman, Director, Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution

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# The man with the electoral crystal ball

David Cameron has never met Professor Paul Whiteley but probably wishes he had. It would certainly have given him a lot more insight to prepare for the intricacies of his new job.



Professor Whiteley is not the only person to have forecast a hung parliament in the 2010 General Election, of course. He just did it a bit earlier than anybody else, that's all. Four years earlier, to be exact.

He laughs. "Yes, I did predict it, in a book published in 2006. I was discussing the Liberal Democrats' prospects and studied the results of the 2005 election as well as some

of our University of Essex surveys. It was quite clear - the data showed a real prospect of a hung parliament.

"I'm not a gambling man but one of my colleagues persuaded me to have a flutter on it - I won the princely sum of £50." Professor Whiteley is certainly not your commonplace pundit. As a respected figure in Essex's Department of Government and

co-director of the British Election Study (BES), he knows a thing or two about the political scene. In his own words: 'I'm an election anorak - in fact, I can't wait for the next one!'

The BES, funded by the independent Economic and Social Research Council and conducted at every general election since 1964, examines long-term voting trends while

trying to explain election outcomes, party choice and turnout levels, as well as studying the consequences of elections on democracy in Britain.

Essex is the only university other than Oxford, to have conducted the British Election Study, and has won the right to run the study for the past three elections.

As for 2010, says Professor Whiteley, "every so often there's what's called a 'realigning election'. It changes things in a fundamental way - for example, 1979, when Mrs Thatcher won a large majority, and 1997, when New Labour and Tony Blair were elected. I think this is also one of them."

The BES is based on samples and questionnaires with different modes, says Professor Whiteley, such as face-to-face interviewing of a random probability sample of the British electorate.

"We do this before the election is conducted, with 2,000 respondents from all over the country, and then again afterwards. Increasingly, though, we've migrated to the internet. This has advantages, particularly for campaign studies when you want to find out

what is happening in a short period of time. We were doing surveys every day during the election campaign, picking up people's reactions to things immediately - like the leaders' debates, which had a significant effect."

In the 1960s it was widely believed that British electoral politics was built on social class, with the middle class voting Conservative and the working class Labour. Early election studies, though, showed this was an oversimplification. Today, there are a range of models examining people's motivations, revealing that electoral choice is based on a much wider range of factors.

"We're discovering new things about why people vote the way they do all the time," says Professor Whiteley. "The biggest component of what we do is the 'Continuous Monitoring Survey', which is carried out monthly between elections. It can be very revealing. We caught for instance, a big change in people's perceptions when Northern Rock first got into trouble."

Over the years, he estimates, the BES has talked to around 80,000 people, providing sophisticated data to researchers and election

experts, decision-makers, party activists and journalists.

During this year's election, Professor Whiteley was contacted by media from all over the world. But he says: "It's hard to measure the study's exact influence. If I go to a reception in the Palace of Westminster though, MPs do come up and discuss it. And we were told during this election not to release our results until after the campaign, in keeping with the Civil Service rule of 'purdah'. That may seem ludicrous but it does suggest what we do is significant!"

Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen, a Labour peer since 2000, knows all about the BES, having studied politics at the University of Essex. She is also fascinated by what is unfolding.

"I've only served in the Lords under a Labour administration so it will be very interesting to see how things change. I don't know how the coalition will fare but for me, one of the strengths of the House of Lords is that we can work together across party lines. I hope that continues."

“Our main aim in the Lords is to look at legislation and improve it, irrespective of which government is in power. We do that quite often by working together behind the scenes... Most people don't have a clue what the Lords do, they think we sit there snoozing in our ermine. But they really like it when you explain. They don't like the 'ya boo sucks to you' atmosphere of the Commons.”

Baroness Gibson, BA Government, 1976



“How the coalition will work is an open question but it has shifted politics in a new direction. Nick Clegg talks about a 'Big Bang' approach to constitutional reform. If that happens, it is going to change the electoral system, parliament and the way the country's governed. It's fascinating.”

Professor Whiteley, Department of Government



# Cutting-edge research – it's in our blood...



It's a delicious irony. Professor Chris Cooper has forgotten his blood type. Still, if the cutting-edge work that he and his colleagues are currently undertaking on blood substitutes at the University of Essex's Department of Biological Sciences proves successful, there will be no need for Cooper – nor indeed anyone else – to remember their blood type or donor card ever again.

The team has a patent pending after making a breakthrough on the long road to creating artificial blood. Mimicking the capacity of human blood to carry oxygen around the body has frustrated the world's scientists for decades, Professor Cooper explains "Oxygen is carried around by haemoglobin, a protein within our blood cells. But outside the protective environment of the red cell, haemoglobin can be toxic.

"So the basic science we've addressed is 'what is the chemistry of this molecule and can we modify it to be less toxic?' We've produced engineered haemoglobin which suggests the answer is yes. But it's very early days. Whether this is the final solution or whether we'll end up modifying molecules differently we don't know."

The research, however, can only be good for the University.

"When I arrived at Essex two years ago I said our research reputation was our most precious asset," says Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan. "That's just as true now."

Essex was placed in the top ten UK universities for the quality of its research in the latest Research Assessment Exercise, Professor Riordan explains. "We were originally set up as a research-intensive university. It's central to our identity and success. I believe that university research and teaching are two sides of the same coin.

"Research makes us distinctive as a higher education institution – this is where the knowledge is created and where it is disseminated, through knowledge transfer, commercial research, and through our students. Our purpose is to expand and deepen the fund of human knowledge and pass on the benefits."

Month by month, ground-breaking research from all of Essex's departments makes headlines, whether in gene regulation, hearing aid technology, how the economic crisis is affecting personal incomes or robotics.

Professor Cooper's team have had their own headlines. Blood, after all, is big business. More than 75 million units are donated annually for use in hospitals across the world. There are, however, major problems with its supply, explains Professor Cooper. "Blood can be infected by viruses, it can only be stored in a fridge for 30 days and it must match the recipient's blood," he says. "A successful blood substitute would be guaranteed virus free, could be stored forever and would be universal and not need blood-typing."

