Birmingham honoured for promoting international collaboration

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Chicago

The University of Birmingham and the city have been honoured in the United States, for increasing international collaboration and promoting the many initiatives associated with being a sister city. During March, some 35 staff from Birmingham participated in events in Chicago – including workshops, visits to local businesses and universities.

The Mayor and the members of the City of Chicago City Council honoured Birmingham, following the series of events, visits and projects that the University initiated this month, by passing a resolution praising the University for its engagement activities in Chicago.

The Birmingham / Chicago relationship originates from September 1993. Based on "second city" principles, its original aim was to promote business connections between middle England and the mid-West of America.

Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, visited Chicago to meet with leaders of academic and cultural institutions in Chicago, and to promote UK-US relationships developed through the Marshall Scholarship Programme, a British government-funded scholarship which annually awards leading American graduates the opportunity to undertake post-graduate study in the United Kingdom.

Professor Eastwood comments: “The issues we face today are too important, too complex and too urgent to be solved by nation states, acting alone. We are in discussions with leading scientific and industrial partners in the United States, over practical issues affecting industry, collaborative projects and opportunities for the training of graduate students.”

A delegation from the University of Birmingham also held a Science City road show in Chicago, and made a series of visits to Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Kraft Foods, Wrigleys, and the Argonne National Laboratories.

One of the main events of the month saw leading scholars from the universities of Birmingham, Chicago, Northwestern, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, participate in a workshop that examined two new dynamic areas of interdisciplinary research that have emerged in recent years – the neuroscience of sociality, looking at the neurobiological process involved in social interaction, and the social biology of aging, which looks at the intersection of illness, society, and the ageing process.

Professor Malcolm Press, Head of the College of Life & Environmental Sciences, was a co-convenor of the workshop. He comments: “It generated 12 initiatives on a range of topics under the broad heading of society and health. We have agreed target outcomes for July and are already talking about a return meeting in Birmingham later on this year.”

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