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Welcome to the winter edition of The Caledonian

The new format of the magazine, which now appears quarterly, has been well received across the University. In this latest edition, our cover story focuses on the launch of GCU New York. We are the first UK university to launch a campus in New York and GCU NY Vice-President Cara Smyth talks about the challenges in the run-up to the spring opening of the campus in Wooster Street, Soho.

Staying with an international theme, we also have a major feature on Professor Barbara Parfitt, who is standing down as the founding Principal of the Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing in Bangladesh. In a wide-ranging interview, Professor Parfitt recalls her incredibly diverse career and explains why proper retirement isn’t an option for her.

One of GCU’s latest honorary graduates, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, also talks about the international challenge of feeding and educating the world’s poorest children. The founder of Mary’s Meals explains how his organisation is now helping 800,000 children and his vision is for every child in the world to receive at least one meal a day in their place of education.

We also discover why international social work academic Professor Stephen Webb decided to return to Scotland after six years as Director of a leading research institute in Australia. In his role as head of GCU’s social work programme, Professor Webb discusses his research ambitions for the university, his interest in social justice and how that chimes with GCU’s For the Common Good mission.

We hope you enjoy these and the other features we have compiled for this issue of The Caledonian and, of course, we always welcome your feedback and suggestions for future editorial content.
What has been the reaction to the arrival of GCU in New York and what feedback have you received, particularly from other education providers, civic leaders and other potential stakeholders?

The reaction has been fantastic. New York is home to a number of leading institutions with a vast history, such as NYU, Columbia, Pace and other institutions such as Parsons, FIT, and the New School which have unique programmes here. In preparation for the launch, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Pamela Gillies, had introduced GCU to the key universities here who have offered wonderful support and we continue to develop these relationships. It is not seen as a competitive environment, but collaborative.

The city is particularly pleased to have its first UK university campus. We have had strong support and interest from the UK side as GCU presents a unique opportunity for international partnerships and exchanges in learning, business and social causes. Our goal is to utilise the New York campus to expand further the strategic partnerships that the University already has in place and continues to develop.

In addition, the New York community, from city to business leaders, has been incredibly welcoming to our entry, our programmes and particularly to our social mission. A terrific thing about New York is its robust and diverse population, its participatory nature and the vast number of international communities that call New York home. With such a large population, different entities focus on adding value to the community and we are pleased to be joining forces with them.

What stage are you at with the design and building work and what is the expected timeline for completion?

The building is in the heart of Soho on the cusp of many vibrant neighbourhoods. The campus has been fully designed and is currently under construction. We will be open in the early part of 2014 and are already planning our first series of programmes. It is an exciting time and we are looking forward to the spring opening.

The GCU London campus is much admired for its imaginative use of space and its learning environment. What can you tell colleagues about the vision for the GCU New York campus?

Professor Karen Stanton and the London team have done a wonderful job in bringing such great success to GCU. We know we have big shoes to fill in New York in order to follow their example. Much of our planning and design work has followed the format of the London campus, which is so engaging and welcoming. The vision for New York incorporates design and modern technology to create a learning venue that will be a centre for divergent thinking, education and community outreach activities.

We will follow Glasgow and London by having a Caledonian Club for young students and their families as part of our community engagement model. The local community around the campus area is very excited about this, as are we.

GCU NY is located in an area that is being transformed as part of the city’s urban regeneration programme. GCU London’s Spitalfields base has undergone a similar transformation. Do you think the similarities between the two locations will be reflected in the character of GCU NY?

There are definitely significant synergies between the campuses, both being located in transformed areas of the cities that are full of vibrant activity and retailers, galleries and residential neighbourhoods. As the Wooster Street campus is located near so many important neighbourhoods it will allow us to grow in many ways and tap in to the interesting cultural treasures that NYC has to offer, including the lower East Side, Chinatown, Tribeca and Nolita, all of which our school borders. The character of GCU is to welcome our neighbours on to campus and spill out into the surrounding areas in an effort to have a positive impact on our community.

Are there any unique aspects to the design/development of GCU NY that you are able to share at this time?

64 Wooster is a ground and lower level location in the heart of New York’s landmark Cast-Iron District. The building includes...
Vice President of GCU New York Cara Smyth shares the plans for the University’s new campus in Soho.

period detailing, 45 linear feet of street frontage, skylighting/daylighting and extended ceiling heights. The interior will be a modern design with nods to the period of the building itself in the materials/furnishings. The layout includes a solution for the dual requirements of school function and open event space for Town Hall lectures. We have worked to be eco-friendly and maximise energy efficiencies.

GCU NY will initially offer short executive courses and masterclasses, with a view to offering postgraduate programmes in the future. Those programmes are still being developed, but can you give a flavour of what subjects will initially be offered, and have any specific guest lecturers been lined up to deliver masterclasses so far?
We are in discussions with a number of thought leaders both here in New York and from the UK. They are professors and professionals who are experts in subjects including the business of fashion, social business and microfinance, risk, global talent management, sustainability etc.

Full postgraduate programmes will only be available after the University is granted a charter by the New York State Education Department. Can you explain the background to this process and how long it will take?
This is a standard process that all institutions must undergo in New York if interested in offering accredited programmes and we expect the charter will be granted in time for the next academic year in September. Although a lengthy process, the activities surrounding the education licence were undertaken on a timely basis and various GCU teams were involved in assuring all areas were professionally handled, including course work, student experience, compliance and so on. Institutions are subject to peer review and site visits. Through this process, the state ensures that we have the curriculum and learning environment in place to meet the educational needs and higher education standards of New York universities and the population they serve.

When GCU NY is granted its charter, will the PG courses be designed and delivered as an extension of GCU’s three academic schools in Glasgow, as is the case in GCU London, or will a completely different approach be required for the US market?
In fact, we are closely following the
Glasgow and London models. Our initial focus will be on programmes offered by Glasgow School for Business and Society and the British School of Fashion, extending in time to other market needs. We will integrate the experience and activities of Glasgow and London with sensitivities to best practices and interests of our New York audience.

GCU New York will use the most modern and dynamic teaching methods, including what’s known as the ‘Town Hall’ approach. Can you explain this in more detail? GCU is at the forefront of embracing and creating future learning methods. Town Hall formats – where professionals or professors speak about specific issues or ideas and afterwards participate in a general ‘public’ discussion, often involving a panel and a moderator – are currently being used live and online. There are a growing number of schools working to evolve traditional methods of teaching to attract new audiences and encourage new solutions. We know from the success of TED talks that people are keen on short and rich programmes driven by compelling ideas. We are exploring a number of styles for setting up our inclusive programmes as well as on how to integrate content and educational material in a way that is exciting, dynamic and offers the potential for further exploration.

How big a role will new and innovative technology play in learning and teaching at GCU NY? Innovative technology will be key for all learning in the future and at GCU NY this will be a key part of our overall agenda. We look forward to using our new space as a vehicle for experiential and online learning. We are also exploring how social media and live streaming will play a role in furthering our content and allowing connectivity for people all over the globe. For example, if we host an event at GCU New York on supply chain integration in fashion, we can find a way to livestream this to communities in Glasgow, London or Bangladesh. The opportunities with technology are exciting and appear endless.

What are some of the key factors which will attract potential students to GCU NY? I think students will be attracted to GCU by the quality of our truly unique educational offerings. Our ‘For the Common Good’ motto and activity are key to our evolving community. There is a tremendous movement underway to create a better world. There is a focus on social business and responsibility, community engagement, impact investing, resilience engineering, health services, responsible risk management etc. that all have a new tone and approach. Our Chancellor, Professor Yunus, is certainly one of the most powerful examples of creating practical change that results in a better society. People want to be part of that. GCU is at the centre of transformative education that can support the positive development of the world.

Will there be the opportunity for GCU Glasgow, London and New York students to participate in transatlantic trimester exchanges? The possibility of international exchanges, sharing information and experiences, is one of the most exciting features of GCU. We are a globally-networked university and as such, we present terrific opportunities for our students, professors and researchers. New York is home to strong fashion and financial service sectors as well as media, technology, insurance and health. Manhattan is also where the United Nations and the New York stock exchanges are headquartered which provide potentially exciting collaborations. As GCU is a signatory to the United Nations PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) and is the first Scottish university to be a member of the UN Global Compact, we are keen to develop engagement possibilities alongside their initiatives as well.

There will be a core team of academic staff based at GCU New York. How will this be made up? The total number in our core team and what the composition of staff will look like is still being finalised, but key staff are currently being recruited, including the Dean, local academics and other staff.

You come from a ‘business of fashion’ background and have held senior roles in Burberry, Jil Sander and Jeffrey. How have you found the transition from the fashion industry to academia? I actually felt very compelled to make the switch. I truly love fashion and all my roles in the field, but strongly believe that the landscape has changed. Business and industry can now be married with social concerns and this is where I want to invest my time and efforts. GCU is at the forefront of education and practical applications in this area. I am constantly energised by the synergies I see opening up in areas that are ripe for collaboration and exploration.

What have been the biggest challenges and achievements related to GCU NY so far, and what are the biggest challenges you face in 2014? The challenges involve juggling the many details of the new building while further expanding our network and continuing to establish our reputation in New York. However, the achievements have been notable: we had a wonderful launch event in September and since then we have been participating in various initiatives and events and are making a name for ourselves. For 2014, we will continue the momentum, opening our doors to the numerous possibilities we hope to bring to New York.

In his launch address, Chancellor Yunus spoke about his hope that GCU New York would become a centre for discussion with a view to promoting the importance of sustainability, particularly in fashion. How important will this role be in differentiating GCU NY from other education providers? As New York is one of the key fashion centres of the world, we have an audience that we hope will explore new solutions in the business of fashion, innovation and ways to promote sustainability and environmental and social issues. GCU has the credibility and opportunity to facilitate education and change in these areas like no other institution in the world.
A month in the life of the Yunus Chair

GCU’s Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health explores the relationship between social business, health and wellbeing, focusing GCU’s work in vulnerable communities, working with several social enterprises and employing researchers and students from anthropology, health economics, social sciences, statistics and more.