How exciting could this research prove? "Well," says Dr Paul Thomas, one of the University's business development managers and whose job is to assess the commercial potential of such research, "the global market for whole blood and products derived from it is around \$50 billion a year - and growing.

"That almost certainly represents quite a few millions of dollars as an opportunity. This project is one of only a handful each year here which reaches the patent stage.

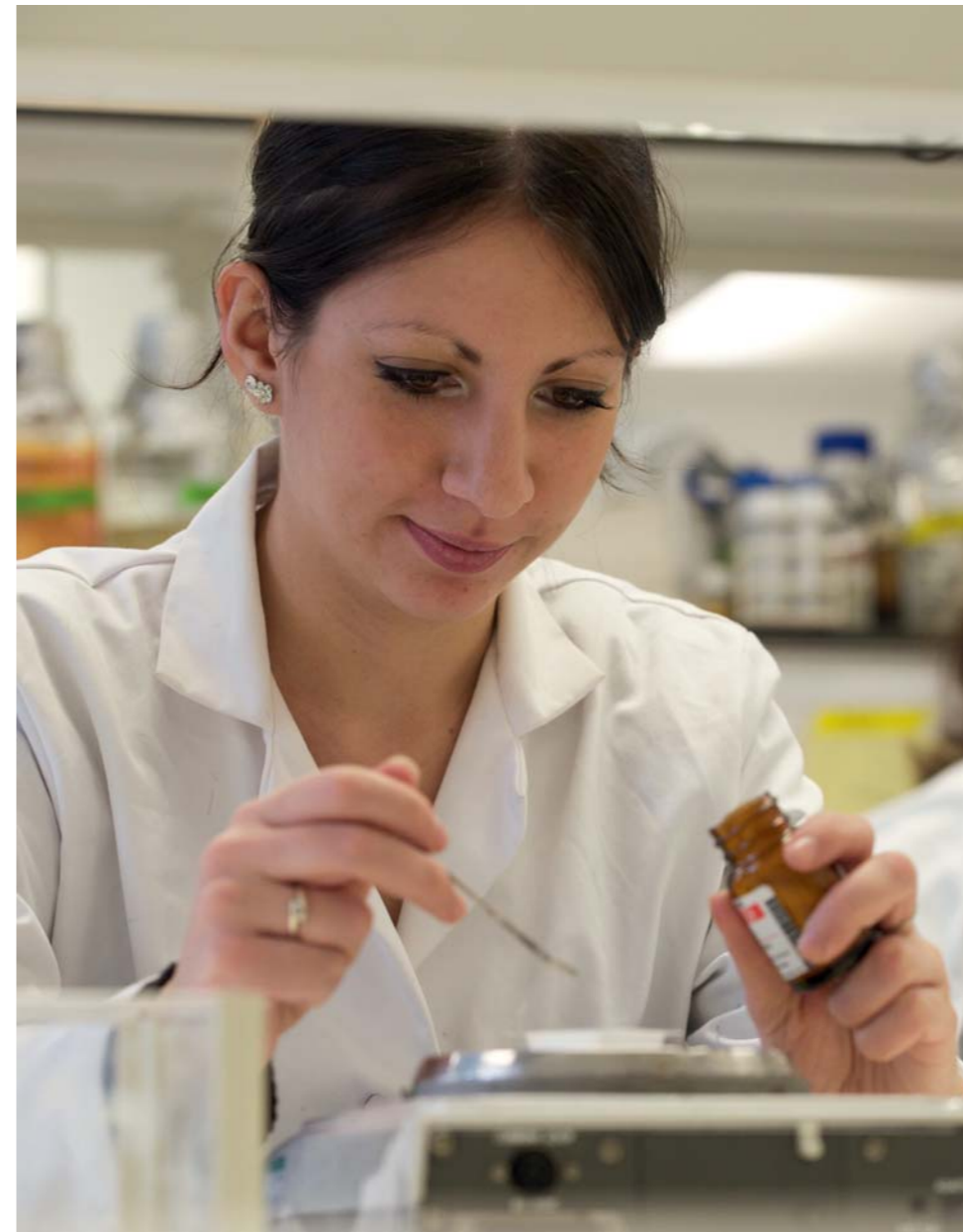
"My mission now is to find some big money to take this to the next stage. Several companies have tried and failed to deliver safe and effective blood substitute concepts so far, so this is quite a challenge.

"Even small sums can have a significant effect, of course, while a couple of million would boost the project from something which is bumping along, drip-fed by grants, to the next level."

As for Professor Cooper, well, it's time to end the interview.

He discusses his first interest in science and talks about the 'eureka moment' in the blood substitute project – apparently it happened when his colleagues Mike Wilson and Brandon Reeder were chatting on a train to London.

But you can tell he'd rather get back to some serious thinking – "I never turn off, I don't want to turn off, scientific discovery is exciting and you can have an idea at any stage, even when you're brushing your teeth."



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My mission now is to find some big money to take this to the next stage. Several companies have tried and failed to deliver safe and effective blood substitute concepts so far, so this is quite a challenge.

Dr Paul Thomas

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If our idea works it will be great, it will save lives, it will be wonderful. But that is what we are trying to do all the time. Scientific discovery is exciting. When you are younger you just want to discover something new. Later, you would like to make a difference.

Professor Chris Cooper,  
Department of Biological Sciences

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# Living the dream

## (with a little help from our friends!)

What does £5,000 mean to most of us? An exotic holiday? A down payment on a new car? A kitchen refit?

To Anasol Pena, it means living her dream. To Jose Luis Machecha-Groot, it means shedding tears of joy. And to Wendy Clifton-Sprigg, well, that sort of money means helping to transform someone's life... "and that's a great thing to be able to do."

As the University of Essex's Deputy Academic Registrar, Wendy helps administer several graduate scholarships. "The institution's perspective is that scholarship funding is critical, particularly in the postgraduate market, and increasingly so as students incur costs to do their first degree."

