

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

School of Chemistry Community

Part of
THE EPS COMMUNITY



Spring 2015

Greetings

As you will see from this newsletter it has been a busy few months in the School of Chemistry, with the University [launching plans for the state-of-the-art Collaborative Teaching Laboratory](#) and the award of a [£2.2 million grant towards synthetic biology research](#). Our staff have also featured in the media with [Michael Grove](#) and [Dr Eduardo Nicolas Schulz](#), writing for *Education in Chemistry* and *The Conversation*, respectively.

[The Research Excellence Framework \(REF\) results](#) were revealed at the end of last year, which is a six to seven year exercise in which the research of all university departments are rated and ranked for each academic discipline across the country. The last exercise of this type was in 2008. I am very pleased to say that the School of Chemistry's overall grade point average increased from 2.61 to 3.1 (out of 4), with an outstanding 95% of our research outputs being classed as internationally excellent (81%) or world leading (14%). On this measure we were ranked 7th out of the 21 Russell Group Schools of Chemistry, and 8th out of all of the 37 Schools of Chemistry in the UK that took part in the exercise. This research ranking is testament to the hard work of the staff in the School, which when coupled with the undergraduate student experience in which we are ranked number 1 in the UK, shows an outstanding commitment.

Our students have also been incredibly active, with [ChemSoc](#) raising money for charity, holding a careers event and busily planning their Spring Ball. We also welcome the [Women in Science and Engineering Society \(WISE\)](#) and I look forward to hearing more about their future activities supporting and promoting women within Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

As the end of the second semester in the 2014-15 academic year approaches, I would like to wish you all a pleasant Easter and I look forward to updating you with the latest news from the School and our students in the Summer Term.

With best wishes,

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Professor Jon Preece
Head of School
Chemistry

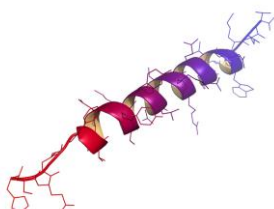
News from the School of Chemistry

University launches plans for Collaborative Teaching Laboratory



The University has launched ambitious new plans for a £40 million state-of-the-art Collaborative Teaching Laboratory (CTL) to facilitate the teaching of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. It will enable collaborative and interdisciplinary working amongst undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, providing a transformational teaching experience to enable them to develop the skills and experience required by employers. [Read more.](#)

Artificial proteins could bring the next biological revolution – starting with MRI



Scientists and engineers have looked to nature for their inspiration for centuries. The field of biomimetics uses ideas from nature to solve complex human challenges.

Synthetic biology, a more recent concept, focuses on the design of artificial devices or systems with biological or “bio-like” functions. This covers a wide range of applications – but perhaps the most fascinating biological “device” we could wish to emulate is the protein. [Read more.](#)

Carly Thomas chosen as one of our Top 12 Alumni to watch



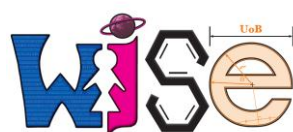
The University's 300,000th student will graduate this summer and join our alumni community. To celebrate this occasion we asked staff and students to nominate a student to become our symbolic 300,000th alumnus. Due to the volume and quality of nominations we chose an additional 11 students to form our Top 12 Alumni to watch. Final year Chemistry student Carly Thomas is one of those and we will be following her journey through her final months as a student and into graduate life. [Read more.](#)

ChemSoc



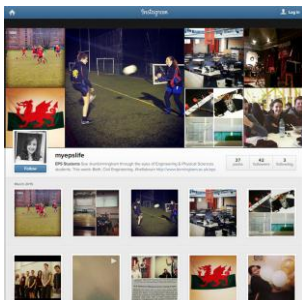
This year has been a busy one for ChemSoc! Conaill Perry and Simon Johnson, ChemSoc Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, [tell us more.](#)

Welcome to WISE - Women in Science and Engineering Society



The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Society are the newest student group to join the EPS Community. They work to provide as many events and opportunities as possible to members across the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences to integrate, form networks and to help inspire the next generation of female scientists and engineers. Annabel Fitzgerald [tells us more.](#)

Student Instagram Takeover



With the growing popularity of Instagram as a social networking service, the College has recently launched a student-led takeover account. Every two weeks a different student from across the College will be managing the 'MyEPSLife' channel, taking photos and videos of their experiences and highlighting activity across our Schools and the wider University community. Explore the current activity [here](#).

