Department staff scoop awards at Brookes Annual Teaching Awards

On 27 March 2015, Oxford Brookes Union hosted the third annual Students’ Union Teaching Awards. Created in partnership with the University, the awards are designed and managed by students from the ground up as a way to recognise, reward and celebrate the teaching and contribution that all staff have made to the student experience. Over 200 members of staff were nominated by students in seven categories such as ‘Most Inspirational Lecturer’ and ‘Above and Beyond the Call of Duty’.

Nominations are a huge vote of confidence from Oxford Brookes students to all of the hard work and dedication of staff over the academic year. Congratulations go to Dr Faye Mitchell and Dr David Sutton who were awarded ‘Brookes Best Taught Module’ for Approaches to Mobile Software Development, Department of Computing and Communications Technologies.

“This module was one of the best that I have taken on my course. The lecturers made sure that everyone understood everything being taught… it felt like the lecturers genuinely wanted us to do the best that we could and it was wonderful. By the end of the module some of the work I produced I feel I could put in a work portfolio to show to potential employers.”

Student nominee.

Rachel Rimmer, Vice President: Academic Experience, stated: “The Student-Led Teaching Awards is an excellent opportunity for students to thank and recognise staff’s outstanding contributions to their overall student experience.”
DEAR ALUMNI, ASSOCIATES AND FRIENDS

Welcome to this issue of our Annual Newsletter. You will see from the contents of this issue that 2015 was an exciting and dynamic year for staff and students in the department. Our students have been competing in national competitions and winning prizes. This includes a team of students from the first cohort of our BSc (Hons) Software Development for Business course who won a £500 prize in a competition organised by IBM on wearable technologies. Another team of students won the ‘Best Teamwork’ prize in an Engineering YES workshop in Milton Keynes. This confirms what we already know about our students and graduates – that they are an intelligent, creative and inspiring bunch of people.

I am very pleased that we are able to include a feature about Helana Santos in this edition of the newsletter. Helana graduated from our Network Computing and Multimedia Systems and carved out a career in the computer games industry. She has certainly made her mark in this arena. She was ranked in the top 100 Women in Games by MCV magazine in 2015 and, more recently, featured in an article in the Guardian entitled ‘Helana Santos: the video game creator who’s living the Modern Dream’. The article outlines her career in game development and reports some of her thoughts on the unique power of computer games. Like many of our graduates, she is a shining example to us all.

One of the events which I remember with great fondness from 2015 is the Emerging Tech Weekender - an event which was co-organised by my colleague Samia Kamal and Tony Hart from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It was inspiring to see how the participants worked together in teams over the weekend to design and prototype new technology-based products and then pitch a business venture based on them to a panel of experts. More than 30 participants from the region took part in the event and I’m delighted to say that it was a team that was led by CCT students who won the prize.

You will find many more interesting articles in this edition of the newsletter. We would love to see you again if you are visiting Oxford, so please do drop in if you are able.

Kindest regards,
Nigel Crook,
Head of Department
Two students (Alicia Sykes and Iwo Harlejczyk) took up this opportunity and one of them also stayed on for a further two days to attend the Droidcon hackathon. The feedback was excellent: the conference offered interesting talks from Europe’s leading Android developers as well as the opportunity to test out some of the latest Android-based devices provided by the sponsors. There was also an informative presentation from the Android Wear product lead from Google, about what is new in Lollipop and how to develop for wear devices. The subsequent hackathon was also very productive. Every developer who planned to make something for Android Wear was given a free smart watch to develop on, and some very original apps were created during the weekend.

Brookes Bandits win £500 prize

On 15 April 2015, a team of first year students attended a national competition for the Software Development for Business degree.

The event was hosted at IBM South Bank, sponsored by Tata Consulting (TCS) and organised by the Tech Partnership www.thetechpartnership.com. The theme of the competition was Wearable Technology. The Brookes team was called the Brookes Bandits and designed a product called MaTEy (Mobile Tracker). The system included a mobile app and secure collar for finding lost dogs, using wearable technology including a kinetic charger and secure fingerprint lock. The Brookes team had five members: Elyse Malcolm, Ibrahim Idris, James O’Sullivan, Pavi Ram and Sam Dannatt who were delighted to win the £500 prize.