November was a busy month for the Yunus Centre and its Chair, Professor Cam Donaldson. Although a little more action-packed than most, it reflects what has been a very strong year for the Centre and its team of 15 staff and seven PhD students.

November 8
Spent the week in Kuala Lumpur where I served as the International Chair and co-organiser with the Grameen Creative Lab and National University of Malaysia, of the First International Research Conference on Social Business. This conference involved more than 30 presentations from researchers in 11 different countries. For a number of years, we have been trying to build a research network out of the universities associated with Professor Yunus.

I presented a paper together with Michael Roy on our work on conceptualising and evidencing social enterprise as a public health intervention. GSBS senior lecturer, Dr Simon Teasdale, presented on ‘Tactical mimicry of social enterprise in the English Third Sector’, an excellent piece showing how organisations cunningly adapt their labelling and behaviours in order to attract government funding, and, so, may not be as genuine as they make out to be.

November 9
Joined colleagues Simon and Michael attending the Fifth Annual Global Social Business Summit in Malaysia which was attended by Nobel Laureate and GCU Chancellor, Professor Yunus.

November 10–11
Went on to London to attend the Medical Research Council’s Methodology Research Panel. This is where I put on my health economics (as opposed to social business) ‘hat’ and assess up to 30 grants from a health economics perspective. I also serve as Deputy Chair. The Panel comprises leading university-based researchers from various health-related disciplines, and so the discussions about the grants are often fascinating and informative. There are high standards, and it is hard to be successful, but we are pleased when we know we have spent money on a really good project.

November 19–20
Attended and led two workshops in Wick and Inverness, where I joined health economics colleague Marissa Collins in working with the Health and Social Care Partnership and the Joint Improvement Team of the Scottish Government to pilot economics-based approaches to aiding such partnerships in managing their limited budgets.

November 21
Went to Oldham City Council, this time with Dr Olga Biosca and PhD student Yishen Liu, to discuss how the Yunus Centre might be able to work with them in their lead role as a Cooperative Council. We discussed how our work could inform the establishment of fair credit schemes.

November 29
Attended the Association of Directors of Social Work meeting in Edinburgh on ‘Health and social care integration: delivering the outcomes’ at which I delivered a plenary on ‘Delivering outcomes in times of austerity: a health economics perspective’. The main thrust of this was that, although it is claimed that recent reforms to better integrate health and social care will result in a better balance of care for communities, we are not very good at putting in place the processes to bring such better balance into being.

PS
Did I mention popping back to London to teach MSc Public Health at our GCU campus there? We teach these students a health economics module which helps them learn about how economics can be useful in setting priorities. Looking back at all this - maybe I need a few lessons myself.
How Scotland drives the social work agenda

As one of the world’s leading international academics in social work, Professor Stephen Webb has had a profound impact on social work practice and methodology. Roisin Eadie meets the new head of GCU’s social work discipline

Professor Stephen A. Webb sits at a desk piled high with books. On closer inspection, it becomes apparent that they are all about social work. And they have all been written, edited or feature chapters by a certain Professor Stephen A. Webb.

As one of the world’s leading academics in social work, Professor Webb has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on international social work practice and methodology.

His 2001 article, Some considerations on the validity of evidence-based practice in social work, is the world’s most cited social work publication and is ranked as the most influential journal article in the discipline over the past decade.

That recognition opened up a range of international research opportunities. During his six years as Director of the Research Institute for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing at Newcastle University in New South Wales, Australia, Professor Webb played a key role in generating externally funded research income of over $A2.5 million. His group of social workers in Australia achieved the highest possible research rating by becoming the top-rated group in the country in 2012.

Yet when the offer came to head up GCU’s social work programme, he didn’t have to think too long or hard before packing up and heading back to the UK.

“Scotland is a country that drives the social work agenda, the traditions and culture are progressively different and there is a stronger social justice agenda. My experience of working in Glasgow in the 1990s and today is that there is a stronger sense of people working together to achieve outcomes that are good for all people. As a whole, Australian life is highly individualistic. GCU’s For the Common Good mission really struck me as distinctive and very forward looking,” said Professor Webb.

Professor Webb is combining his return to teaching with building the profile and capacity of GCU social work research.

“While GCU is very good at the quality of student experience and the calibre of its teaching programmes, there are great opportunities to build the University’s social work research and income generation. It is vital that social work at the University develops a distinctive research agenda that draws on the social science methodologies and frontier edge concepts,” he said.

“In Australia, I was the director of a big research institute so my involvement in front-line practice was minimal and I didn’t do much teaching, except at postgraduate level. That’s something that I really missed. They say that working with students keeps you forever young and I think there is something in that.

“The interaction in tutorials and lectures is valuable and important for an academic and I am enjoying being back in the thick of things with colleagues in the department. The social work students and staff here at...
GCU are very supportive of each other. The place has a good vibe to it.”

Social work graduates will encounter challenging situations throughout their careers, from cases surrounding the abuse of vulnerable, older people to working with offenders or those with mental health or drug-related problems.

“We need to seriously rethink the notion of community. Communities reveal contradictions, cracks and tensions. There used to be something called community social work, where social workers lived and worked in the community and became an integral part of it by forming meaningful relationships. That has almost disappeared. Many people advocate reinventing this type of preventative community work and there is debate about what a new approach would look like,” said Professor Webb.

The social work profession has found itself in the firing line politically and through the media following recent high-profile child abuse and child death cases.

“Those outside the profession might say: ‘just get the kids out of that house’ or ‘stop interfering in private lives’ but social workers have to balance this tension and work within the law. Their decisions have to stand up in court. Evidence-informed decisions are crucial. They can’t just go on a gut feeling,” said Professor Webb.

“When a child dies due to abuse, who should be held accountable? Some say the police, others blame social workers. In those situations, it is about being able to estimate what’s going to happen in conditions of extreme uncertainty while staying within the law and dealing with limited resources.

“Social workers are encouraged to work with the families and to use a variety of strategies and interventions. I believe that for every child who comes to public attention, there are thousands who have been protected, kept safe and secure.

“A situation that social workers are encountering more and more is the emotional neglect of children – leaving them in a room on their own all day, not feeding them, not talking to them. Not cuddling them or forming attachment bonds, not providing them with enough stimulation, not washing their clothes.

“As a society we have become more aware of child neglect. When I was a kid, it was unlikely that social services would be going around housing estates checking up on reports of child neglect but these days schools, family centres, police and hospitals are much more attuned to identifying children in need of help and protection.”

While Professor Webb headed down a scholarly route, he well remembers his experiences as a volunteer and residential social worker in children’s homes.

“I helped out at a local community organisation for people with disabilities. I continued to work on a part-time basis throughout my time at university, including spells in children’s homes and a residential secure unit where I worked with kids who had history of offending,” he said.

“I guess social work has always interested me because of its focus on issues of disadvantage, inequality and social justice.”

After completing an undergraduate degree in behavioural sciences, Professor Webb went to Oxford University to complete postgraduate studies. He gained his professional ticket for practice and Certificate of Qualified Social Worker at Oxford University while taking a specialist degree in social work.

His varied career has included family therapy, working with children with mental health problems, lecturing at Dundee University and the University of Sussex, and working with social services.

Now he finds himself in a position where he is helping to select and educate the social workers of the future and prepare them for the challenges ahead.

“The social work mission is always going to be caught up with key value questions about justice and equality, discrimination, racism and sexism as well as being able to deliver ‘best practice’ services for people that help them in their daily lives.

“GCU social work education is highly regarded by employers such as social services and the voluntary sector. Employers actually look to take on our graduates because they have been trained to such a high standard and are well equipped for the challenges they will face in these difficult times.”
Ayesha’s enduring appeal

Like most nine-year-olds, Ayesha Siddiqui is full of fun. Yet since 2011 she’s been fighting a rare form of leukaemia. Her mum, Noreen, a senior lecturer at GCU, tells Linda Robertson how University staff and students have rallied behind the campaign to help Ayesha...
I think, therefore I find a creative solution.
Ayesha Siddiqui's eyes twinkle with mischief as she clambers on the adventure playground in her garden, shrugging off her mum's calls to be careful.

Bundled up against the winter chill in a cosy furry gilet and colourful leggings that she tie-dyed herself in art class, she edges her way in front of mum, Noreen, and the pair of them slide down the chute together, their heads tipped back in laughter.

She's had 10 cycles of intensive chemotherapy, numerous hospital stays and has lost her hair three times. She's still undergoing treatment, but as she scoots from the chute to the swing, grinning as she goes, anyone can see that this is a girl who clearly isn't letting illness stand in her way.

“She has always been a boisterous girl, completely fearless and full of energy, and she still is – she's desperate for horse riding lessons,” says Noreen, a senior lecturer in Fashion Marketing in the Glasgow School for Business and Society.

“She doesn’t mind going to hospital as she realises that's where she gets the medicine to help her fight the cancer but she hates taking the drugs and how they make her feel. The worst is the hair loss. She has lost her hair completely three times and every now and then her hair thins out.”

Ayesha has the Philadelphia chromosome positive variant of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and she might need a bone marrow transplant.

Following her diagnosis, the family launched a campaign, Ayesha's Appeal, to raise money for Anthony Nolan – a charity that helps to save the lives of people with blood cancer – and to encourage as many people as possible to join the bone marrow donor register, especially those from ethnic minority and mixed race backgrounds, like Ayesha, who are under-represented.

