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The importance of being creative and innovative in science research

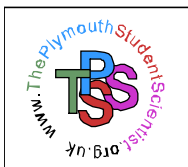
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The importance of being creative and innovative in science research

Professor Wendy Purcell, Vice-Chancellor, University of Plymouth

It is a great honour to be asked to provide the guest editorial for the third issue of this innovative new journal. In this edition there are articles ranging from animal behaviour to human psychology and marine sports science, showcasing examples of outstanding undergraduate science research here at Plymouth.

It has been an amazing year for me and in November I celebrated my inauguration and first anniversary in the role as Vice-Chancellor of this thriving university. When I started my academic career here in Plymouth, obtaining a BSc Honours degree in Biological Sciences, I never once dreamed that I would be back in twenty or so years to take up such an exciting post! The University of Plymouth provides a supportive environment and an excellent grounding in science and research, a spring board for your future career.

To my mind, science is a really creative subject full of intrigue and chaos and the thrill is solving problems and discovering new things – innovation in practice. There is a dynamic blend of subjects in the Faculty of Science and staff are encouraged to nurture innovative thinking during undergraduate research activities. There is also a strong tradition, here at Plymouth, for research-informed teaching, encouraging student engagement in research and raising the profile of links between research and teaching.

I am extremely ambitious for our university, especially in acknowledging the importance of research at all levels. The recent national research audit results (the Research Assessment Exercise or RAE) demonstrates the world-leading position and excellence of much of our academic research and the enormous potential for future research growth in terms of impact and outreach. There is also great value in being a researcher, learning and practicing important personal skills as well as making an important contribution to the academic community, UK and economy. There is a lot of discussion at the moment about how universities can help the country in times of economic difficulties. It is strongly acknowledged that innovation and enterprise plus the appropriate skills development is the only way a country like ours can compete in a global market. Our RAE results show that the majority of areas submitted by the University of Plymouth contained world-leading research, achieving the highest rating possible (scoring 4-stars) and 80% of the research submitted was judged as being of international repute. These results are fantastic, proving that Plymouth ranks among the leading research universities in many areas.

This success also gives our students the opportunity to learn and research alongside world-class experts, so enhancing the student curriculum and overall experience.

The Plymouth Student Scientist is an enterprising idea. The journal celebrates and values the undergraduate contribution to the research agenda at Plymouth as well as demonstrating the importance placed on such activity. It is an e-publication aimed at promoting student research activities, publishing and disseminating work to a wider audience, which we believe can greatly benefit other students by enabling them to see excellent examples of peer research, as well as potentially enhancing student authors' CVs, portfolios and future employability.

My experience as a science student at the University of Plymouth equipped me to be bold, confident and innovative and to seek answers to those questions that tax us all and to ask questions that hadn't been asked before. The student research in this journal demonstrates a similar innovative drive for knowledge and understanding and I am very proud of the excellent work published here. I hope these articles inspire other students to aim high and to embrace scientific research and innovation. May I wish you a successful 2009 and hope it brings with it lots of exciting opportunities.

Best wishes
Wendy

Professor Wendy Purcell
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
University of Plymouth