"We want talented postgraduates to be able to afford to come. Scholarships enable students who wouldn't otherwise be able to pursue their studies to join us. We can say: "Come to Essex, we want the best here, we have a fantastic research environment and we can provide support. In turn, that benefits our academic departments, as excellent postgraduates and early-career researchers join the research community."

Anasol and Jose Luis are both recipients of Santander scholarships. The Spanish banking group is supporting 15 students over three years from Ibero-American countries to study at postgraduate level at Essex. The scholarships, worth £5,000, form part of a broader Santander commitment to donate £180,000 over three years to the University,

including £45,000 for travel bursaries for staff and students visiting universities overseas.

Anasol, a 27-year-old from Mexico, is studying advanced web engineering. She can still remember when the e-mail from Essex landed in her inbox. "I knew what it was before opening it," she smiles. "I was excited and terrified at the same time. Without the funding, I couldn't have come. I was working as a security auditor in a bank and had been saving for four years. I would have had to save for another two to reach my target."

"When I was accepted, I phoned everyone immediately – my family, my boyfriend. It was amazing. It was my dream to come here and I'm now living it."

Jose Luis, from Colombia, is taking a Masters degree in Finance and Investment. "I was planning to come with a loan rather than a scholarship," he recalls. "But when I applied for a visa the embassy said that I didn't have the funds necessary."

"The very next day, I heard I'd been awarded a Santander scholarship. I actually cried! I hadn't been expecting it. The paperwork was sent immediately, I went back to the embassy in Bogota and two days later I had the visa in my passport."

"It's taken all the pressure off and made me free to make the best of myself. The fees are very expensive for us, and there's no guarantee of a good job later, but the best investment is to study."

"Life's changed and it's great. It was my aunt, my mother's sister, who first urged me to go to university. I feel very lucky. I hope to do the same one day – help someone to get to university. It's so important." The award of scholarships, says Wendy, is based on various criteria, with academic potential and some evidence of need normally considered before admitting departments put an application forward to a central scholarship scheme or decide to fund applicants locally.

Support comes in all shapes and sizes including your fellow alumni, via the University's Alumni Fund – there's even a group of alumni in the United States who have contributed to a scholarship fund established by the American Friends of the University of Essex.

One of the most recent is the Silberrad Scholarship, established in 2008 following a legacy in excess of £2 million made by John Silberrad, a barrister who lived in Loughton, Essex.

The fund is for home/EU students, who came to Essex for their first degree or Masters and who became so enthused that they wanted to continue doing a research degree.

"It's a pleasure to be able to say: 'You can stay here and continue to work with us', says Wendy. Yes, you do get the feeling that you are helping to change the course of someone's life. Such support is key - indeed, scholarship funding is going to become more and more important."

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To say that being in a position to further my education is a gift is meant in the literal sense – it is exactly that – a gift, and something that I am deeply appreciative of.

Amanda Wilkinson, PhD History, Silberrad Scholarship recipient

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The support of our alumni is making a real difference to the University's students today. Thanks to the continued generosity of our alumni, the Alumni Fund is able to support a number of projects and initiatives across the University from scholarships and bursaries to sports equipment and community volunteering activities.

Joanne Rogers, Alumni Giving Manager

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“ Scholarships have a transformative effect on students, their studies and their lives. For many, it's the difference between attending or not attending university. It's increasingly becoming a financial burden, which is why it's so important that previous generations support the next generation. In many ways, we were very privileged. The world has changed and they really need our help.

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Professor Colin Riordan, Vice-Chancellor

# Essex's Global Challenges



The Global Challenges programme was introduced by Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan, as part of the University's Vision for 2008-2013, and includes four projects which address issues of worldwide significance. The aim is to develop substantial multi-disciplinary projects with the potential for international collaboration, which showcase Essex's research strengths and have a strong focus on leveraging external grant funding.

Each of the four projects received initial funding of £50,000 from the University and match-funding is expected to be available to support them as they begin to win external funding. The Global Challenge projects are:

## Constructing a new global socio-economic and political order

Catastrophic flooding in Burma, oil at \$150 a barrel, the destruction of the world's forests, a near doubling of the price of rice – just some of the crises that scientists and policy makers have failed to address in a coherent and integrated way.

That's according to the team behind this Global Challenges project, which aims to establish a research programme into the political and social conditions that could help

achieve sustainable economic growth at a local, national and global level.

The project aims to take a more joined-up approach to major global issues such as climate change, the price of oil, food crises and the critical pressures on land use and water. The research team believes that a failure to address the links between these individual crises is potentially more serious than the impact of any of them individually.

As well as the team from Essex, colleagues from the University of Manchester and the Bio-Science for Business Knowledge Transfer Network are also involved in the project.

## Finding answers to global threats

Growing populations, changing consumption patterns, depleted natural resources and

climate change now pose unprecedented challenges to humanity.

Experts from the interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES) plan to analyse the risks and develop solutions to address them. Drawing on the unique mix of experts at Essex, the iCES project will examine rural and urban communities around the world that, despite the emerging global threats, are finding ways to increase resilience and promote the sustainable use of resources.

A key objective of the research will be to analyse the factors that facilitate or hinder the transition to sustainable living. The project, for which a range of external UK and EU funding agencies will be targeted, will contribute to regeneration agendas and lead to a flagship programme of research.



## Transitions to peace and prosperity

The challenge of helping countries in their transition from violent conflict and repression to peace and prosperity is at the heart of the multi-disciplinary project on transitional justice.

The project team recognises the need to go beyond recognised criminal justice processes, such as prosecution of perpetrators and reparations, to achieve stability. The transitional justice project is focusing initially on six research themes: data archiving and analysis, economic dimensions, peace-building, conceptual issues of transitional justice, and gender and children-focused approaches, and justice.

Dr Clara Sandoval, from the School of Law and the Human Rights Centre, explained:

"Each state facing conflict or repression constitutes a potential threat to the international community. Transitional justice is a global challenge since it is a prerequisite for the successful achievement of lasting peace and prosperity."

She added: "An active investment in the complex processes of justice, peace-building, development, poverty eradication and the management of social change is needed to avoid states relapsing into instability."