Within six months, Ayesha’s Appeal had reached its target of £150,000 – it now stands at £180,000 – and the family have recruited almost 1000 people to the register through donor drives, two of which have taken place at GCU. Future donor drives will be undertaken by students from GCU and it’s hoped to establish a Bone Marrow Group at the University.

The family's fundraising and awareness efforts have also earned them a string of awards. Dad, Nadeem, a leading cancer surgeon at Glasgow Royal Infirmary who helps administer his daughter's chemotherapy treatments, was named overall Great Scot and one of four Unsung Heroes in the Sunday Mail's Great Scot Awards.

Noreen was recently named Individual Fundraiser of the Year at the first Anthony Nolan awards and was commended in the Shirley Nolan Award for Special Recognition while Ayesha received a commendation in the Little Hero category. Earlier this year, Ayesha was a winner in the Daily Record's Our Little Hero awards and Noreen is also in the running for Tesco Mum of the Year.

“The awards have all happened at the same time – it’s all been a complete surprise,” says Noreen. “But I feel that we’ve got a platform that we can build upon and use what we’ve achieved to get more people involved as 1600 people need a bone marrow transplant in the UK alone.”

Life for the Siddiquis changed forever when Ayesha was diagnosed with leukaemia in the spring of 2011.

“She had a few friends at home on a play date and came in from the garden and mentioned her head was sore,” recalls Noreen.

“I thought it may have been a head cold or she was developing a viral infection. She seemed tired, a little pale, and had lost her appetite. After a few days we took her to the GP and got antibiotics which perked her up and she started to eat small amounts of food but she was still tired.”

When she finished her antibiotics and there was no real improvement, Nadeem took her to A&E at Yorkhill Sick Children’s Hospital.

“He insisted on a blood test and within 20 minutes the results indicated something wasn’t right and she was admitted into the oncology ward that evening.”

Ayesha began a programme of treatment then doctors discovered she had Philadelphia chromosome.

“Normally you see it in adults who develop leukaemia. It’s very rare in children,” says Noreen. “We followed a protocol that required her to have a bone marrow transplant and on three different occasions we were told that they’d found a match but…”

‘We found a bone marrow match three times but none was good enough’
when it actually came to genetic type matching, as they refer to it, they found it wasn’t good enough.”

It was after the third attempt that the idea of the fundraising appeal was first mooted by a neighbour who made the approach to Anthony Nolan.

“We didn’t know what was happening with her treatment and I wasn’t that keen, I have to say, to open up to the public. I can still remember the first day a newspaper came to do a picture and I couldn’t speak, I was in tears. But when we started the giving page online everybody began to donate and it just snowballed.”

Cosy and settled, Ayesha sits down on the sofa to strum her guitar before swapping it for her violin – she’s been taking lessons – regaling her mum and little brother Saif, aged 6, with a burst of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, her face a picture of concentration.

“Ayesha was six when she was diagnosed so it’s been very hard and a learning curve,” says Noreen.

There’s the cocktail of medication she has to take every day – Noreen reels off a stream of up to 17 different tablets – and weekly hospital check-ups.

Ayesha is on a 28-day medication cycle which requires oral and intravenous chemotherapy as well as steroids, which make her diabetic.

“Philadelphia chromosome is so rare that I only know of another four cases in the UK and most of the research comes from America,” says Noreen.

While awaiting the outcome of Ayesha’s current treatment, the family want to take their fundraising and donor drives to England: “There’s a much larger ethnic minority/mixed race population than here so we want to encompass the whole of the UK,” says Noreen.

“We didn’t realise we were the largest individual contributor to Anthony Nolan so we’re from a small city and Scotland has only a population of five million. It’s amazing what we’ve achieved with limited resources but it’s testament to the people of Scotland. It makes you feel that things are going to be OK because so many people want to help.”

GCU staff rally round to support Ayesha

From fundraising events to bone marrow donor drives, Noreen’s GCU colleagues have thrown their weight behind Ayesha’s Appeal.

“Staff have been very generous in their support, from organising and contributing to bake sales and donor drives on campus to participating in fundraising activities such as the Women’s 10K and ladies’ lunches,” says Noreen.

“Dr Julie McColl ran a half marathon and raised over £600 for Ayesha’s Appeal while Kate Lennon helped to organise three bake sales which raised £2000. The ladies running the Women’s 10K on a rain-soaked day was one to remember. I think there were 10 members of staff who took part and raised over £4000 with some of the sponsorship coming from staff members.”

Noreen has been touched by the reaction from colleagues and the backing she’s had from GCU, which she says has made a “huge difference”.

“When Ayesha was first diagnosed, I met with my head of department to explain my situation and he was very sympathetic, listened carefully and gave me my options. The HR department was very good too. I’ve always felt GCU has been supportive.

“It’s also nice to remember that I am an academic and I have expertise in something. Many people who I’ve met through fundraising know me as Ayesha’s mum or someone who works for Anthony Nolan. When I tell them that I am a senior lecturer at GCU and have a PhD in internet retailing they are a little shocked.”

• Ayesha’s Appeal: http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Ayeshaappeal
• Anthony Nolan: www.anthonynolan.org
• Glasgow Marrow: glasgowmarrow@gmail.com
It’s a storyline that could have come from any top TV drama: successful journalist reads an article in a rival newspaper and his life is changed forever.

The journalist was Mark Stevenson, the newspaper was The Herald, and the article was an interview with Shed Media Group Chief Executive Eileen Gallagher about GCU’s MA TV Fiction Writing course. Mark, now a successful television screenwriter, has kept that crumpled piece of newsprint ever since.

The former Daily Express journalist has gone on to write for EastEnders, Casualty and Holby City and he shared his story with this year’s MA TV Fiction Writing cohort and industry leaders at a recent MA TV award ceremony. Mark graduated in 2011 from a programme which in less than five years has had a major impact on the UK television industry, attracting almost £500,000 in scholarship funding from, among others, the BBC and Warner Bros. who have recognised its crucial role in nurturing the next generation of TV screenwriting talent.

“The course has exceeded my expectations,” said Eileen, who played a vital part in its genesis. “I didn’t expect the students to go on to get good jobs as quickly as they have done. For some of them to get on to the writing teams at Hollyoaks and EastEnders is an incredible success.

Writers can spend 10 or 15 years of their careers trying to get on to those shows, and this just highlights that we’re able to give our graduates a great step up.”

The course was designed to fulfil a particular business need. With many programmes offering film-writing, there was nothing teaching the discipline of writing for long-running dramas, something which was becoming a problem within the industry.

“Many of the graduates coming to us for jobs had inappropriate qualifications or experience – film-writing degrees, or something in general media,” explained Eileen. “So we started thinking about how we could solve the problem for ourselves and for the industry.”

“Brian Park, Ann McManus and I chose to approach GCU because we wanted our course to bring in voices that would never normally be heard on television,” said Eileen. “The University is a perfect fit because it’s so inclusive, and that’s the tone we wanted for the course.”

The programme launched in 2009 and, as it goes from strength to strength, its success and popularity can be credited to a number of factors.

“It’s partly down to the people we have teaching the writing part of the course,” said Dr Catriona Miller, MA TV Fiction Writing Programme Leader. “Ann Marie di Mambro and Chris Dolan are themselves practising writers, and it’s important for our students to work with people involved in the industry.

“We’ve also developed close relationships in the business and we’ve had TV commissioners such as Mal Young [who created Doctors and Holby City] and Stuart Murphy (director of entertainment channels at Sky) coming in to work with the students. Having Eileen and Ann from Shed involved has given us gravitas – they were described as TV royalty to me and when people discovered they were part of the course, it really opened doors for us. They’ve been great supporters.”

As GCU begins to welcome new applicants for its 2014/15 MA TV course, Eileen has set her sights on broadening the programme’s horizons. “We want this to be a UK-wide course,” she said. “I think we got around 70 applicants for the last intake but I want us to get around 200 or 300 next time.”

And Mark’s storyline had its own happy ending. “If it wasn’t for this course,” he said, “I wouldn’t be a screenwriter. It’s as simple as that.”
When the idea to create a global set of responsible business values was first mooted in the early 2000s, few working on the project could have foreseen how crucial the question of corporate leadership was about to become.

Only a few years later the global financial crisis threw the role of the world’s most powerful business leaders into sharper public relief than ever before.

“There was a recognition that the old model of doing business – namely focusing on the financial bottom line of a company – had caused the crisis, so as a consequence it has made us ask questions, such as what is the purpose of a company – is it merely serving shareholders or does it serve a wider set of interests, including environmental and social goals?” said Jonas Haertle, head of the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Secretariat at the UN Global Compact Office.

Haertle said that although the principles predated the 2008 financial crisis, sparked by the corporate mismanagement scandals at the likes of US energy giant Enron in 2001, the situation focused minds on what could be done to change things for the better.

“With PRME we are making the case that while it is important for a company to focus on financial gains, these gains must be in the long-term interests of society and also take into account environmental risks. The crisis helped us to make that case.”

The UN cannot achieve such momentous change alone, Haertle observed. And working bilaterally with private sector companies wasn’t sufficient either. To create a real and lasting transformation across public, private and third sectors, universities and business schools had to play their part – and the six principles for responsible management education, known as PRME, made, and continue to make, an excellent script.

Developed by an international task force of 60 deans, university presidents and official representatives of leading business schools and first launched in 2007, more than 530 institutions have now signed up to PRME, including GCU in January 2012.

It’s easy to see why PRME is such a neat fit for the University: PRME has developed educational resources in three areas – poverty reduction, gender equality and anti-corruption, all specialisms where GCU is particularly strong.

The University is keen to build on these foundations. Professor John Wilson, Executive Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Glasgow School for Business and Society, said: “GCU has pledged to engage in a continuous process of improvement with regard to embedding the principles within the curriculum.”

Which could sound like an arduous task, but that is not the case, according to Haertle.

