

Dame Kelly Launches University's 16million Sport and Exercise-Science Building

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The University of Birmingham's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences enters a new era on Thursday 14 June, when Dame Kelly Holmes officially opens the School's £16.4 million home.

The double Olympic champion will unveil the new building, which is the largest purpose built sport and exercise-science facility in the UK, containing state-of-the-art facilities for teaching and research.

The school is one of the leading UK centres for research in performance sport, exercise physiology and sports psychology and was awarded the maximum 6* rating at the last Research Assessment Exercise. Current projects include research tackling psychological barriers to exercise, optimising nutrition and training interventions to improve performance of athletes, the chemical processes that influence diabetes and obesity, and studies of the links between stress and our immune systems.

Professor Doug Carroll, Head of School, comments: "We are delighted to have a new home that provides us with an ideal environment to continue our drive to be at the forefront of research and teaching in sport and exercise sciences.

"Birmingham was the first university to offer a degree in Sport and Exercise Sciences that extended beyond the boundaries of Physical Education. Today, the impact of our research goes well beyond the performance, health and confidence of athletes to benefit the general public.

"We continue to push the boundaries with major research projects looking at obesity and diabetes, sports nutrition and performance in elite athletes, eye-limb co-ordination, movement in the young and elderly, and exercise and immunity.

"In the run-up to the 2012 Olympics, with an increasing focus on sport and exercise, it is key for us that our work influences society and can genuinely have a positive impact on people's lives."

The official opening comes after a day-long symposium focusing on the role that physical inactivity plays in the growing global obesity epidemic.

Among the speakers are Dr Ian Campbell, Chair of the UK National Obesity Forum, and Shaun Matison, Chief Executive of PruHealth, who will discuss the idea of offering cheaper health insurance for people who are physically active.

Professor Asker Jeukendrup, Director of the School's Human Performance Laboratory, comments:

"Obesity has reached epidemic proportions, with more than one billion adults overweight and at least 300 million of them clinically obese. This is a major contributor to the global burden of chronic disease and disability, with far-reaching economic consequences. Physical inactivity and poor diet will soon take over from smoking to become the number 1 killer. Awareness of the importance of nutrition has grown through the press and by actions of policy makers. However, physical activity, despite overwhelming evidence for its role in the prevention of disease, has received relatively little attention.

"We want to send a clear message to policy makers that the lack of physical activity is one of the biggest health problems today's society faces: a problem we cannot afford to ignore."

ENDS

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Notes to Editor

Members of the media wishing to attend the event should contact the Press Office. NB: Dame Kelly is expected to arrive after 6.30pm.

The School of Sport and Exercise Sciences

The School has an excellent research base. It achieved a 5*A rating in 2001 national Research Assessment Exercises (RAE), the highest rating available. Recently, the HEFCE research re-grading exercise among 5* departments has elevated the School's rating from 5* to 6*. The School's research activities are organised into three broad areas: Exercise Physiology; Motor Control and Applied Psychology.

There are currently over 40 postgraduates pursuing PhD degrees within the School.

Our expertise has had a significant influence on the sporting world in general, with some of our academic staff being invited to consult on the training and nutrition for several top athletes in Europe, UK Athletics and some Premiership football clubs.

DETAILS OF THE SEMINAR

Why Exercise?

Chairs; Professor Anton Wagenmakers and Professor Paul Stewart

9.30am Introduction: obesity and physical inactivity

Professor Asker Jeukendrup, University of Birmingham

9.45am Physical activity, energy expenditure and fitness: an evolutionary perspective

Professor S Boyd Eaton, Emory University

10.15am The evidence that physical inactivity is unhealthy

Dr Keith Baar, Dundee University

10.45am Coffee

11.15am Obesity and lifestyle: Diet or sedentary living?

Professor Ken Fox, University of Bristol

11.45am The biochemical basis of the health effects of exercise: an integrative view

Professor Frank Booth, University of Missouri

12.15pm Q&A with all morning speakers

12.45pm Lunch

The obesity epidemic: can we turn the tide?

Chair: Professor Doug Carroll

2.00pm The obesity epidemic: can we turn the tide?

Dr Ian Campbell, Chair of the UK National Obesity Forum

2.30pm Environmental changes to promote energy expenditure; the example of stair climbing

Dr Frank Eves

3.00pm Tea

3.30pm Cheaper health insurance for physically active?

Mr Shaun Matisonn, Chief Executive of PruHealth

4.00pm Motivating people to exercise: Empowering self responsibility for physical activity engagement

Professor Joan Duda, University of Birmingham

4.30pm Q&A with all afternoon speakers

5.00pm Closing remarks

5.15pm Ends

Dame Kelly Holmes will officially open the University of Birmingham's new £16.4 million pound Sport and Exercise Sciences building on Thursday 14th June.

The as well as leading academic experts including Professor Ken Fox, University of Bristol and Professor Frank Booth, University of Missouri.

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