## Reinventing the internet

The University is to become a leading player in the global challenge to re-design the internet so it can cope with the demands of the 21st century.

Having secured funding from the EU, the University's Future Internet Research Task

Force will offer a unique, holistic approach to solving this international problem. The internet has become a victim of its own success and usage today is stretching the original network to its limits.

The project is bringing together key researchers with computer science and electronic engineering expertise and internationally-renowned experts from Essex's sociology and business disciplines. This combination of cross-disciplinary expertise with network research and connectivity facilities allows the University to offer a unique test-bed facility with unprecedented capabilities for collaborative research at a global scale and the potential to become a stepping stone between Europe and America on Future Internet Innovation.



# Stay connected

Would you like to catch-up with old university friends? Find out more about what's going on at the University? Receive e-newsletters letting you know about forthcoming events and reunions?




Yes! Then why not register on the new alumni website *Essex:Connect*?

*Essex:Connect* is an exciting new online community for alumni, 'friends' and supporters of the University of Essex. Designed to help alumni stay in touch with the University as well as each other, *Essex:Connect* lets you:

- Create and update your own profile pages, adding pictures and personal updates
- Trace old university friends and get back in contact with them
- Register for forthcoming events, reunions and professional networking opportunities
- Join discussion groups or start groups of your own
- Find out all the latest news from the University

Thousands of Essex alumni worldwide have already signed up. Joining *Essex:Connect* couldn't be easier. All you have to do is log on to [www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni), click on 'register now' and enter your details to create your own User ID and password.

## Profile pages

Within *Essex:Connect*'s personal pages you can create and customise your own profile page including pictures, news feeds and a message board.

You can also message other Essex graduates, keep track of your *Essex:Connect* e-mails and create an address book of other *Essex:Connect* users.

If you want to find out what your university friends have been up to since leaving Essex you can search and view other *Essex:Connect* users' profile pages and leave messages.

## Events

Throughout the year, the University organises a range of events that are open to Essex alumni both on and off campus. The *Essex:Connect* events calendar allows you to view detailed information about the forthcoming range of alumni, public and corporate events.

Our events programme includes:

- alumni reunions
- professional networking
- public lectures
- arts and cultural events
- sports events

*Essex:Connect* allows you to book your place at events online, quickly and securely, to make sure you never miss a chance to meet up with fellow alumni, return to campus or to network with like-minded professionals.

## Professional networking and careers support

As an Essex graduate, you can take advantage of the University's Careers Centre services and resources for up to three years after you graduate. You can receive tailored advice from a Careers Advisor, register with JobsOnline to search for graduate opportunities and attend careers events.

In addition to this, the Development and Alumni Relations Office offers a number of professional networking events and opportunities each year as well as an *Essex:Connect* Job Opportunities Board.

The Job Opportunities Board gives Essex graduates the chance to search for jobs online as well as advertise job vacancies within their own organisation completely free of charge.

## Supporting Essex

There are many ways in which you can show your support for Essex. Some of our alumni and friends offer careers advice, placements or support for current students, others assist in the recruitment of the next generation of Essex students. If you would like to discuss ways in which you can help the University please contact the Development and Alumni Relations Office.

We are very lucky that a large, and growing, number of supporters help by making a donation to the University.

Donors can give in a variety of ways and their support funds activities and programmes that would otherwise not take place. *Essex:Connect* allows supporters to donate online quickly and securely and indicate which area of the University they want their donation to support.

## Alumni Messages

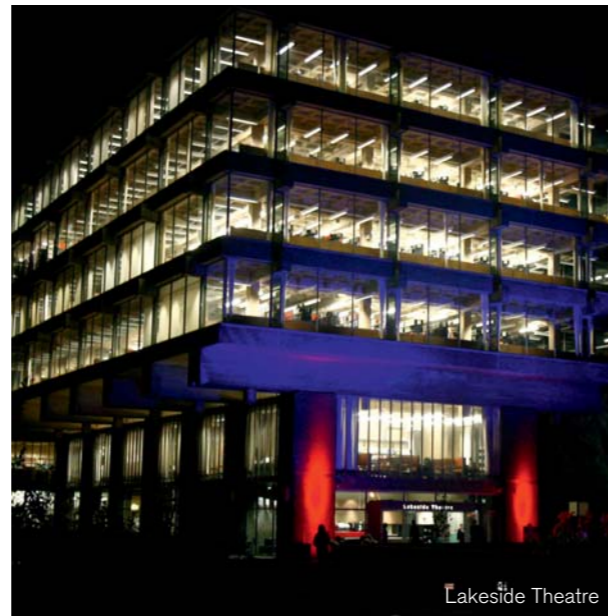
We would love to find out where you are and what you have been up to since leaving Essex. The new Alumni messages section on *Essex:Connect* lets you update your former classmates and friends with what you have been doing since you graduated. You can also read, search and view messages from other alumni the world over.

You can either submit your message to appear in alumni messages or why not submit your profile to appear in the graduate profiles section.

This replaces our alumni updates section that used to appear in *Essex:Effect*, now enabling you to revise your profile at any time of the year and give instant updates to your old friends.



Southend accommodation



Lakeside Theatre

# It's all change at '21st century' Essex!

The University of Essex has certainly changed since it was established almost 50 years ago. The pace of that change, however, is rapidly picking up.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan says: "The current changes to the physical infrastructure are the biggest since Essex was founded. It's a pretty dramatic programme. People returning to the University in three or four years will still recognise it - but it is going to feel very different."

The plans followed a review of Essex's ambitions in terms of its research, teaching, learning and knowledge transfer capabilities. "What we came up with was a capital investment plan of some £200-250 million running from 2008-2013. The consequence of that, of course, is that we need to raise funds from a wide range of sources. But we are confident it will transform Essex - it is going to feel more 21st century. In effect, it is a renewal of the whole University." As part of that programme, the past year has seen significant improvements to facilities.

If you want dramatic, then Southend Campus' new University Square accommodation, boasting 561 en-suite rooms and ready for its intake of students in October, takes pride of place. The development comprises four main blocks, the largest a ten-storey building in London Road, with three huge clock faces forming part of a multi-coloured external design, and which has transformed the skyline at the heart of the town.