“The main message that I stress, when I travel the world talking about this, >>>
is that there are already a lot of good work happening in institutions. Many institutions are already working in this direction and they are delighted to discover that they can scale up their effects and effectiveness through engaging with PRME. It’s not a hard sell.”

GCU has gone further than simply signing up to the principles. In recognition of changes already made – innovations such as the creation of the first MSc in Social Enterprise in Scotland in partnership with the Social Enterprise Academy, or the first MSc in Citizenship and Human Rights in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations – GCU joined the ‘PRME Champions’ group, a worldwide leadership network of 30 members chosen from the more than 500 signatories. GCU is also a member of the UN Global Compact, a linked initiative which is focused more closely on the private sector.

Dr Alec Wersun, GCU PRME leadership team, said: “GCU’s first Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) report, which organisations use to update partners and the PRME Secretariat, was extremely well received. The report – whose lead author was Dr Stephen Sinclair – won a Recognition of Excellence in Reporting award at the 2013 Global PRME Summit in Slovenia.”

So PRME is good for the University, facilitating networking on the world stage, and ensuring that GCU’s already well-established commitment to the common good reaches to the largest and most influential audience possible. But what does it mean for students? At its most basic, will the initiative make graduates more employable?

“There’s a realisation in many business sectors that you can’t just look to government for solutions to these huge societal and environmental challenges that we are facing,” Haertle said. “The principles enable students to get a more holistic view and they can then go on to help companies meet these challenges.”

A political scientist by training, Haertle is aware that change at universities and business schools will not, in itself, be enough. There must be a change in the perception of what constitutes a ‘good’ education. This means campaigning to change the structures around business education.

University league tables, for example, are a bugbear.

“The challenge we have is that mainstream rankings of business education are focused on short-term criteria. One of the best examples is the Financial Times ranking. One of its main criteria is how much money a student makes in their first job. That requires students to go for very highly paid posts so that the institution is highly ranked. “That only means that institutions are equipped at turning out students into highly paid sectors such as finance rather than sectors which might have very beneficial outcomes for the society that these businesses are in. The alternative is a system that puts higher emphasis on the benefits that an organisation can have for all society.”

Haertle admits that the PRME initiative is still in its early stages – there are a potential 13,000 educational signatories out there. However, though the end game comes when those students who have received a business education aligned to the principles enter senior management positions, Haertle said the initiative is already having a tangible impact.

“Some graduates go into mid-level positions or, through executive education, work even higher up. So we do see students from those universities which are aligned with PRME making a difference. However, the majority of students will rise over the next 20 years and the hope is that they stay engaged and retain their idealism.”

And if that happens – according to Haertle and the wider PRME movement – the catastrophic events of 2008 will remain a salutary lesson on the impact of poor corporate leadership and will not be repeated.

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**PRME Principles for Responsible Management Education**

**PRINCIPLE 1**

**PURPOSE:** We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

**PRINCIPLE 2**

**VALUES:** We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

**PRINCIPLE 3**

**METHOD:** We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

**PRINCIPLE 4**

**RESEARCH:** We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.

**PRINCIPLE 5**

**PARTNERSHIP:** We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

**PRINCIPLE 6**

**DIALOGUE:** We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.
Belinda Earl is one of the most talked about women in British fashion. The former Saturday shop girl rose through the ranks to become the UK’s highly-respected, albeit unofficial, ‘Queen of Retail’. Now, as Style Director of Marks and Spencer, Belinda has joined forces with GCU to find the fashion business leaders of the future.

In September, Marks and Spencer announced the launch of their M&S Studio @ Fashion Street within the British School of Fashion at GCU London as well as pledging £50,000 for the M&S Fashion Scholarship – annual bursaries which will provide support for a select number of students to study on one of the School’s four courses.

As the British School of Fashion opens its doors to the first M&S Scholars, Belinda explained exactly what she is looking for from the new cohort.

“We want students with a positive attitude,” she said. “They must be willing to learn and embrace the demands of an international retailer with a very strong brand like Marks and Spencer.”

Belinda laid the foundations for her own success in the fashion business at an early age. She began her career as a 16-year-old shop assistant in Debenhams before going on to study for a degree in economics at the University of Wales. After graduating, Belinda joined Harrods in 1985 as a merchandiser before returning to Debenhams. She worked her way through a number of promoted positions and, aged 40, was appointed their Chief Executive in 2000, making her the youngest ever CEO of a major UK retailer. She became Jaeger’s Chief Executive in 2004 before taking up her current role with Marks and Spencer in September 2012.

“We’ve been delighted to work with the University to create the M&S Studio @ Fashion Street,” said Belinda. “It really gives us the opportunity to be innovative and creative, and we’re really impressed with the British School of Fashion and the emphasis it has on developing the marketeers and brand managers of the future.”

In December, a panel of experts from M&S and the British School of Fashion met to select the M&S Scholars. Professor Christopher Moore, Director of the British School of Fashion, said: “We were absolutely judicious in terms of who we awarded these scholarships to. We selected people who were serious, who genuinely wanted to learn, who saw a career path emerging in front of them and who, without this scholarship, would not have been able to study with us.

“We chose robust, clear, professional applications from people about whom we could really say: ‘Yes, you deserve to be an M&S Scholar at the British School of Fashion’.”

The scholars will not only benefit from Marks and Spencer’s financial support during their studies, they will also have exclusive use of the M&S Studio @ Fashion Street, as well as receiving mentoring from the retailer.

“M&S will benefit from working with GCU, an auspicious educational institute,” Belinda explained. “But it’s more about the students. They’ll benefit from working with us during their studies and, as a business, we will embrace their learning and development and provide them with a number of opportunities to pursue.”

Her sentiment is echoed by Professor Moore, who believes that M&S’s core values of quality and style are closely aligned with those of the British School of Fashion.

“I’m convinced that our relationship will go from strength to strength,” he said. “As we produce M&S scholars of ability, character and success, I’m sure both parties will realise that it’s a very fruitful, strategic relationship.

“Belinda is one of the UK’s most respected and successful fashion business leaders. She has a wealth of experience in managing new talent within the world of fashion and it’s wonderful for us to have her involvement in this important initiative.”
INTERVIEW: MAGNUS MACFARLANE-BARROW

Why every child in the world deserves a free school meal

His mission may seem impossible to many, but more than 800,000 children worldwide already depend on him. Peter John Meiklem meets the founder of international children’s charity Mary’s Meals and GCU’s latest honorary graduate

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow hasn’t been home for days. He arrives at GCU direct from a fundraising trip to Los Angeles, having allowed himself only a brief pit stop in the Mary’s Meals Glasgow office to gather his thoughts.

As delighted as he is to be receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of the University from GCU, he has the look in his eyes of a man whose body clock has long since quit trying to keep up. But that, he explains, is what he does: “If it’s to do with Mary’s Meals I feel that I’m supposed to be standing up and telling people about it. The way people are moved to work all over the world is an incredible thing to watch. I feel that my own role – and those of the staff who are working every day on this – is to support that global movement.”

As you’d expect from a man who founded an organisation that now feeds 822,000 children worldwide, foreign travel is a bit of a theme. Mary’s Meals itself grew from one such trip. It was the early 90s, Magnus was working as a salmon farmer in his native Argyll, and Bosnia, a country he’d visited regularly throughout his childhood, was in the middle of a bloody civil war.

Magnus and his brother watched a news bulletin featuring somewhere in Bosnia they knew well – Medjugorje, a place of religious pilgrimage linked to the Virgin Mary.

“There was a report about refugees and how they were suffering. My brother and I started asking wouldn’t it be great if we could do a small thing to help those people. So we launched a very simple little appeal to family and friends. About three weeks after that, we found ourselves driving a Land Rover with all those donated things to Bosnia and delivering them to a refugee camp.”

On his return to Scotland, Magnus expected to go back to work. But the people who’d engaged with his earlier appeal had other plans. He found his house packed with new donations and, though he didn’t know it then, what is now Mary’s Meals had been born.

“It was only then that I thought about it, and prayed about it, and decided to give up my job. I had a little house in the village and I sold that and someone gave me a truck and at that point I decided to continue driving back and forth. I thought it would last a few months, maybe a year.”

The charity was initially called Scottish International Relief and carried out a range of projects in many different countries. Mary’s Meals – the delivery of one meal per day to children in a place of education – started life as a campaign but grew in importance until it became the sole aim and name of the charity in 2002. The significance of delivering the meal at school is the hope that in the longer term...
education will help provide a route out of poverty.

“We always bring it back to the simplicity. We don’t want to get tempted to complicate this and add on other parts,” Magnus explained.

And it’s this back to basics philosophy which connects so powerfully with the thousands-strong network of volunteers and donors who still provide the vast bulk of the charity’s funding. And although the charity has grown in size and scope, receiving Scottish Government and philanthropic donations, Magnus still prefers to see it as a “grass roots” organisation, one that is run out of the shed in Dalmally where he stacked his first Bosnian donations.

That a major worldwide aid organisation is run out of a tin shed is as much a reflection of the person who founded it as anything else. A tall, unassuming man – who played shinty for Scotland – he seems an unlikely front person for a multinational – who played shinty for Scotland – he seems an unlikely front person for a multinational aid agency. He says his chronic shyness led to him dropping out of a history and politics degree at Stirling University and he still gets nervous when asked to speak publicly on topics unrelated to the charity.

But ask him what prompted him to dedicate his life to helping others and the answer is not hard to come by: faith. He was brought up a devout Catholic and the influence of his religion on his life choices is a clear thread which runs throughout his conversation. He speaks of his “desire to put my faith at the centre of my life.” Which is not to say he is pious.

Speaking of growing up in the Highlands, he says: “That’s certainly not to say that I became a saintly teenager. I got into plenty of scrapes and had the usual teenage traumas. I had a life very similar to most teenagers – and probably a wild one at that. But I never lost my faith, it was always there, and I always came back to it when I had to make decisions.”