Research student team wins ‘Best Teamwork’ prize at Engineering YES

This residential programme provides training for research students and introduces them to business people, business thinking and enterprising environments. At the end of the three-day training, each team had to make a formal oral presentation of their business plan before a panel of judges comprising business and venture capital representatives. The Brookes team, named ‘VivaTech’, defended their idea of a wearable device that can detect and prevent back pains related to bad back postures. Team Vivatech won the prize for ‘Best Teamwork’.

Team Vivatech was comprised of six CCT research students: Adedotun Adeyemo, Adewole Ogundayeoka, Basel Youssif, Bedour Alshaigy, Cristian Roman and Min Han Lee participated in the Engineering Yes workshop in Milton Keynes.

Droidcon 2014

Computing students were given the opportunity to attend Droidcon, the two day annual Android convention in London on 30-31 October 2014, for free, in return for help in volunteering to set up the event.
During my time in Guangzhou, I met some of the cast who were based in Hong Kong. One of them asked me to get in contact with him as soon as I got back to Hong Kong for some potential colour grading projects. When I returned to Hong Kong, I registered my freelance business and that’s how I got started.
INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION ON BEE DATA

In October 2014, David Carugo travelled to Ireland and collaborated with artist Sean Taylor and scientist Mikael Fernstrom on the production of a multimedia art/science communication piece about the decline of bee populations. Data from bee colony collapses was analysed and a process called ‘sonification of data’ was used as the basis for a piece of music which was performed and recorded. The resulting recording is being distributed on physical media and via digital delivery, and is designed to raise awareness of the problem of bee colony collapse.

On 29 October 2014, Arantza Aldea’s daughter Sandra, Zaineb Ben Fredj’s daughter Hanna, Rachel Harrison’s son Philip and Samia Kamal’s daughter Amaal held a Charity Cake Sale to raise money for wild orang-utans as part of Chester Zoo’s ‘Go Orange for Orang-utans’ campaign (www.chesterzoo.org/support-us/go-orange-for-orangutans). They also arranged a silent auction for a cuddly orangutan and a large cake!

The fundraiser was a real success with a total amount of £206.13 being raised in one day. And to top it off, everybody who generously donated seemed rather pleased with the cake.

Staff members (and friends) of the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment have been busy knitting and crocheting tiny hats for Innocent Smoothie bottles, as part of the Innocent Big Knit (www.thebigknit.co.uk) in support of Age UK. On 3 December 2014 we got together for a ‘hat hand-in party’ where we pooled our efforts and found we had knitted or crocheted our way to a grand total of 278 hats! As you can see, the range of colours and styles is amazing, and we had so much fun making the hats. Who knew we were such a creative lot? Innocent Smoothies sold in the Colonnade shop at JHBB were festooned with little hats (but not necessarily our little hats, unfortunately). For every be-hatted bottle sold, Innocent made a donation to Age UK.
Computer Society

Anti-Theft Charge

The CCT Computer Society had a team that competed in Angel Hack in June 2014 at Google Campus in London, and Computer Science student Alicia Sykes was a runner up in this competition with her app Anti-Theft Charge, an app which can be enabled when the phone is being charged and will sound an alarm when disconnected from charging. Thus alerting the user that someone may be trying to steal their phone. This simple app was a hit with the judges at Angel Hack and is now available on the Google Play Store.

Brookes Freshers

In September 2014 Computer Science student Oliver Poole released a new app for Oxford Brookes freshers which contains loads of useful information for anyone getting settled at university in Oxford, or any student who lives in Oxford. It contains everything from maps of the university campuses to restaurant and clubbing information, and a section on how to get advice as well as lots of handy phone numbers and contacts all in your pocket! The app is now available on the Google Play Store.

UCLUB

Since February 2014, Harry Kirkman and George McDonnell have been working with two business students from Oxford Brookes on their new app UCLUB, this app allows students to purchase tickets for clubbing nights out in just a few taps and beat the queues! The app is now available on the Google Play and iTunes Store.

7 Steps

George is also developing an application being funded by the Oxford Brookes Research and Business Development Office. This application is called ‘7 Steps to Recovery’ and is in collaboration with David Festenstein who is a communications coach. The app aims to help people to recover from health and personal setbacks using his coaching.
Brookes alumna Helana Santos in the top 100 Women In Games

Helana Santos, who is a graduate of Computing Systems and Multimedia Systems combined at Oxford Brookes, has been ranked in the top 100 Women in Games by MCV magazine (a weekly magazine for the video games industry). In an interview with them she talked about what she perceived to be her biggest achievements:

“There are many achievements throughout my career that I have been proud of. Last year alone I started working as a full time indie developer working on LA Cops. Our game has been received very well at the shows we attended.