An eight-storey block in College Way and a four-storey block - and the main atrium-style entrance - in Queens Road make up the development along with a fourth podium block, also four storeys high, hidden from view in the centre.

In contrast the new Clifftown Studios, situated in the former United Reform grade II listed Church, haven't altered the Southend skyline

one iota. Inside though, there has been a remarkable transformation.

Principally designed for the University's East 15 Acting School students as well as for professional and community use, the nave of the building has been converted into a flexible performance space, flanked by seating for 200 people.

The studios were launched at the start of the year with a weekend of celebratory performances. An audience of almost 1,000 explored a series of tableaux on the many different cultures and moments in history that have led to the creation of modern Britain.

The Colchester Campus' Lakeside Theatre meanwhile, was re-opened in November 2009 after an £880,000 refurbishment, the biggest investment since the theatre's construction in



Lord Triesman, Professor Colin Riordan and Pasco Kevlin open the new Lakeside Theatre

"The building provides an excellent learning environment for the students at East 15 Southend and also now gives us a public performance space. For the University it is a major milestone in the creation of a city centre campus that offers unique and well-designed facilities as well as an attractive place to study."

Leon Rubin, Director of East 15 Acting School, on the Clifftown Studios

1971. The theatre is now integrated into the Albert Sloman Library, with a purpose-built box office, café-bar and exhibition space. A lift has opened up the Theatre for wheelchair users while providing better access to the theatre studio.

For keep-fit enthusiasts - and Essex is full of them, with remarkably high participation levels - the extension of the sports centre fitness suite has also been well received. Capacity has increased from 65 to 110 stations, with an additional strength and conditioning area.

The biggest transformation of all though is only just beginning, says Professor Riordan. Work on the infrastructure of the Knowledge Gateway, a research park with a planned Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution at its heart, has begun.

Set in 43 acres of parkland adjoining Colchester Campus, the park will offer commercial tenants access to the University's research and business development activities as well as extensive leisure, conference and catering facilities together.

"It will pretty much double the size of the campus, while also providing a completely different entrance to the University," says Professor Riordan.

"The idea of a research park goes back almost 30 years and we were determined to make it happen. Funding represents a challenge in the current environment, but we have drawn up a detailed capital investment plan - and we know we will get support from our wide base of benefactors. They have become increasingly important to us."

"People returning to the University in three or four years will still recognise it - but it is going to feel very different... we are confident it will transform Essex - it is going to feel more 21st century. In effect, it is a renewal of the whole University."

Professor Colin Riordan, Vice-Chancellor

"I like it. It's different, it's modern and I think students will like it too. It makes the University and the town stand out."

Bob Mack, Dean of Southend Campus

# University news

## Professor Plum, in Square 2, with the lead pipe...

It's not every day that you go to work only to find yourself facing a dead body, bloodstain evidence, witness statements and six suspects.

That's what happened to students from the School of Law during a novel 'mystery murder' teaching event designed to help them gain a better insight into the use of forensic evidence.

The crime scene – complete with 'defunct' law professor – was set up by Dr Karen Hulme, who says: "The idea behind the project was to introduce the notion of forensic science to the students and give them a basic understanding of the uses and limits of science in the criminal justice process."

"Most law students won't have a science background and yet if they enter the legal profession they may at some point need to evaluate and counter scientific expert evidence in court."

The lesson was funded by the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund.



## 38,000 reasons to go green...

Convincing people to adopt a greener lifestyle is not always easy but it makes total sense to the University's Estate Management Section.

It's not rocket science, says Richard Frost, Energy Manager. Install new heating controls in the student accommodation at University Quays, for instance, and what do you get?

"Well, we're on target to save £38,000 a year in energy savings. We've also cut our electricity bills by about seven percent after the introduction of more efficient light controls," he says.

"We had been wanting to do this work for some time but it was not until we got help from the Higher Education Funding Council and Salix (part of the Carbon Trust, offering interest-free funding to accelerate investment in energy efficiency technologies) that we were able to press ahead."

"In all, we spent £200,000 and we should recoup what we borrowed in less than four years. What's even better is that it's a revolving fund – if we come up with more projects, we can re-use the money again and again before having to pay it back."

The University has made big strides to make itself as environmentally sustainable as possible in time for the introduction of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (recently



renamed the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme), the UK's first mandatory carbon trading scheme, in April this year. It covers organisations using more than 6,000MWh per year of electricity - equivalent to an annual electricity bill of about £500,000.

The Estate Management Section, working with the Green Task Force – made up of staff and students co-ordinating Essex's sustainability policy – has also instigated grey water systems, bio-fuel boilers and a wind turbine.

The University also follows a non-air conditioning policy but, where it is unavoidable, the waste heat will be reused. In the Lakeside Theatre, it is recycled into the hot water system, while the same technology is being introduced in the new Sports Centre extension (for hot showers) and in 'Lab J', a 100-seater computer laboratory.

## Essex Law graduate's French connection

A graduate of Essex's innovative LLB English and French Laws is to become the first Essex graduate to train as a French judge.

Pauline Girerd, who graduated in 2008, has been admitted to the prestigious – and highly

competitive École Nationale de la Magistrature (French National School for the Judiciary).

Students on the Essex LLB spend two years in the UK before undertaking a further two years of study at a partner institution in France.

## Stress and the art of accentuating the positive

Scientists at the University have made a breakthrough in understanding what makes people vulnerable to stress.