Mary’s Meals has around 200 paid staff. Most are based in Africa, in the charity’s largest projects in Liberia and Malawi. This number is dwarfed by the organisation’s army of volunteers – more than 65,000 in Malawi alone, and 700 based in the UK. They all work towards a single goal – the provision of one meal in a place of education for every child in the world.

“We always think about the next school or the next child on the waiting list – because there’s always someone next on the waiting list. That’s what drives me on.”

It’s a simple idea. Too simple say some of its detractors, questioning whether relying on a Scotland-based charity to feed so many children in Africa and beyond is first of all sustainable, and secondly contributing anything to tackling the deeper structural problems which lead to such widespread global hunger and entrenched poverty.

Magnus has heard the questions before, and quickly points out the fact that the Malawian government is now feeding more of its own children, basing some of its work on the Mary’s Meals example, adding that the charity sources as much of the food as possible from the countries they work in and therefore support local economies.

“Our vision is that every child in the world should be able to receive a meal every day in their place of education. We believe that’s possible. We don’t believe Mary’s Meals will deliver every one of those meals. Clearly it won’t, or shouldn’t even aspire to that. There are other organisations – particularly governments – who are and should be providing school meals.”

He bristles slightly, motivated, you suspect, by what he has seen, and the people he has met, on his travels: “There are between 3 and 4 million hungry children that no one is reaching just now; there’s 59 million out of school, so there’s clearly far more to be done.”

Married in 1996 to nurse Julie, whom Magnus met through the charity’s early work, he has seven children between the ages of two and 16. What was their reaction when they were introduced to the poverty Mary’s Meals works so hard to alleviate?

“They haven’t actually been to Africa. Please God that one day they’ll get that opportunity. Having seven kids is a big financial factor when you’re trying to get them somewhere. On Mary’s Meals salaries it’s not something I’d be able to do very easily. But hopefully one day. They all certainly want to. So as they get older, I’m saying we might take one out at a time.”

At first the answer is surprising, then less so when you think it through. Magnus is determined that the charity he founded should stay committed to its humble beginnings, knowing that that is Mary’s Meals great strength.

“It is a very simple concept that works. People love it on both sides of the work. People in the communities who volunteer to cook and serve the food believe in it because they see that it works – it changes the lives of their children. It’s the same here, in terms of the way people support it. They see it for what it is – something very simple that changes lives.”
Magnusson Award winner Helen Curran has been helping transform children’s lives with fledgling charity Eye Care Zambia.

Ophthalmic Dispensing student Helen used the award to fund her travel to Zambia and buy essential equipment for the charity. Taking part in the charity’s first project is the realisation of a long-held dream for Helen. She said: “Years ago, when I was a Saturday girl in a local opticians’, Sister Claudia Bradley, a nun based in Zambia, told my boss, Valerie Kennelly, about the desperate need for eye care across Africa. Valerie, who is herself a former student of GCU Vision Sciences and my inspiration to pursue a career in optics, was inspired to establish Eye Care Zambia. She asked me to get involved and we teamed up with Sister Claudia to work primarily in a school and focusing on children.”

Eye Care Zambia screened more than 600 children in Zambia’s Linda district, going on to test and dispense glasses to more than 200. They also screened local adults, and partnered with the local Neri Clinic to give anyone who needed it free follow-up eye care and, in severe cases, patients were treated free by specialists at UTH University Training College.

“To see all our work to establish the charity pay off and to be able to supply care that would have been impossible to access for the ordinary people of Linda was fantastic,” said Helen.

“It was an amazing experience and I plan to go back when I qualify. Being able to apply the skills I have learned in the classroom to a real-life situation has really boosted my confidence and my commitment. The Magnusson Award made such a difference to our work in Zambia.”

For more information about Eye Care Zambia, contact Helen at HCURRA11@caledonian.ac.uk or Valerie at theopticalcentretrim@eircom.net

Erasmus exchange inspires Gillian

Outstanding GCU students have been recognised by Erasmus, the European Union’s flagship educational exchange programme.

Gillian Murray, who is studying for a Masters in Public Health, has won a runner-up award in Erasmus’ annual Your Story essay competition. Gillian wrote about her studies at Cyprus University of Technology and a work placement in a hospital, which she described as “the best period of my life”. Gillian travelled to Cyprus while studying for her Bachelor of Nursing and since her return has been awarded a scholarship to continue her studies. She said: “My experience of studying abroad really contributed to my winning the scholarship by giving me independence and confidence.”

David Hibler, Erasmus Programme Manager, said: “This competition gives us the chance to have a glimpse of the life-changing experiences that students enjoy. We congratulate GCU and Gillian Murray, this year’s ‘Highly Commended’ essay winner, whose story will inspire others to take part in the programme.”

Stephen Smith and Laura McKendrick have been chosen by Erasmus to work as programme ambassadors – promoting student mobility to students and school pupils across the UK.
Stephen, who is studying Business with Management, and Laura, who is studying Media and Communications, studied in Marseilles and Rotterdam respectively and are two of just 200 ambassadors selected across Britain each year.

Rhona Hodgart, Exchange and Study Abroad Manager, said: “We are delighted that our students’ abilities to inspire others with their own successful travel experiences has been recognised by Erasmus. It is a great accolade.”

In December 2013, GCU was awarded The Erasmus Charter for Higher Education – the EU endorsement that allows institutions to participate in the international exchange and cooperation scheme.

OMAN

Biggest ever graduation
Hundreds of students graduated at Caledonian College of Engineering’s nineteenth graduation and awards ceremony in November – the biggest event in the College’s history. Three hundred and sixty graduates were joined by His Excellency Nasser bin Khamis Al Jashmi, Undersecretary of Oman’s Ministry of Oil and Gas, Executive Dean and Pro Vice Chancellor of the School of Engineering and Built Environment, Professor Douglas Greenhalgh, and 1000 other guests at the College’s Airport Heights Campus. Nine Masters, 250 Honours Degrees and 101 Degrees were awarded.

GCU welcomed academic and administrative staff from the College to the Glasgow campus in the autumn. The group visited the SEBE to observe lectures, teach modules and share best practice with GCU colleagues.

Students of Oman’s Institute of Health Sciences also joined GCU students at the November graduations. Eight students, studying BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, BSc (Hons) Radiography Studies and BSc (Hons) Medical Laboratory Sciences, in a unique transnational collaboration between GCU and the Institute, travelled to Glasgow to receive their awards. Kay Keir, programme leader, said: “We were delighted that eight of the 18 students studying with us in this, the third cohort in the collaboration, chose to join us at GCU to graduate with the School of Health and Life Sciences community.”

INDONESIA

Preserving the past
School of Engineering and Built Environment student Michael Roy has been awarded a second Khalid Abdulrahim Travel Scholarship to continue his studies in Indonesia.

He is working with the country’s Heritage Trust and Architectural Documentation Centre, as well as international architects and building conservators to complete his research into the preservation of the region’s endangered colonial architecture.

Michael visited Indonesia last year to look at how Scotland’s expertise in preserving its own built heritage can be applied in a developing country.

Michael said: “This is a fantastic opportunity to focus more closely on my dissertation topic. I hope to be part of an international community that can help influence government and public feeling about Indonesia’s colonial architecture. Obviously this architecture is a reminder of the country’s colonial past and that, combined with a lack of expertise, is putting many buildings at risk. We hope raising interest in this architecture could have a ripple effect to help improve Indonesia’s traditional buildings, which in turn could boost tourism and address poverty. I’m very excited to be taking new ideas from Scotland to help in that process.”

CHINA

Journalism showcase
The work of GCU’s Media and Journalism students has been showcased across China. Examples of students’ award-winning work in print, broadcast and digital media were exhibited in the Sino-UK Higher Education Cooperation in New Media Industry programme, run by the British Council.

GCU was one of just 10 UK universities selected to take part in the project which, as well as showcasing students’ work, allowed GCU staff to meet academics in their field at institutions across China, and media industry leaders. The showcase was designed to promote academic exchange between UK and Chinese universities.

Professor John Wilson, Executive Dean of Glasgow School for Business and Society and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), said: “We were delighted to be selected to be part of the British Council’s New Media initiative. GCU was the only Scottish university to be involved and the project offers exciting opportunities to showcase the University’s excellent work in media and journalism as well as further illustrating our commitment to working closely with media academic and practitioner colleagues in China.”

In autumn GCU welcomed journalists and media managers from China to learn more about the future of the profession.
Professor Barbara Parfitt has just retired as Principal of Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing in Bangladesh, but she’s now preparing for the next step in a remarkable journey. Lynn McGarry reports

As a hands-on nurse and teacher, Professor Barbara Parfitt has helped transform primary health care and nursing education around the globe. It’s a journey that stretches from Glasgow to the Hindu Kush and beyond; a journey that began in an Essex Sunday school in the 1950s.

Says Professor Parfitt: “Right from the time I was eight years old I wanted to work overseas. A missionary doctor came to the village Sunday school – we all went as it was the entertainment of the week – and showed slides of her work in India. I was captivated. I thought, ‘that’s what I want to do when I grow up’.

“But, in those days, the chances of a village girl doing medicine were nil. My choices were teacher, nurse, secretary or working for M&S. To me, nursing was the only option because I wanted to do development work, though I didn’t understand that then, of course.”

Professor Parfitt trained and worked as a district nurse midwife – “It was like Call the Midwife. I cycled around delivering babies in the morning and did ulcers in the afternoon” – did the “hippy thing” around Europe, and studied theology for three years, before travelling to Afghanistan supported by Interserve, an organisation which funded the establishment of health and education programmes across Asia.

