

Leader column

Enterprise at Leeds

As I continue my visits across campus, I am struck by the central commitment to the integration of research, scholarship and student education. But of course there is so much more, including clear evidence of excellence in enterprise, enabling students to achieve business success, offering business access to innovation and expertise, and supporting staff to engage with business and the third sector.

It is humbling to witness the sheer creativity and innovation demonstrated by our staff and students. I know that Lord Young, the Prime Minister's Enterprise Advisor, left campus after attending our Enterprise Day truly inspired by meeting our student and graduate entrepreneurs. As a consequence, staff involved in organising his visit are now contributing to a national policy review of enterprise education, to the Sino-British Entrepreneurial University Forum and to the new Small Business Charter Award, demonstrating our ambitions to grow and support enterprise on campus and the wider region.

Having met Barney, James and Sam – the founders of Jumpln, a company launched by the three students last year – I'm not at all surprised Lord Young left the Enterprise Day so impressed. These enterprising students from Medicine, Earth and Environment and the Business School designed a taxi booking and sharing app tailored specifically for students, which is now in use in Leeds, Newcastle and Nottingham. A recent deal signed with leading taxi company, Comcab, will see the service rolled out to Birmingham and Liverpool, with a view to eventually setting up a nationwide operation. We supported the Jumpln team through our curriculum with modules from the Leeds Enterprise Centre, and by Enterprise Scholarships funded by alumni and delivered by the Spark team in Careers, and I was delighted to hear that Jumpln had won first prize of £2,000 in last month's Business Plan Competition.

Government sees universities playing a key role in enabling regional growth and, although we weren't successful in our recent bid to host a University Enterprise Zone, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board which assessed the proposal was very impressed by our submission. As a result, we have been invited to submit our bid for consideration to be part of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan. This bid – in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University and Leeds Trinity University – requests £5m towards the build of an Innovation Centre and a further £5m contribution to the development of 20,000m² of "embedded incubation space" on the universities' city campuses, with the aim



of encouraging business start-ups – created by our students as well as coming from the wider region – business growth and innovation.

Our generous alumni support our fundraising campaign in many ways, including gifts specifically for encouraging enterprise on campus. Many of our former students have made their mark through their entrepreneurship and are pleased to support us in creating the next generation of entrepreneurs. A new Enterprise Incubation Programme will help us extend our support beyond graduation by enabling graduates to remain on the campus and interact with our staff, spin-outs and business communities during the first vital stages of their entrepreneurial journeys.

In today's competitive employment market, students are increasingly being attracted to Leeds by the exceptional enterprise opportunities, education and support we can provide. After the successful launch last year of the MSc Enterprise and MA Fashion Enterprise and Society, from September we will be welcoming undergraduate students to the BSc Biotechnology with Enterprise and BA Music with Enterprise programmes. This creative approach to collaboration between our academic and professional staff is providing many success stories, demonstrating both commercial and personal success. Two examples are the Social Enterprise Zone hosted in Leeds University Union and the new Level 3 Social Enterprise Consultancy Project module delivered with the support of the School for Social Entrepreneurs. Also, I'm sure this summer's launch of our MOOC – Starting a Business: Transforming Ideas into Opportunities – will serve to further highlight our growing enterprise programme portfolio and introduce our wide expertise in this area to new audiences.

Our strengths in supporting student enterprise are complemented by a very strong track-

record of innovation through our research, creating over 100 spin-out companies since 1995. Our longstanding partnership with the IP Group has helped create shareholdings for the University in 16 spin-outs with a market value of £188 million. I am also aware of our responsibilities to the regional enterprise agenda through our growing relationship with the LEP, our delivery of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses programme, the provision of incubation facilities for innovative firms and our engagement with local businesses and industry through the 14 sector hubs. We contribute over £1.2 billion to the regional economy every year and also make significant educational, creative and cultural contributions. Our dynamic Healthcare SuperHub, including health services, pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical, medical technologies and stratified medicine, exemplifies the advantages of building relationships between research groups and user communities, including the NHS and Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust.

I believe that this wide-ranging enterprise activity and the commitment from staff to deliver exceptional experiences for our students provide a unique opportunity to grow and embed enterprise comprehensively across our University. At its March meeting, the Council committed in principle to building the new Innovation Centre as quickly as possible and to ensuring that the University's new strategic plan harnesses the energy being generated in this area to maximise enterprise, innovation and collaboration to meet the needs of our staff and students, the requirements of the business community and the challenge of economic growth, both locally and nationally.

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