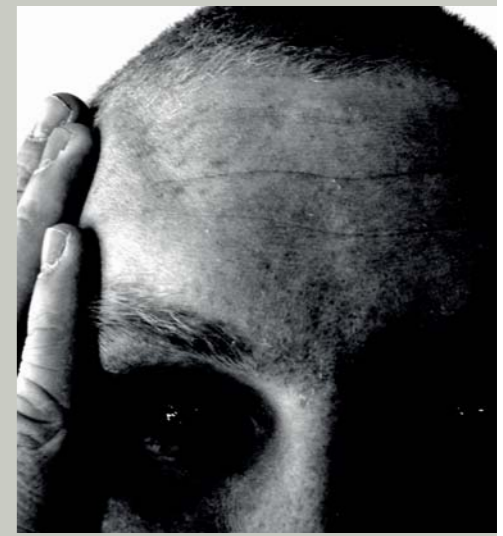
A team led by Professor Elaine Fox of the Department of Psychology have discovered that it is possible, by measuring people's biases towards noticing negative rather than positive images, to predict susceptibility to stress.

The Wellcome Trust funded the study and is now backing the same University team to investigate whether computer-based training to modify such biases could make people more resilient to traumatic events in their lives.

The original study, involving 100 subjects, is the first to reveal that biases towards negative information make it possible to predict a physiological reaction to stress up to eight months later.

"These biases are likely to be reliable early warning signs for vulnerability to anxiety and open up possibilities for therapy," says Professor Fox. Research published a year ago by Professor Fox's team identified a gene which is powerfully linked to a tendency to selectively avoid negative images and to pay attention to positive information.

Professor Fox, Shanna Cahill and Konstantina Zougkou's findings were published online in the journal *Biological Psychiatry*.



## Students' Union strikes gold

Many Students' Unions were once characterised – in the media at least – by long-haired Trotskyites addicted to militancy, late-night drinking, mass demonstrations and the odd bout of brick-throwing.

Not any more, though.

Essex's thoroughly professional SU has been awarded the prestigious Investors in People Gold Award, in recognition of its first-class people management.

How much of an achievement is that? Well, less than one in 1,000 organisations recognised by Investors in People achieve the Gold Award. Essex's is also believed to be the first SU in the country to achieve the feat.

"This is a fantastic achievement... and is a direct result of the energy and effort and

student staff," says SU President Ibbly Mehmet. "Essex is widely recognised as having one of the best Students' Unions in the UK and this is because we have first-class staff that are always prepared to go the extra mile when it comes to looking out for the needs of our students."

Essex's SU employs more than 400 staff, including around 350 students. Services include a dedicated student advice centre, more than 150 sports clubs and societies plus shops, bars and venues.

Launched in 1991, Investors in People is a business improvement tool administered by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. According to the Cranfield School of Management, almost 40,000 organisations were working with Investors in People in 2008, employing 7.5 million of the UK workforce.

## Is there science to altruism?

Huge sums are donated to charity every year, whether for the victims of apocalyptic natural disasters, the local stray dogs home or, indeed, your university.

But while many have tried to define this most human of urges – "True charity is the desire to be useful to others without thought of recompense", according to the Swedish scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg – nobody has yet been able to explain why we feel the need to give.

Researchers at the University are currently trying to find out precisely what motivates us to make donations or support a cause. Economist Dr David Reinstein says: "In the UK we give millions of pounds to a wide range of international, national, regional and local charities and organisations every year, but we don't have a very good understanding about the 'science' behind it.

"The findings from this research could be of interest not just to economists like me, but to charities and fundraising bodies everywhere."

Dr Reinstein is appealing to charitable groups and other organisations in Essex who are planning fundraising campaigns to take part in an experiment to try and clarify who gives what, why and when.



# University news

## How to kill two birds with one boiler house and £5m

An innovative £5 million project is underway to convert the disused 1960s boiler house on the Colchester Campus into teaching rooms for 600 students.

The 'green' development is being fast-tracked to get 20 fully-equipped teaching rooms ready by autumn 2010.

Project Manager Michael Willis says: "In line with the University's sustainability aims, this project meets the urgent demand for additional teaching space without the need for a new building and the associated loss of land."

The boiler house located under the podia of the North Towers was vacated when the University decentralised its heating in 1991. Essex's successful expansion in recent years, meanwhile, has led to a shortage of teaching space.

The rooms will be built on two levels, with an entrance foyer and central breakout space with seating. A theatre rehearsal space for the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies will be provided. Folding partitions will enable four of the rooms to be doubled in size.

## Nobel Laureate flies in to inspire University's poets

World-famous poet and Nobel Prize winner for Literature Derek Walcott is the University of Essex's new Professor of Poetry.

And Dr Maria Cristina Fumagalli, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies, can still barely contain her excitement after Walcott visited Colchester Campus for the first of two stays in April to deliver poetry workshops and a public reading.

"This is an incredible opportunity not only for our students, but also for the general public," she says. "Very rarely do people get the chance to learn directly from a writer of this calibre."

Walcott, from Saint Lucia, is a poet, playwright, writer and visual artist. He won the Nobel Prize in 1992. He is rarely in the UK but accepted an Honorary Degree from Essex in 2008 and recalls of that visit: "I was impressed by the warm atmosphere and intellectual drive of the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies which is home to formidable scholars and committed Caribbeanists."

"I also had the opportunity to meet talented and enthusiastic students and I am really looking forward to working with this cohort of emerging writers."



## JNU and Essex – an institutional alliance



The Vice Chancellor, Professor Colin Riordan, has signed a landmark agreement with the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi, India.

This is the first member of the University's Global Alliance, which is central to its strategic vision – to be a powerful regional university with global impact.

Based fundamentally on overlapping and complementary research interests, the

alliance will also include opportunities for student mobility and joint educational activities.

Four delegations from Essex have visited JNU, with members from Linguistics, Philosophy, LiFITS, E15, Essex Business School and the Human Rights Centre. Further delegations from Sociology, ISER and Biological Sciences are now planned. Essex has hosted academics from several schools at JNU, including Professor B B Bhattacharya, the JNU Vice Chancellor.

## Chancellor's charity work rewarded

The University's Chancellor Lord Phillips of Sudbury has been honoured in recognition of more than 40 years' work in charity law. He received the Luke FitzHerbert Lifetime Achievement 2009 at *Third Sector* magazine's Excellence Awards.

Lord Phillips founded charity specialist law firm Bates Wells and Braithwaite in 1970 and played a major part in debates during the passage of the Charities Act 2006. He is also on the Council for Charitable Support and is the president of the Citizenship Foundation, which he founded.