“I spent four years in the Hindu Kush, setting up primary health care services >>>
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for 250,000 people,” said Professor Parfitt. “With just one other nurse, I ran a small outstation, miles from anywhere, providing everything from medical services and midwifery to emergency treatment and training village midwives. We had only radio contact with our base and went everywhere on horseback.

“When it snowed in November we would be snowed in until the thaw in April: it was fabulous. We had to bring everything we needed in for six months and a Cessna plane would bring emergency supplies and drop our post because it often couldn’t land. I was a young nurse and faced with all sorts of challenges, everything that came through the door, with very limited equipment. We had to save lives as best we could. It was a wonderful learning experience. Then civil war broke out in ’74 and I walked out of the mountains to Kabul through the snow.

“Primary health care and reaching inaccessible people became my thing.”

That “thing” led Professor Parfitt to work and study in remote communities in the US, Nepal and Bhutan before, in 1978, returning to the UK. She studied for an MSc at Liverpool’s School of Tropical Medicine and worked as a nurse teacher at Sefton School of Nursing, then as a lecturer at Manchester University, marrying and having a family – “I’d had no time till then” – before studying for a PhD exploring the impact of the western values of nurses on primary health care development in developing countries. She moved to run a department in Wales, where her work took her to Jordan.

Professor Parfitt joined GCU in 1995, a period which saw her become Dean of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health, Director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Nursing and Midwifery Education, Research and Practice at GCU, and Secretary General of the Global WHOCCs for Nursing and Midwifery, as well as leading research and development programmes in, for example, Tajikistan, South Africa, China and Central Asia.

In 2007 she was awarded a CBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours list, for services to international health development (she’s also been awarded the International Centre for Nursing Education’s Human Rights and Nursing Award), and in the same year stepped aside as Dean to take up a post as Director of Global Health Development at GCU, continuing with projects in South Africa and Central Asia. When GCU decided to take its international health activities in a fresh direction, Professor Parfitt turned her attention to tying up projects she had been working on around the world. Said Professor Parfitt: “I thought this was a nice way to wrap my career up with a view to retiring, but then I was asked to take on a new job – setting up a nursing college in Bangladesh.”

Just 23,000 registered nurses struggle to serve 145 million people in Bangladesh compared with the UK’s 680,000 registered nurses caring for 60 million people. So, in 2009, following discussions between Professor Muhammad Yunus and Professor Pamela Gillies, a delegation from GCU visited Dhaka to explore how the University and the Grameen Healthcare Trust, a not-for-profit organisation created by Professor Yunus, could work together to develop health care provision in Bangladesh to international standards, as well as raise the status of the profession and provide opportunities, education and training for the daughters of Grameen Bank borrowers across the country. The Bank, also started by Professor Yunus, makes micro-loans to small social businesses which help improve communities.

By early 2010, and with $2million backing from Nike, the College’s core staff had been recruited and its teaching and living accommodation was being furnished to welcome its first 38 students. Exactly a year on, HRH the Princess Royal attended the inaugural capping ceremony, the Bangladesh nursing profession’s traditional rite of passage when students have completed their preliminary training.

Today the College has 138 students and 37 members of staff.

Said Professor Parfitt: “We wanted to make an impact on the community health needs of Bangladesh, while promoting new life skills for young women and beginning to break the cycle of early marriage, early child-bearing and, often, early death.”

She said: “Probably my biggest challenge over and above finding a building, painting it and all the other practical issues is bureaucracy, but seeing our first group of 38 students graduating made everything...
worthwhile. Here they were, confident, articulate young women. I had seen them arrive from their villages when they were undernourished and wouldn’t look anyone in the eye. That first 38 were transformed and I see that repeated as each group arrives. GCCN has challenged stereotypes and our young women are challenging stereotypes. I have watched my teachers develop from teachers whose traditional approach was to read a chapter, get the students to learn it by heart, then examine it to see how much they could remember. Now they use interactive approaches. The administrative staff have also developed and are able to take full responsibility and run everything.

“When I leave I will be so sad, it will be like a bereavement, but if no one was able to take over from me, the staff here, admin and academic, would keep it going.”

When she returns to her family and much-missed garden in Scotland, Professor Parfitt will focus on analysing and publishing research undertaken at GCCN and has plans for a book collaboration exploring gender issues in South Asia. She will also continue her work with Nurses Christian Fellowship International, which focuses on meeting patients’ spiritual needs and developing nurses’ leadership skills.

She hopes to be invited back to celebrate graduations and still has personal ambitions for the future of GCCN.

“My hope would be for the College to get its own building next year, and I’d want to see a community clinic and hospital run by the College. I’d hope in five years GCCN would run programmes jointly with a Bangladesh university through to PhD. In 10 years, I’d like to see it become the centre of excellence for South Asia, not just Bangladesh. I feel privileged that I have managed to pull together everything I have done in my life: I’m out in the clinical areas, hands-on, teaching and managing. I have to be doing something practical and using my life to help others. Helping establish GCCN has been the best thing that could have happened at the end of my career – although it’s not the end; I have been asked to work on projects in Libya and Iraq – but I haven’t committed to anything!”

New Principal vows to build on success

Professor Frank Crossan, who took over as Principal of GCCN in January 2014, has extensive international experience through working on projects in Kosovo, China and South America. He was instrumental in the foundation of the College, having travelled to Bangladesh in 2009 to conduct a feasibility study on how GCU and Grameen could work together to address the country’s desperate health care inequalities.

Professor Crossan continued to work closely with GCCN, delivering leadership programmes and running workshops for its staff and students and senior nurses, including college principals and lecturers from other institutions across Bangladesh. He has also played a key role with GCU’s partners in a network of World Health Organisation Collaborating Centres.

Professor Crossan, who has worked at GCU for 14 years, said: “I am really excited to be taking up this new role and immersing myself in another culture. I thrive on change and on changing things. From a young age, I knew I would work in a caring profession.

“When I see an opportunity to improve people’s lives that excites me. “I’ve been blown away by everything Professor Parfitt has achieved and by the motivation and enthusiasm of the staff and students. GCCN is moving into a critical phase where it must become sustainable; that’s my goal.”

Professor Frank Crossan and Chancellor Yunus to the first graduation ceremony and the Princess Royal was a guest at the inaugural capping ceremony.
As part of our regular series on GCU’s Strategy for Learning, Professor Bruce Wood explains the role of divergent thinking and how it can enable students to meet the global challenges ahead.

I think, therefore I find a creative solution

Professor Bruce Wood is Director of GCU’s Centre for Creative Industries and Professor of Design Innovation. Here, he talks about how GCU’s Strategy for Learning is meeting the 21st century demands that lie ahead for students and graduates.

His particular interest lies in divergent thinking, one of the 10 Curriculum Design Principles that form the Strategy for Learning, and the subject of his address at the annual Principal’s Awards ceremony.

What is divergent thinking?
Divergent thinking is the ability to address complex problems through the generation of creative solutions. It changes the approach to problems, offering a range of potential solutions and creating choices. It encourages people to ask the questions: What is? What if? What wows? What works? which will throw up a range of different solutions, some obvious, others less so. Divergent thinking results in the generation of innovative choices by exploring many possible solutions, drawing on ideas from different disciplines and areas, through which often unexpected connections are made. But we have to remember that divergent thinking is pointless if it is not followed by a convergent approach, during which many choices are narrowed down to fewer options and tailored to the criteria required. If you think of divergent thinking as being imagination and synthesis, convergent thinking is knowledge and analysis.

What role does it play in the Strategy for Learning?
It underpins every aspect of the Strategy for Learning. Students need to have experience in adapting their knowledge in creative ways in order to contribute and progress. The days of having one job for life are long gone. The reality for our graduates is that, not only will they have more than one job, they will likely have more than one career, and we have to ensure that our students are fully prepared for that. The Strategy for Learning promotes the further creation of opportunities within the curriculum to explore open-ended problems.
and encourage students to develop their own solutions by drawing on a range of different ideas drawn from different contexts and discipline areas. This will help them to generate possible solutions in a creative, unstructured way and challenge assumptions and take risks.

How do students benefit from a divergent thinking approach?
Encouraging adaptability, courage of thought and instilling confidence is vital if future generations are to thrive academically and in the workplace at home and overseas. In 2012 there were 4.8 million businesses in the UK and more than 99 per cent of these were small or medium-sized enterprises, employing fewer than 250 people. In fact, 96 per cent of all businesses were micro-businesses, which means they have nine employees or fewer. Therefore, it is safe to assume that many of our graduates will go on to be employed by an SME. Businesses of this size cannot afford to carry passengers and our graduates need to have experience in adapting their knowledge in creative ways in order to contribute and progress in a fast-changing environment. One of the benefits of working for an SME is that it is easier to make an impact and colleagues and employers welcome people who are able to think creatively and imaginatively when it comes to generating new ideas and problem solving. By embedding divergent thinking into the curriculum, we are helping to produce dynamic, entrepreneurial and confident graduates who will bring those skills to every aspect of their lives in the future.

Can you give an example of how GCU is encouraging divergent thinking?
The need to be entrepreneurial is encouraged across every discipline and is an essential skill for our students and graduates to contribute in the future, however in some areas it was so embedded within the curriculum that students were not recognising the entrepreneurial input and potential opportunities. The University has looked at this in a creative way and explored a wide variety of options to come up with an innovative plan – one aspect of this is we will establish an entrepreneurial hub, which will be initially based in the Saltire Centre and will provide students and graduates with information and the opportunity to discuss their ideas with experts and, potentially, successful entrepreneurs.

How do you measure whether this approach has been a success?
It is difficult to measure the impact of divergent thinking on its own, but the employability, adaptability and future career achievements of our students would be a good indicator.