“It has also been on Steam Early access where people have been giving us loads of invaluable feedback. We have also started working with a great publisher, Team 17 that is helping us publish the game on Xbox One. Look out for LA Cops early this year.

“In May 2014 we opened Arch Creatives in Leamington Spa. I am one of the five directors involved. It is a co-working space where like-minded people share a desk space and it is part of a community that produces quality games. I truly believe that by sharing with others and collaborating effectively that we all get better and get that much further.

“I also became a UKIE board member in September 2014 and have enjoyed every moment of being part of this great entity that does so much good for our industry.”

MCV recruited a panel of judges from over 50 UK games industry executives to identify the global top 100 women in games. This award is in recognition of the significant contributions Helana has made to the games industry.

European Women in Games Conference

Elke Teichmann and Eef Den Boer from the Digital Media Production MSc course worked on producing a documentary on Women in Computer Games for their MSc dissertation, each specialising in a different aspect of the filming process. They were able to present their work at the European Women in Games conference at South Bank University in 2014. Their video documentary was shown and then they answered questions from industry professionals, computer games students and academics. The work was well received and they made many useful contacts. They are now looking to develop their work beyond their MSc dissertations. Their documentary can be viewed via YouTube under ‘Boys Toys Documentary’.
Samia Kamal worked with Tony Hart from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to host the Emerging Tech Weekender event which was held from Friday 14 – Sunday 16 November 2014 in the Oxford Brookes John Henry Brookes Building.

Emerging Tech Weekender

More than 30 participants worked together in teams to present, develop and pitch new business ventures centred on novel technological developments.

Following an initial brainstorm session, five ideas were selected and teams were formed to develop the ideas:

Over just three days, five teams of technology innovators turned their ideas into ventures, with real world potential. Helped by tech experts and business gurus, teams pitched their ideas to a panel of judges. Technology mentors included Ben Foxall, who provided code and mentoring for teams working with real-time browser connections; Ben Ward, with advice on internet; and Tom Nickson, who gave encouragement for teams working with mesh networking. Business mentors Placi Espejo, Jonathan Gittos, Mark Evans, Tony Hart and Dave Fletcher ran workshops and gave advice on pitching, developing business plans, and preparing ideas for commercialisation. Judges were Nigel Crook, Head of CCT at Oxford Brookes University, Julian Jantke, a co-founder of technology start-ups, and Tony Hart, Network Navigator for Digital, Media and Publishing for Oxfordshire LEP.

The Team Brush! venture won the award for Best Commercial Potential and Audience Selection. The brainchild of 13 year old Oxford High School student Joana Baptista, her team included Cherwell School (Oxford) student Tyriah Allison, aged 11, and Oxford Brookes University students Seren Davies, 19 and Andrew Hayzen, 20.

Joana Baptista says: “I literally thought about the idea a few days ago while brushing my teeth. Taking part was scary at first but the weekend has turned out really great. We never thought we would win – it’s very exciting!” Brush! sends information to parents about their child’s tooth brushing activity – adding in challenges and different levels for them to share and compete with friends. Gifts and messages from parents can be sent to reward successful brushing.

Winner of Best Use of Technology was SenceSpace, which has enormous potential for getting young people more active outside by creating a platform for addictive physical games. Using mobile phones to enable multi-player outdoor games makes it ideal for events, team building exercises and schools.

Nigel Crook said: ‘We were amazed at the quality of work throughout the weekend and the most difficult part was making a choice’.

Team Brush!
Make sure children are brushing their teeth with a toothbrush that sends messages on how often and how long. Built-in incentives include levels, rewards, and social media sharing and messaging.

SenceSpace
Live action real time gaming for events, schools and team building.

Crowd Lighter
Audience participation gaming platform for live events, enabling brands to run competitions, engage crowds with synchronised audio and visual through their mobiles.

Q Control
Reduce queues with dynamic pricing: an application which addresses lengthy queues, for example across different outlets such as coffee shops, by changing prices in response to demand.

FindMe
Help to find missing persons using facial recognition.