Lord Phillips paid homage at the award ceremony to those working in the charity sector.

"One has to say that certain things have gone for the worse," he said. "Against that, there are tens of thousands of charities, many have no staff at all, and we know that they do wonderful unsung work, often in the grottiest corners of society."

"There is a creative anarchy that I love about the voluntary sector. It is a life-enhancing quality – it brings the best out of people."



## First class, on track and going places

A train has been named after the University to celebrate its contribution to Southend and the county.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan was invited to unveil the "University of Essex" nameplate on the Class 321 electric train at

a ceremony at Southend Victoria Station. The train will serve towns including Braintree, Chelmsford, Clacton, Colchester, Harwich and Southend Victoria.

Andrew Goodrum, National Express East Anglia's Customer Service Director, said: "We are delighted to play our part in recognising the significant contribution the University of Essex makes to the county-wide community."

## It's official – Essex is excellent!

Essex has been rated as 'excellent' in economics, political science and psychology in a leading set of European rankings.

Only 11 UK universities were awarded 'Excellence Group' status in all three academic disciplines by the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE), which highlights the research strengths of more than 100 European higher education institutions in 20 countries.

The rankings compare the best university research facilities for prospective masters and doctoral programme students. Excellence Group status is based on such factors as research publications and citations and masters degree programmes.

The CHE, based in Gütersloh in Germany, is an independent institution committed to reform of the higher education system. The rankings also contain information on such things as accommodation and study fees.

# Honorary graduands announced



Rt Hon John Bercow MP is an Essex graduate and Speaker of the House of Commons.

After graduating with a BA in Government in 1985, Mr Bercow was elected National Chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students before being appointed Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Collegiate Forum to head the campaign for student support in the run-up to the 1987 General Election.

He became a Conservative councillor in the London Borough of Lambeth in 1986 and was deputy leader of the Conservative Opposition Group - at the time making him the youngest deputy group leader in the country.

A Member of Parliament since 1997, Mr Bercow has worked across a range of areas including education and employment, home affairs, work and pensions, and international development. Awarded 'Backbencher to Watch' in *The Spectator* Parliamentarian of the Year Awards in 1998, Mr Bercow was named Opposition MP of the Year 2005 in the Channel Four/Hansard Society Political Awards following a ballot of parliamentary colleagues.

Mr Bercow was elected Speaker in June 2009. Since his appointment, he has supported calls for reform of the Commons and to increase public engagement with parliament in the wake of the expenses scandal.



Hanif Lalani OBE, an Essex graduate, has enjoyed a successful career with telecommunications giant, BT. He stepped down earlier this year as Chief Executive of BT Global Services.

Born in Uganda, Mr Lalani graduated from the University with a BA from the Mathematics Department in 1983 and took up a post with BT. Over the next 26 years he worked his way around the business in a variety of finance and management roles in the group's UK and international divisions. Between 1998 and 2002, he worked in Northern Ireland first as Finance Director of BT Northern Ireland, and then within a year he was promoted to Chief Executive. He returned to London in September 2002 where he took up the post of Chief Financial Officer at BT Wholesale and in January 2003 was awarded the OBE for services to business in Northern Ireland.

He was appointed group finance director in February 2005 when he joined both the Board and the Operating Committee and was appointed Chief Executive of BT Global Services in 2008.

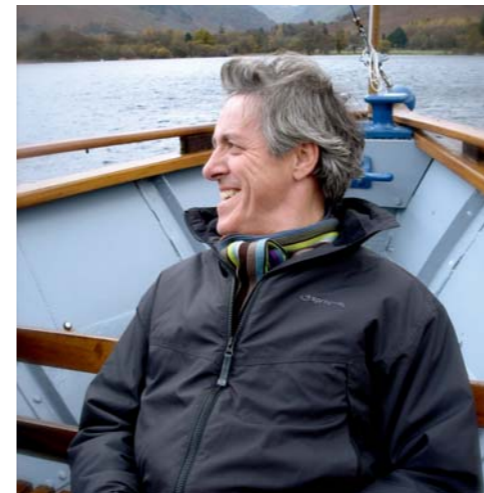


Dr Katherine Rake OBE has been described as 'one of the country's most prominent feminist voices.' Currently Chief Executive of the Family and Parenting Institute, Dr Rake has worked to influence change and public debate nationally and to inform policymaking right across government.

Before joining the Institute in 2009, Dr Rake spent seven years as Director of the UK's leading campaigning organisation for women's rights, the Fawcett Society. Here she campaigned for equal pay, fair political representation and better treatment within the justice system. Dr Rake also fought to put an end to sexism in the city, pregnancy discrimination and the prejudices faced by women from ethnic minorities.

Prior to her role at the Fawcett Society, Dr Rake lectured in social policy at the London School of Economics, was seconded to the Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office, and was Director of Studies at the Institut de Gestion Sociale in Paris. A regular broadcaster and contributor to the media, she was awarded an OBE for services to equal opportunities and was shortlisted for the 2009 Women in Public Life Awards.

The University's July 2010 graduation ceremonies at Colchester Campus will see over 2,000 students celebrating their achievements. There will also be a number of honorary graduands honoured for their contribution across a wide range of fields.



Griff Rhys Jones is an award-winning comedian, actor, writer, director and producer.

Educated at Brentwood School, Essex and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, his career began as a trainee radio producer at the BBC. Mr Rhys Jones first came to prominence when he joined the *Not The Nine O'Clock News* team where he met Mel Smith. Together he and Mel formed one of the country's most successful comedy partnerships with several television series throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Their partnership also founded one of the UK's leading production companies, Talkback Productions.

Mr Rhys Jones has worked extensively in the theatre, most recently in the West End production of *Oliver*, and as a television presenter.

In addition to his charitable work, Mr Rhys Jones has interests in conservation, town planning and communities. In 2008 he was appointed President of the Civic Trust and was instrumental in the foundation of the Civic Society Initiative which replaced the Trust in 2009. He has spoken widely about the need for civic societies to champion the opinions of local people as their built environments undergo change.