We are helping to produce dynamic, entrepreneurial and confident graduates

**View from here**

**MY NAME**
David Wood

**I WORK AS**
Lecturer in Digital Design in SEBE.

**WHAT?**
The teaching practice that I am introducing is the T-shaped Designer.

I use to support my students to develop the capacity to think divergently, as well as convergently. With such divergent thinking they tackle complex global challenges and real-world problems in the generation of creative ideas, by exploring many possible solutions. It draws on ideas from different disciplines and areas through which unexpected connections are often made. In design practice this is embedded in the ethos of a T-shaped Designer. In this ethos deep specialist knowledge of their own design discipline (the vertical body of a capital ‘T’), together with understanding of other theory and socio-cultural contexts (the top bar of the ‘T’) results in first year students growing in size from small ‘T’s over the duration of their career by embracing divergent thinking.

**SO WHAT?**
The T-shaped Designer ethos, as used within our Design and the User module, gets students to generate possible creative solutions in unstructured ways, taking risks to challenge design assumptions. Its strength is the ability to socially collaborate with others, and apply this gestalt knowledge in innovative designs. The concept is industry tested, especially by IDEO Design and IBM. It helps students to gain future employment by framing what makes them stand out from other graduates.

**NOW WHAT?**
Through closer collaboration with employers who want T-shaped Designers, and the current portfolio refresh we have a great opportunity to develop divergent thinking across more of our modules.
Dr Karly Kehoe's work on slavery and its links with the Scottish Highlands in the 18th and early 19th centuries started with a phone call. The historian had been working with archivist Andrew Nicoll on papers transferred from Fort Augustus Abbey, the former Benedictine monastery on the southern tip of Loch Ness, to Edinburgh. Nicoll stumbled across an old diary. He called Dr Kehoe that evening to say he'd found something unusual.

“When the monastery was sold to developers most of the papers were moved to the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh. Andrew was sorting through the material when he gave me a call.

“He had found the diary of an Irish ship surgeon who was working in the Royal Navy’s West African Squadron, whose job it was to repress the Atlantic slave trade. As a surgeon, one of his responsibilities was to board captured vessels and inspect the ‘human cargo’ – slaves. I started to think – what on earth is the connection here?”

Dr Kehoe rushed to read the journal, written by Richard Carr McClement between 1857 and 1869 as a way of telling his family what life was like during the long periods he spent at sea. Dr Kehoe was the first professional historian to read it.

“I started reading at nine in the morning and before I knew it the archivist was next to me saying, Karly – we’ve got to close.”

The journal would go on to inform a paper published in the journal, Social History of Medicine, which considered the relationship that Irish Catholic surgeons had with the Royal Navy. It will also inform Dr Kehoe’s forthcoming book – Empire and Emancipation: Catholics in Britain’s Atlantic World 1780 – 1880. The 144-year-old diary would also spark Looking Back to Move Forward: Slavery and the Highlands, a project which would go on to win the 2012 Edinburgh Beltane Challenge Award for public engagement.

Working with pupils from Inverness Royal Academy and community archivists and historians, Dr Kehoe made some disturbing discoveries. These included the revelation that Inverness Royal Academy, as well as many other civic buildings in the Highlands, had been funded with money made by Highlanders through plantation slavery. The facts didn’t fit the traditional and widely held notion of the Highland region and its place within Scottish and UK history. Thanks largely to the Highland Clearances, when people were forcibly moved from their homes in the 18th and 19th centuries by land owners who wanted to make way for more profitable activities such as sheep farming or deer stalking, the established story has long been one of a community wronged by a great injustice.

Dr Kehoe said: “There is a need for more work which considers the Highlanders as imperial actors, as slave owners and as plantation managers and labourers.”

And even though this simplistic, if powerful, version of events is now being challenged by modern historians, some were still unwilling to welcome the project’s...
findings and their dissemination.

Dr Kehoe’s findings were covered widely by the media and a public exhibition held between December 2011 and February 2012 – a key part of the overall project – brought them to even wider attention. And although the more sensational aspects were the most immediately arresting, their true importance came in their contribution to a wider, more historically interesting point.

“When you have a region like the Highlands that is prioritising an agenda for sustainable development, there has to be an awareness that globalisation isn’t new. It goes back centuries and we can see it with a project like this. The Highlands were plugged into a global economy long before any of us were around, and in a considerable way.”

Local historian and councillor for Cromarty, Dr David Alston, whom Dr Kehoe credits as the “pioneer” researcher of the topic, put it another way.

“It’s not any surprise that that Highlanders and Scots have been involved in the exploitation of other human beings, but it is an uncomfortable truth and it doesn’t sit well with that notion of the Highlanders as victims.”

After winning the Beltane prize – the UK’s leading network for making academic work available to a wide variety of audiences – the project moved into a second phase. Four GCU undergraduate Social Sciences students helped to create a resource pack so that senior school pupils in the Highlands could study the Atlantic slave trade as part of the Curriculum for Excellence; a further three are now working with Kehoe to provide additional content.

The packs, which were distributed in the summer, included historical source material such as letters home from Scottish slave owners in the West Indies, school register lists, government compensation records and estate paper records detailing financial links with the business. Dr Kehoe embraced this part of the project as much as the initial research.

“Scholars have a responsibility to make their work available to a local community. We are privileged in our role as educators and researchers. We have access to museum and archive collections which other people don’t normally see. What’s the point of that if we can’t bring it to a public audience that can benefit?”

A member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s Young Academy of Scotland – a collection of Scotland’s brightest academics and early careers researchers – Dr Kehoe has received funding from the Society to investigate how money made on slave plantations in the West Indies was spent. Given that Dr Kehoe’s main research interest is in the role of Scottish and Irish Catholic migrants – part of her own family-line goes back to Ireland – and on the role Catholic communities played in British life, she is still pleasantly surprised by the on-going success of the project and the way the topic has helped to unite academics, historians, archivists, community groups, students and school pupils.

Looking Back to Move Forward: Slavery and the Highlands has helped to contribute to a body of work and a story which tells us more than simply what happened hundreds of years ago, a story that is relevant to work across the Glasgow School for Business and Society and, indeed, GCU as a whole.

“I did the project with the school because I wanted the pupils of Inverness Royal Academy – as well as my students – to realise that in this so-called era of globalisation there is social responsibility and ethical debates that come along with it. If these young people eventually become community or national leaders, I hope they will look at things from an ethical perspective because they know how things happened in the past.”

The Surgeon’s journal

The journal was the record of one man’s life in the Royal Navy. It was written between 1857 and 1869 by Richard Carr McClement. The first station he was with was the West Africa Station, so he was on ships that sailed off the West African coast trying to catch slavers. As he was the doctor, if a slaver was captured, he was one of the first people on board. He would write a detailed report on the condition of the slaves and reflect on those in his diary which revealed the fact he was very upset, having seen things he never thought he would see. The journal ended up in the Fort Augustus Abbey as his son – who received the journal – became a monk and later died there.
Lily makes welcome return to GCU

From the launch of GCU New York to joining the world’s largest corporate citizenship movement, the University continues to have an impact at home and overseas. Here we highlight the latest innovations, events and developments of the last few months, including a return visit by social entrepreneur and model Lily Cole and how the death of Nelson Mandela led to renewed interest in the University’s archive collections.

£30MILLION PROJECT STARTS
Heart of the Campus  This year signals the start of work on the ambitious campus transformation which will create cutting-edge teaching, learning and research facilities and inspiring social spaces. The George Moore Building will be tackled first with the contractor due on site in May and work scheduled for June. The ground floor will feature a stylish new restaurant while the first floor will be a dedicated ‘one-stop-shop’ for student services.

It’s scheduled to be completed in summer 2015 when work will begin on the Hamish Wood Building, which has a completion date of spring 2016. The building will be the setting for a showcase University reception and café space and a new teaching and conference facility. The reception will also act as the official entrance to the Glasgow School for Business and Society, based on the first floor, and will have a blend of flexible and contemporary learning spaces.

EXCELLENCE RECOGNISED
Research  The University was presented with the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in recognition of its commitment to the career management and skills development of its researchers. It marked an important step in GCU’s strategic commitment to produce and disseminate research which contributes to the common good through its practical applications to public policy, service delivery and economic regeneration which has a beneficial impact on lives and wellbeing in Scotland and further afield.

CYBER CHALLENGE
SEBE  The University hosted Scotland’s first cyber security residential camp, teaming up with Cyber Security Challenge UK in the continuing fight against online crime. The event tested participants’ resolve through challenges, including an entrepreneurial Dragon’s Den competition to create a security product, and a virtual online game of attack and defence against competitors in England’s Defence Academy.

MAL RETURNS
GSBS  Mal Young, one of Britain’s most influential television producers, returned to GCU to work with the next generation of television scriptwriters. The former producer of acclaimed BBC shows EastEnders, Doctors, Casualty and Holby City

LILY DELIVERS FRESHERS’ ADDRESS
GCUSA  Lily Cole made a return visit as part of Freshers’ Week to introduce students to impossible.com, a social network that will seek to engender a peer-to-peer gift economy. Lily delivered the annual Freshers’ Address.
worked with MA TV Fiction Writing students on their original pitches, listening to their ideas and offering feedback.

GOLD AWARD
Sustainability
GCU became the first university in Scotland to be recognised with a prestigious gold EcoCampus award, marking the commitment of its students and staff to sustainable principles. The University is now working towards the top platinum status.

GOING UNDERGROUND
Business
The University announced that it is to work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) to transform ingress water in Glasgow’s underground systems into a sustainable heat source. The GCU team will support SPT in developing a financially and environmentally effective method of harvesting heat from the water. That will allow SPT to offer an even more efficient service and further improve customers’ experience of the system. The heat from the ingress water will be extracted using an energy efficient heat pump. Water in the underground tunnel has a temperature of around 14°C, which is sufficient for extracting heat. The pumps will allow SPT to use this heat in its stations and other buildings.