Funding boost for next generation of synthetic biology research at Birmingham



The University of Birmingham will form part of a consortium of universities investigating ways in which high-throughput DNA synthesis methodologies can be optimised, as part of a nationwide strategy to improve the capacity of DNA synthesis. The consortium will benefit from the award of a £2.2M grant from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), entitled 'Next Generation DNA Synthesis'. [Read more](#).

The Chemistry of Prozac



[Dr Simon Cotton](#) has been featured in a podcast for The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) discussing the chemistry of Prozac. [Read more](#).

Is a conceptual understanding of maths vital for chemistry?



For those working within the disciplines of mathematics, physics and engineering in higher education, the 'mathematics problem' is all too familiar. The term describes the well-documented issues associated with the lack of mathematical preparedness of students as they begin their university studies. While there has been considerable community-wide and institutional activity to tackle the problem, for example the development of mathematics support centres and a range of online learning materials, there is evidence that the problem may now be different in nature, so a different solution is sought. [Read more](#).

Cutting funding for basic scientific research would be a big mistake



For all the exciting stories and developments that basic science research produces, there is one question that the public never tires of asking: "What are the possible applications of that discovery?" or "What is the value of your research?" While the question is arguably one worth asking, the answer doesn't always convince everyone. And if it isn't convincing, people are quick to react: "Why then are we investing insane amounts of money into those experiments?" [Read more](#).

Birmingham says global demand for 'cold' should be taken seriously with launch of new Policy Commission



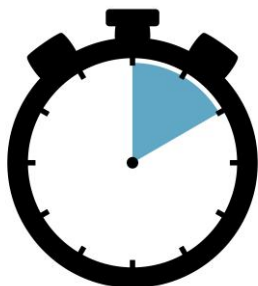
The University has recently launched a new policy commission entitled 'Doing Cold Smarter'. It will investigate how the growing demand for 'cold' and cooling, which is required to address global challenges of hunger, disease and population growth, can be met without causing environmental ruin. The provision of cold is a vital foundation of modern society - without it medicine, data and the supply and preservation of food would break down. Cooling is also energy intensive; estimates suggest that it consumes up to 14% of Britain's electricity and £5.2 billion each year is spent on energy for cold across the grid and transport. These figures will be significantly higher in warmer countries, while in rapidly developing nations such as China and India investment in cooling is starting to boom. [Read more.](#)

Don't miss out! Book your place on the EPS Reunion 2015!



Do you have fond memories of your time at the University of Birmingham? Do you still keep in touch with those classmates who you pulled all-night study sessions with to get that last assignment finished? As a graduate of the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, we would love for you to join us on campus on Saturday 20 June 2015 for a reunion. [Read more.](#)

Mini chance to make a massive difference



You can make a difference to your University in the time it takes to make a cup of tea.

To mark Micro-Volunteering Day on 15 April there are a whole range of opportunities to support Birmingham; all possible in just ten minutes or less.

These bite-sized tasks can have a big impact: from answering questions on your shopping habits for students' dissertations, to sharing your opinion on our website design or celebrating with the University's newest alumni by sending in your graduation memories. [Email us](#) to learn more.

Scholarships available for postgraduate study



The University is pleased to announce the launch of the [Distinguished Alumni Scholarship scheme](#). Awards of £2,000 per scholarship will be offered to outstanding alumni wishing to undertake Masters study at the University during 2015. [Read more.](#)

In addition 224 new £10,000 scholarships available for Masters students from under-represented groups are available for 2015 entry through the Birmingham Masters Scholarship Scheme. [Read more.](#)

New staff in 2014/15

There have been a number of appointments in the School this term. [Read a summary of our new staff online here.](#)

Your School needs you...

Would you be able to share some of your time, expertise or connections to help our students to succeed?

