Glasgow joins with Ivy League to boost research ties

The University has signed a strategic agreement with New York’s Columbia University which will see the development of a range of research collaborations.

Columbia University, a member of the prestigious US Ivy League, signed a memorandum of understanding with Glasgow which will allow academics from both institutions to work closely together to develop high-impact research themes. The document sealing the collaboration was signed at an official ceremony in New York City in October. Professor Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Claude Steele, Columbia University Provost, signed the agreement.

Senior staff from both institutions welcomed the new partnership, which forms part of Glasgow’s internationalisation strategy. Professor Anton Muscatelli said: ‘The University of Glasgow is delighted that this memorandum of understanding has been signed. To formalise our existing links with one of the USA’s great universities will provide first-class opportunities for staff from both institutions to collaborate and work together. The relationship between Columbia University and the University of Glasgow has been built up over the past number of years and there are a number of research themes where we can work closely together.’

‘I look forward to the relationship between two of the top 100 universities in the world blossoming in the years to come.’

Professor David Hirsh, Columbia’s former Executive Vice President for Research, said: ‘Columbia is pleased to formalize its collaborations with the University of Glasgow as we share several common research interests. We believe the mutual cooperation will advance the scholarly pursuits at both of the universities.’

The agreement will see the development of biomedical research collaborations in the first instance. The three themes identified are cardiovascular disease; molecular pharmacology and neuroscience and genetics of complex traits. The work will be based on translating research findings into treatments for patients.

To mark the signing, a cooperative research symposium featuring lectures from staff from both universities was held earlier in the day at Columbia University Medical Center. In addition, Professor Muscatelli also gave a lecture. He spoke about the funding challenges facing universities in the current economic climate and compared US funding models with those in the UK.

Welcome from the International Dean

As the International Dean for the Americas I am writing to update you on our activities in the region. My role as dean is a challenging one, representing and promoting the whole University across a huge and diverse region. The initial task has been to give focus to the University’s activities in the Americas. Meeting with representatives from other universities visiting Glasgow as well as travelling to their institutions is an important part of the job.

During 2011, I shall be overseeing our strategic partnership with Columbia University as well as building on the many other research and teaching relationships with our Universitas 21 partners. Exchange partners provide unrivalled opportunity for an international experience for Glasgow students.

Earlier this year I was able to attend alumni events in Boston and Washington, DC. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to see our alumni ambassadors in action, promoting Glasgow to prospective students by sharing their experiences of living and studying in the city. The enormous enthusiasm for Glasgow was very encouraging and I very much look forward to meeting more alumni in May at our forthcoming events.

Professor David Fearn
International Dean for the Americas
After many years of nursing on isolated Aboriginal reserves, often hundreds of miles from the nearest road, David Bateman (known as Dave) came to the University of Glasgow in 1994 to pursue a Masters in Public Health.

Dave and his wife Susie really enjoyed Glasgow, Scotland and University life. ‘I am not sure which was more challenging though, school, deciphering accents or being a new father. I remember carting my son to the Barras, the pubs, trivia nights, hiking up Ben Lomond, and to the Graduate House for overseas student association meetings (and a few pints). I remember a terrible snow storm where my Canadian driving skills came in handy freeing two stuck cars, and for once I was the best at snowball throwing. I also remember walking through the campus looking at buildings older than any in Canada, having stated to the University of Toronto office (which was responsible for assessing scholastic equivalencies) that there was no need to assess my Masters as Glasgow had probably got it right after 500 or so years!’

High, from the Canadian Rockies, Canmore, Alberta

Since returning to Canada, Dave has worked as a nurse, taught and developed University programmes and has been an administrator. He has been a plenary speaker on disasters and has developed rural disaster and infection and pandemic plans. Presently he is the site manager for the hospital in Canmore, Alberta.

For the past three years he has been a Health Delegate for the Canadian Red Cross and has been involved locally with detention monitoring for refugee claimants and internationally as a nurse, infection control specialist and administrator in disasters after cyclone Gustav and the earthquake in January 2010. In April of this year he is heading back to Haiti to work with the Ministry of Health and Haitian Red Cross to facilitate a smooth handover of the hospital.

‘Since that day when my wife encouraged me to look overseas for schooling, my life has been ever more fulfilling. Attaining my MPH has opened doors for me, with the most rewarding being my work with the Canadian Red Cross and truly feeling a part of a humanitarian effort.’

Dave enjoys life in the Canadian Rockies with his wife Susie and their two sons, Dexter (15) who was born at the Queen Mother’s Hospital in Glasgow and Morgan (13) who was born in Canmore. ‘After two generations of my family being in Canada, I have put a little Scottish back into the family heritage, although my sons are not sure why I call them big Jessies’.

New memorial recognises first African American to qualify as a doctor

A memorial was erected at Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York in September of last year at the unmarked grave of one of Glasgow’s most remarkable graduates.

James McCune Smith was the first African American to be awarded a university medical degree and practice medicine in the United States.

James McCune Smith’s descendants unveiled a new headstone at the ceremony to commemorate his many achievements. Greta Blau, his great-great-granddaughter, realised she was descended from him after finding his name inscribed in a family bible. After some genealogical research to confirm the family connection, Greta learned that James’s children passed, lived and were identified as white in society after his death.

James was born in New York City, to parents who were former slaves, and began his education at the African Free School in the city. Racial discrimination barred him from attending any American medical schools so he crossed the Atlantic and studied at the University of Glasgow, where there were no barriers to education. He received a bachelor’s degree in 1835, a master’s degree in 1836, and his medical degree in 1837.