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Oxford Brookes University joined Activate Learning colleges, City of Oxford College and Banbury and Bicester College in a two-day event called Careers Fest 2015 which took place at the MINI Plant, Oxford on Tuesday 20 and Wednesday 21 January. It offered school pupils from across Oxfordshire access to careers advice and the opportunity to sample a range of future careers.

**Careers Fest**

In 2015 the theme was ‘real jobs now and in the future’ and aimed to provide school pupils with advice and inspiration to help them make decisions about their futures. More than 50 exhibitors took part in the event to showcase a host of exciting employment opportunities in Oxfordshire together with information on the types and levels of qualifications required. More than 2,000 pupils attended the event.

CCT had a stand with robots Artie and Robbie which was supported by Andy King, Luis Fuente, Bedour Alshaigy, Cigdem Sengul, Olivia Cox and Nigel Crook. Our staff and robots worked very hard to engage the pupils (talking to just over 1,000 students and teachers during the two days) and their efforts were rewarded with the prize for 2nd best exhibitor.

Every year there is an International Broadcast Convention (IBC) held in Amsterdam. It’s where all of the world’s major companies, such as Sony, Panasonic, Avid, YouTube, Google, Canon, Gopro and so on, all go to announce their latest deals and launch their latest products. There are 50,000 delegates who attend from around the world, and big name speakers, including, in 2014, physicist and broadcaster Brian Cox. Our Associate Lecturer for Journalism and TV News, Gillian Kelly is also a freelance reporter and producer for the ITV national news and is the Associate Producer for IBC TV. It broadcasts live for 12 hours a day through the six days of the conference. For the last two years she has taken 3rd year students with her, picking those who have excelled on the TV News module. They then go through further interviews with an independent production company, to get jobs as runners for IBC TV. This year three students beat competition from four other universities to be one of ten students to go to Amsterdam. They were Adam French, Bethan Evans and Samuel Swinnerton. They then went through further interviews with an independent production company, to get jobs as runners for IBC TV. This year three students beat competition from four other universities to be one of ten students to go to Amsterdam. They were Adam French, Bethan Evans and Samuel Swinnerton. The three students excelled, and did themselves and Oxford Brookes proud. Bethan, who is now a Mastering Engineer at Pinewood, said: ‘IBC TV was amazing. I met Brian Cox and Robert Rodriguez, worked with some amazingly talented individuals and floor managed a live TV studio’. Gillian says she: ‘[...] looks forward to choosing some stars from this year’s academic crop to join her again next year’.

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CCT Students at the International Broadcast Convention
Noor Shams studied for the MSc in Mobile and High Speed Telecommunication Networks at Oxford Brookes, graduating in 2007. She joined the Transmission Network Development team at BSkyB straight after completing the MSc programme. It was a three year graduate training programme and after that she was promoted to Transmission Network Development Engineer.

My role resides in optical network design and development with dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) and synchronous digital hierarchy (SDH). Acting within 3rd-4th line escalation, working with vendors to ensure equipment meet design needs and technical standards and also train and assist NOC and other related teams. My degree helped a lot getting the job, it ticked all the boxes for technical competence. My main job responsibility is the design of DWDM networks which span the whole of the UK. The coursework during my MSc programme provided a good insight into the design techniques and technical issues presented by these networks.

I always wanted to be a telecommunication engineer and my current role makes it happen. The networks I am designing and maintaining handle huge amounts of traffic which is unbelievable. I have contributed to the design and implementation of state of the art 100 gigabit/s optical networks which are new in UK. In the future I want to continue my career in telecommunications and become an expert high speed network architect. My career advice to current students at Oxford Brookes is to develop a solid understanding of network theory and have a look what is happening in industry. A good knowledge in vendor equipment also helps to get into the profession.

My best memories of my time studying at Oxford Brookes are the teachers and study partners/friends that I made, I still have contact with them. Most of my fellow students are international. I had an excellent study group of three students and we were culturally diverse. All of this group have been successful, both in the University and in their subsequent professional life. Living in Oxford is always rewarding because of its rich culture and history. All around there are nice friendly people, many of whom are involved in the knowledge industry. So many things are happening and it’s easy to find something that you are interested in. There are many reasons to study at Oxford Brookes: innovative courses, very supportive staff and Students’ Union and a joyful social life. These things are so important to an international student like me.
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All information is correct at the time of going to press (January 2016). Please refer to the University’s website for the most up-to-date details.