TOURISM TRIUMPH
GSBS
The Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Development won a major contract to work out how much Scottish tourism is worth to the Scottish economy at a national and local level. Working in partnership with Professor Hervey Gibson from consultants Cogentsi, the Centre will establish the volume and value of tourism in Scotland.

PRINCIPAL’S AWARDS
SEBE
The third Principal’s Awards, organised by GCU LEAD, honoured digital forensics and security senior lecturer Dr Michelle Govan, who was named winner of the Principal’s Award (Individual) for Learning and Teaching. Dr Govan, with the support of the Head of Department, Professor Tom Buggy, was instrumental in winning approval for a five-year undergraduate Masters in digital security, forensics and ethical hacking, the first of its kind in the UK.

The Games Team from SEBE received the inaugural Principal’s Team award for Learning and Teaching for the collaborative approach of their Scottish Games Jam event, the largest in Europe, during which GCU students and industry professionals work together to create a game in 48 hours. The team’s wider work also supported Alzheimer Scotland and Gathering the Voices, an initiative inspired by the experiences of Jewish refugees.

GATES GRANT
Research
The Caledonian Academy, with the help of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is investigating what strategies and behaviours people adopt while studying on massive open online courses (MOOCS), online programmes with open access where anyone can learn from the world’s leading academics. Millions of people are studying on MOOCS but little is known about how these students actually learn while using this revolutionary approach to higher education.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS
Graduation
The winter ceremonies in London and at the SECC in Glasgow were attended by more than 1000 graduates and their families. They were joined at GCU London by fashion business industry leaders Richard Craig, Managing Director of Margaret Howell, and Michael Sharp, Chief Executive of Debenhams, who were presented with Lifetime Achievement Awards. In Glasgow, honorary degrees were conferred on Magnus MacFarlane Barrow OBE, founder of Mary’s Meals; Ian Grabiner, Group Chief Executive of the Arcadia Group, pictured above; leading scientist Professor John Marshall MBE and Sir Craig Reedie CBE, Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee.
PIZZA DISCOVERY

Professor Kofi Aidoo played a key role in the development of a ‘healthy pizza’. One of the world’s leading food scientists, Professor Aidoo and colleagues set out to discover the nutritional content and quality of contemporary pizzas and show how they can be reformulated to make it the basis of a nutritionally-balanced meal. The findings were reported by media sources across the globe.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The University welcomed a significant rise in students from schools in neighbourhoods with a lower than average participation in Higher Education. At the end of its first year in operation, the Schools and Colleges Engagement and Transition Team (SCETT) reported that the number of pupils from its six partner secondary schools who have gained a place at GCU is up from 16 in 2012 when there was no SCETT activity, to 30 this year after SCETT intervention – a rise of more than 80 per cent.

TEAM OF THE YEAR

The newly formed UK Recruitment and Outreach department won the Team of the Year prize at The Herald Society 2013 awards dinner. The group, which began working in its current format at the start of the 2012/13 academic year, beat competition from the Macmillan@Glasgow Libraries Volunteer Team, Scottish Marriage Care and the University of Strathclyde to win the prestigious accolade. The Herald Society Awards, run by Scotland’s biggest-selling quality newspaper, celebrate the best work in the public and voluntary sectors.

INNOVATION ON SHOW

Researchers demonstrated the latest technical advances in rehabilitation to John Swinney, the Scottish Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth. Professor Lynne Baillie and her team were attending the inaugural European Telemedicine Conference and the European Innovation Showcase at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh.

CHANCELLOR YUNUS HONOURED

Chancellor, Professor Muhammad Yunus was presented with the Ripple of Hope Social Justice Award by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights in recognition of his international anti poverty work to empower people through the use of microfinance.

The award recognises leaders of the international business, entertainment and activist communities who demonstrate commitment to social change. Recipients are considered to share the late Robert F. Kennedy’s passion for equality, justice and human rights, as well as his belief that everyone must strive to “make gentle the life of this world”.

MANDELA MEMORIES

The death of Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa and an honorary graduate, inspired tremendous interest in the Anti-Apartheid Movement archive. The collection contains original documents, letters, flyers, badges, campaign banners, posters and stickers that were used by campaigners during the anti-apartheid struggle. Archivist Carole McCallum was interviewed and filmed by STV and BBC, as well as newspaper journalists.
Stephen Khan, editor of the news, comment and analysis website, The Conversation, urges academics to make sure their voice is heard in a new online environment.

“It’s in The Record – it must be true.” How many of us have heard that sarcastic refrain? If it’s not aimed at the Daily Record, it’s The Sun, or the Daily Mail. Even what used to be called the broadsheet press is not immune. Neither is radio or television.

Much of the criticism is unfair, of course, as many journalists and news outlets provide excellent services, albeit with ever-decreasing resources. Nevertheless, people are increasingly sceptical about what they read, watch and listen to.

So they switch off. Or stop buying. Disengage from the debate. It’s a similar story for many academics who don’t trust the mainstream media to communicate clearly and correctly, so they stop talking to journalists. Sadly, as a result, everyone is a loser. The public is uninformed and the people with real knowledge and expertise stay locked away. Fortunately a key is at hand.

The Conversation launched in the UK in May 2013. It is a news analysis and comment site that brings academics and journalists together to offer content direct to the general public. Already it is making a major impact, and GCU academics are among those driving it.

In just six months, Conversation content generated by the UK team has had more than 5.2 million reads worldwide. The work is republishable free of charge and that has seen it reproduced or linked to by internationally respected outlets such as The Guardian, the BBC, The New York Times, The Herald, The Hindu and Scientific American.

What’s more, academics publish with confidence that their message will not be misrepresented. So how does it work? The academic is paired with a Conversation editor. These are experienced journalists who each have their own specialist areas. They agree a brief with the academic and once the article – normally around 800 words – is complete, the editor will work on it, adding headlines and images. The piece will not be published, however, until both the academic and the editor are happy with the entire package – text, headlines and picture captions.

Publishing the piece online though is really just the end of the beginning. The Conversation team will also look at other ways of projecting the content. This will usually see it tweeted and it may also appear on Facebook or other social networking sites.

We will also approach other publications that may be interested in republishing. They are free to do so provided they follow our guidelines which state that content must not be changed or misrepresented and that the academic must be fully credited.

Another opportunity open to academics on The Conversation is that of being able to engage with readers. One of the best examples of this was a piece by GCU lecturer in sociology and social policy, Dr Nancy Lombard, on violence against women and gender stereotyping. This was read by more than 13,000 people around the world.

Nancy, like all Conversation writers, is able to respond to comments and track the number and location of readers on a personal dashboard on the site. As one of 13 original founding partner universities providing financial support for The Conversation, GCU is also able to use its own dashboard to see how well its academics are communicating with national and international audiences.

In a world of Twitter, blogs, iPhones, multiple apps and even newspapers, the public has access to more comment and analysis than ever before. Yet much of it is ill-informed. Within the university community, however, there is a wealth and depth of knowledge, with academics truly qualified to lead the Conversation. I hope you will join us sometime soon.

Contact stephen.khan@theconversation.com or peter.meiklem@gcu.ac.uk
Exercise that’s a way of life

Who are you and what’s your day job?
Michaela Sinclair, Student Funding Advisor in Student Administration Services and self-employed joint owner of Ayrshire Counselling & Therapy Centre.

What’s your Back Story?
I originally started Tai Chi after some furniture toppled on my head causing two slipped discs in my neck. I immediately felt great benefits and was very quickly hooked. After training for quite a few years, I qualified as a Tai Chi and Qigong instructor and am responsible for the Scotland Qigong Federation. I train under my own Chinese Master in England and have also trained in China three times (so far...) and Europe with some amazing Tai Chi and meditation Grandmasters, so Tai Chi has also led me to meet some really interesting people.

Why do you do it?
Although originally a martial art, Tai Chi is practised worldwide as a system of exercise that combines soft and hard, slow and fast movements in a balanced, natural way that adheres to the Taoist philosophical principles of yin and yang (from the Yijing – Book of Changes). These principles also relate to life in general so, for me, it’s not just an exercise system, it’s a way of life. I also get to swing a sword around a lot which is pretty good fun too!

Does it help you in your daily life at home and at work?
Absolutely. Practising Tai Chi connects actions, breathing and consciousness, so, apart from the health benefits like increased energy levels and greater flexibility and co-ordination, it’s also fantastic for stress reduction and relaxation.

What are your Tai Chi ambitions?
Really just to keep learning, improving and teaching.

What has been your biggest/proudest moment in relation to Tai Chi?
Being made an Indoor Student by my teacher Grandmaster Liming Yue who is an International Master and Coach. In China, ‘Indoor Student’ refers to someone who is accepted to a higher level through commitment and loyalty. I also enjoyed organising a public demonstration and weekend seminar at GCU recently. We had fantastic demonstrations from top level Masters from China and the UK and the whole audience joined in the taster session.

Finally, how would you encourage others to have a go?
There are various classes around Glasgow and I teach a class at GCU in the Faith & Belief Centre on Tuesdays at 5pm. I’d say it’s worth trying out for the mind as well as the body. The classes are very relaxed and suitable for all levels of fitness.
At GCU, our staff are committed to offering an excellent student experience. That is why we have been ranked 2nd in the UK for international student satisfaction in the latest International Student Barometer survey.

Our dedication has also placed GCU:
• 1st in Scotland for international student support
• 1st in Scotland for accommodation costs and visa advice
• 4th in the UK and 2nd in Scotland for learning experience and student recommendation.

To find out more, visit www.gcu.ac.uk
96.2% of GCU graduates go on to employment or further study.

GCU boosts Scotland’s economy by £444 million.

10,000 jobs are supported by GCU.

£30 million Glasgow campus transformation under way.

1st Scottish university to open in London.

1st UK university to launch in New York.

17,000 students in Glasgow from more than 100 countries.

More than 120,000 graduates in 123 countries.


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