He subsequently practiced medicine in New York for 25 years and was involved in the anti-slavery and suffrage movements, contributing to and editing abolitionist newspapers and serving as an officer of many organizations for the improvement of social conditions in the black community. A prolific writer, he opposed the American Colonization Society’s plan to repatriate African-Americans and he was active in the Underground Railroad during the civil war. James died in 1865 aged 52 shortly before slavery was outlawed in the US with the passage of the 13th Amendment.
Richard Rockefeller receives honorary degree

Richard Rockefeller, EdM, MD, Trustee and Chair of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, was made a Doctor of Science at a ceremony at the Carlyle Hotel, New York on Tuesday 26 October 2010.

Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Anton Muscatelli conferred the degree upon Dr Rockefeller and Tessa Holyoake, Professor of Experimental Haematology and Director of the Paul O’Gorman Leukaemia Research Centre, who nominated Dr Rockefeller for the award delivered the oration on the night. The official ceremony was followed by a small celebration dinner at the hotel.

Dr Rockefeller, who is the great-grandson of the industrialist John D Rockefeller, was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukaemia in the year 2000. Thanks to a breakthrough in drug treatment around that time he is currently well and off all treatment. He officially opened the Paul O’Gorman Leukaemia Research Centre in Glasgow in May 2008. Opening the centre, Dr Rockefeller paid tribute to the staff and said their work is vital. He said: ‘The leukaemias are among the harshest of cancers. Much progress has been made to date, but a great deal remains to be done. I have chosen to support the Paul O’Gorman Leukaemia Research Centre because among all the world’s researchers, Dr Tessa Holyoake and her extraordinary staff stand out as offering the greatest promise of a medical cure for the leukaemia from which I have suffered.’

For 20 years to 2009 Richard was chairman of the United States advisory board of the international aid group Doctors Without Borders and has often gone into the field with them as an advisor. As Trustee and Chair of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund he spends his time with a variety of non-profit companies and foundations, with interests ranging from community revitalisation to oceans protection.

Forthcoming Events

Atlanta pub night
Alumni and friends are invited to join Chris Berry, Professor of Political Theory, on Friday, 20 May from 6.30pm at TAP 1180 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309. The get-together is an opportunity to meet with fellow alumni and enjoy after work drinks on the patio.

Chicago drinks and networking evening
Join Professor David Fearn, International Dean for the Americas, on Wednesday, 25 May at Osteria Via Stato, 620 North State Street, Chicago, from 6.30 pm for drinks and small bites. Meet with fellow alumni and friends to socialise and network before the Memorial Day holiday weekend!

San Francisco
Alumni are invited to attend on Wednesday, 1 June at Hotel Durant, Berkeley from 6.30pm for networking and drinks. Socialise with alumni from the local area, the San Francisco Alumni Association contacts and Professor David Fearn, International Dean for the Americas.

Toronto Young Alumnus of the Year Presentation Dinner
Alumni and friends are invited to this dinner event on Saturday, 28 May to celebrate the achievements of the 2010 Young Alumnus of the Year winner, Dr Patrick Gunning (BSc 2001, PhD 2005). Dr Gunning is an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and was honoured at the 2010 University Christmas Dinner in Glasgow for his exceptional accomplishments in the field of cancer research.

The Young Alumnus of the Year Award was established in 2001 as part of the University’s 550th celebrations and this event is an opportunity for our alumni to join and celebrate Patrick’s achievements on Canadian soil.

For further information and to reserve your place at any of the above events please email emma.sloan@glasgow.ac.uk or visit www.glasgow.ac.uk/alumni/events.
Events round up

Atlanta reception and exhibition
The High Museum of Art in Atlanta provided the wonderful venue for the alumni reception on Thursday, 14 October. The event, in conjunction with the National Galleries of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh, was a celebration of Scotland and the new exhibition Venetian Masterpieces from the National Galleries of Scotland. Guests were welcomed to the High by Director Michael Shapiro. Tour groups were led by Michael Clarke, Director of the National Galleries and curator of the exhibition, which includes two masterpieces by Titian, Diana and Actaeon, and Diana and Callisto.

Burns celebrations in Houston
Houston saw at least two major Burns Suppers in January and Glasgow alumni were prominent in both. At the Westside Burns Supper Association event on 22 January Robert Wylie (BSc Hons, Nat Phil 1978) gave a spirited Address to the Haggis. Houston’s Heather & Thistle Association held its Supper on 29 January and the Immortal Memory was given by Dr Tony Grogan (MD 1959) from Winnipeg, Canada.

Boston Burns night
80 guests gathered at the Downtown Harvard Club of Boston for this year’s event on Thursday, 10 February. Clark McGinn was on hand to expertly Address the Haggis which was piped in by Mike MacNintch and Tom Pixton who entertained throughout the night with Scottish tunes. We were delighted to welcome back Kirsten Cairns who sang beautifully and led the group in a rendition of Auld Lang Syne to round off the celebrations.

Washington, DC Burns night
A lively night was enjoyed by all on Saturday, 12 February at the beautiful historic home of President James Monroe, the Arts Club of Washington. Alumni, friends and prospective students enjoyed Scottish tunes from Becky Ross (fiddle), Karin Loya (cello) and Bob Mitchell (piper). Guests were treated to a plentiful supply of steaming haggis, neeps and tatties and before the night was finished, managed to drink the bar dry of its supply of whisky!

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