We are currently looking for help and support from alumni with the following:

- All women in science and engineering. As part of **National Women in Engineering Day, 23 June**, the EPS Community is hosting a number of activities, conversations and events designed to celebrate women in engineering and scientific careers. If you work in science or engineering and would like to sit on our panel, get involved in the conversation on Twitter, or come along to our evening event, please get in touch by [emailing us](#)
- **Undergraduate Open Day, 26-27 June**. Could you donate a couple of hours of your time to pop back to your old School and speak to our prospective students about your time at Birmingham? For more information and to get involved [email us](#)
- Work experience placements are invaluable for our students, allowing them to learn about the world of work first-hand and apply their knowledge in a real-life setting. If you work in industry and think you could offer a work experience placement to our undergraduate or postgraduate students, please [email us](#)

There are many ways in which you can give a little back, from providing a career profile, to mentoring a student. Please [email us](#) if you would like to get involved and we'll be happy to talk to you.

College and School events taking place shortly...

[EPS Inaugural Lecture Series](#)

For information on upcoming lectures in the EPS Inaugural Lecture Series please [visit our website](#)

Tuesday 9 June 2015

[EPS Societies' Awards](#)

Come and celebrate with our student societies as we recognise their fabulous achievements in 2015/16.

Time: 7pm-11pm

Venue: Great Hall, Edgbaston Campus

Saturday 20 June 2015

[EPS Alumni Reunion](#)

As a graduate of one of the nine schools in the College of Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS), you are invited back to campus for a Summer Reunion to get together with your fellow alumni to celebrate your experiences, accomplishments and friendships at the University of Birmingham.

Time: 9.30am-6pm

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

Please visit the [website](#) for more information and to secure your place at the Reunion

Tuesday 23 June 2015

[National Women in Engineering Day Celebrations](#)

Following the success of last year's first ever National Women in Engineering Day (NWED), this year's event is being held on Tuesday 23 June to celebrate the achievements of women in engineering and science. The EPS Community will be celebrating the day with a variety of exciting activities and events on campus.

Time: Programme to be confirmed

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

For more information please [email us](#)

University events...

Saturday 25 April 2015

[Fab 'n' Refresh](#)

On Saturday 25th April 2015 the Guild of Students, in association with the Development and Alumni Office, presents Fab 'n'

Refresh! Come back onto campus to party the night away with fellow alumni who graduated from 2005 onwards.

Time: 10pm-late

Venue: Joe's Bar, Guild of Students

Saturday 13 June 2015

[Alumni Sports Day](#)

Save the date for the 14th annual University of Birmingham Sport Alumni Sports Day. This year promises to be bigger and better than ever before with 16 events across 14 different sports. The events will take place on campus, at the Bournbrook and Metchley pitches and the Edgbaston Priory Club, creating a multi-sport festival.

Time: 9am-5pm

Venue: Various

Monday 22 June 2015

[Baggs Memorial Happiness Lecture 2015](#)

The Baggs Memorial Lecture began in 1976 and the lecture series has seen many distinguished speakers tackle the topic of happiness from their personal viewpoint including Yehudi Menuhin, David Attenborough, Peter Ustinov, Maureen Lipman, David Lodge, Adam Hart Davies, Robert Winston and Sue Lawley. This year the University is pleased to welcome Matthew Parris who worked for the Foreign Office and the Conservative Research Department before serving as MP for West Derbyshire.

Time: 6.30pm-8.30pm

Venue: Great Hall, Edgbaston Campus

Saturday 12 September 2015

[Golden and 50th Anniversary Reunion Lunch](#)

If you graduated in 1965 or before you are invited back to campus on Saturday 12 September to a Golden and 50th Anniversary Reunion Lunch with your fellow alumni to celebrate your experiences, accomplishments and friendships at the University of Birmingham.

Time: 10.45am-4pm

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

Alumni group events...

The University of Birmingham has alumni groups all over the world that organise local events. To join a group and see details of upcoming events please visit the [webpage](#) and select your location.

Do we have the right details for you?

Please visit [your.bham](#) or email alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

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