Lord Triesman of Tottenham is an Essex graduate earning a BA in Government.

Following his days as a student radical at Essex and a career in academia, Lord Triesman took up a post at the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) in 1984. In 1993 he became General Secretary of the Association of University Teachers before being appointed General Secretary of the Labour Party in 2001. Made a Life Peer in 2004, Lord Triesman moved into government, initially as a Whip and then at the Foreign Office, before being appointed the first Minister for Students at the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

Appointed as the first independent Chairman of the FA in 2008, Lord Triesman is a keen football fan and former grassroots player, coach and referee, he is Patron of the Tottenham Hotspur Charitable Foundation which undertakes a range of community and education projects throughout North London and in Africa.

## Alumnus of the Year

History and Government graduate Deborah Baker will receive the Alumnus of the Year Award at Graduation in July.

Deborah will be presented with the award in recognition of her contribution to the human resources industry, the value she places on helping realise individuals' full potential and rising to the top of her career.

In her role as Group Director for People at leading entertainment company, Sky, Deborah holds one of the most significant HR roles in the UK and oversees over 17,000 employees.

Since joining Sky in 2007, Deborah has been instrumental in transforming Sky's approach to its talent across the breadth and depth of the organisation. Working closely with the Chief Executive, Jeremy Darroch, she has also worked to embed a culture of individual responsibility for development right through the company, while simultaneously creating a wealth of resources for the employees to choose from, housed in an innovative inline 'Development Studio'.

The Alumnus of the Year Award has been presented annually since 2002. The award aims to recognise the achievements of a former student who has made a substantial contribution to their field.

If you wish to nominate an Alumnus for this award, please contact the Development and Alumni Relations Office.





# Careers support and professional networking



Essex alumni occupy prominent positions in business, the arts, politics and civil society. Amongst our graduates we have leading scientists, business leaders, public servants and even presidents.

Throughout the year the Development and Alumni Relations Office holds industry-specific events where like-minded alumni can network professionally. In recent months the programme has included dinners, receptions and lectures both on and off campus.

A successful Finance Networking Event was held at Santander's London HQ in March where over 50 alumni working in the finance industry attended a lecture by Professors Michael Sherer and Jerry Coakley of Essex Business School, followed by a networking reception.

Most of these events are by invitation only and capacity is usually limited. In order to be invited to those events that may be relevant to you it is essential that you keep us informed of your address and business details; this can be done quickly and easily online by signing up to *Essex:Connect* at [www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni).

# Graduate Internships Scheme



Calling all those graduating this summer - have you found your niche or are you hoping to kick start your career?

The University's Graduate Internships Scheme which launched in February for 2008 and 2009 graduates has been extended to include you! We have more than 50 offers of internships from businesses throughout Essex and Suffolk. Several graduates have already started their new jobs.

We are receiving fresh opportunities for graduates every day, and more than 100 have applied to the scheme.

Many of the businesses are looking for enthusiastic, highly motivated graduates to help boost their business in specific ways.

There is a high demand for IT software people, marketing and business graduates, and one business is urgently seeking fluent German and English speakers for translation work.

Do you have a physics, chemistry or related degree? A company is looking for someone to work with products used for neutron shielding. There are also opportunities for electronics, finance and accounting graduates.

We have funding so that you will be paid for these internships. We are also offering CV feedback sessions and Professional

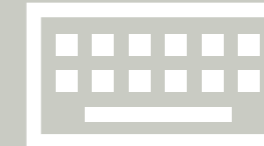
Development Days, which are packed with vital information to help you get the most out of your internship. We have two dates coming up - July 2 and July 20.

For more information or to apply, please get in touch with the Graduate Internships Team on 01206 872495 or email [graduateinternships@essex.ac.uk](mailto:graduateinternships@essex.ac.uk)

We are also on Facebook - search for University of Essex graduate internships scheme.

# How to get in touch

The Development and Alumni Relations Office helps former students stay in touch with the University. We love to hear from you, so do stay in touch. It is important that you keep the University up to date with your details, the easiest way to do this is online on the new *Essex:Connect* alumni website - just log on to [www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni).



## How the University can help you

- Careers advice and support
- Professional networking opportunities
- Events and reunions
- Putting you in touch with old friends
- Alumni members card

## How you can help the University

- Engaging with your department
- A link for business engagement with organisations
- Careers advice and support for current students
- Demonstrate your support by making a donation



There are a number of new ways to find out about what's going on in and around the University. Follow the University on Twitter at

[http://twitter.com/Uni\\_of\\_Essex](http://twitter.com/Uni_of_Essex).



Development and Alumni Relations Office  
University of Essex  
Wivenhoe Park  
Colchester  
CO4 3SQ

T +44 (0) 1206 873373  
E [alumni@essex.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@essex.ac.uk)  
[www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni)

## Some other useful contacts

Careers support and advice  
+44 (0) 1206 872494

Enquiries on postgraduate study  
+44 (0) 1206 872719

Copy of degree certificates  
+44 (0) 1206 872986

Accommodation on campus  
+44 (0) 1206 872358/2370



# There has never been a better time to support your university

All donations to the University's Alumni Fund, the fund that helps support clubs and societies, volunteering and hardship grants, can be increased by at least 50 per cent under a government matched funding initiative.

The programme runs until 2011 and until then the University of Essex will receive an extra £1 from the Government for every £2 you donate, including overseas gifts. And, if you are a UK taxpayer, your donation plus Gift Aid will be matched under the scheme (almost doubling the original value of your gift).

For further details on the Alumni Fund and how you can make a donation please visit [www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni) or telephone the Alumni Giving Officer on +44 (0)1206 874472.

The University relies on the support of its alumni and friends so please give what you can today. Thank you.



Edited by Lynsey Dawson, Development and Alumni Relations Office

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Development and Alumni Relations Office  
University of Essex  
Wivenhoe Park  
Colchester  
CO4 3SQ

T +44 (0)1206 873372  
E [alumni@essex.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@essex.ac.uk)

[www.essex.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.essex.ac.uk/alumni)