

Life Sciences Newsletter

Imperial College London

Jan 2017

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As you may know, in 2015 Imperial [commissioned a piece of independent research](#) to examine issues of gender equality and institutional culture at the College. At the time the College stated that findings of the report findings – undertaken by an academic expert in the field – would be used to guide advise the College on how to make positive changes to its organisational culture. The Imperial College Institutional Culture report, widely reported in the press, is [available online here](#).

Following publication, the Provost James Stirling wrote an [opinion piece for the Times Higher Education \(THE\)](#), which reaffirmed the College's commitment to addressing the problems that had been unearthed.

The Department of Life Sciences is equally committed to ensuring an inclusive culture where all staff and students feel supported in aiming to excel in all that they do. In the months ahead, the [DoLS Equal Opportunities Committee](#), in consultation with the Head of Department, will be addressing the concerns raised in the report. Staff and students will be invited to participate in this process and will be kept informed of the steps taken.

In the meantime – if you **experience** or **witness** any discrimination – do speak up and use the support available:

[Harassment Support contacts](#)

FoNS [‘Have your Say Campaign’](#)

Have your Say Hotline 08001972814

- USEFUL INFORMATION:**
- ▶ [College’s EU referendum webpage](#)
 - ▶ [Working at Imperial](#)
 - ▶ [Organisational and Staff Development](#)
 - ▶ [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre](#)
 - ▶ [Occupational Health Service](#)
 - ▶ [Postdoc Development Centre](#)

WELCOME TO ALL NEW STAFF

Research Assistants: **Julius Demmer** (Thomas Meier); **Febin Varghese** (Bill Rutherford), **Joseph Barrit** (Alfonso De Simone). *Research Technicians:* **Scott Peters** (David Featherbe). *Teaching Technicians:* **Ivana Pennisi** (Gerald Larrouy-Maumus) and **Elizabeth Telford** (Rob Ewers). *Research Associates:* **Tibetu Habtewold** (George Christophides); **Lan Qie & Terhi Riutta** (Rob Ewers).

APPOINTMENTS

Anne Dell was appointed Chair of the Biochemical Society (2017-2019).

Cristina Banks-Leite was elected to become a council member of the British Ecological Society (BES). The BES has over 4,500 members from 90 countries, and is the largest ecological society in Europe and second largest in the world.

GRANTS

Richard Gill was awarded a Grantham Institute pump-priming award (around £25K) to fund development of a current partnership with an island resort company in the Maldives and Thailand to carry out research on ‘sustainable solutions in pest control in small island ecosystems’.

POSTDOC NEWS

Department of Life Sciences [Postdoc Symposium](#) is taking place on 30th March 2017!

- To give a short talk (10-15 minutes) and compete for the best speaker prize, please submit abstracts (250 words) to r.aw08@imperial.ac.uk before the 28th of February
- Register free for the symposium: www.tinyurl.com/dolspdcsymposium

PUBLICATIONS

Brödel, A.K., Jaramillo, A. & **Isalan M.** Directed evolution of orthogonal dual transcription factors for synthetic logic gates. *Nature Communications* 7, 13858, DOI: 10.1038/ncomms13858 (2016).

Patricia Bernal, Luke P Allsopp, Alain Filloux and María A Llamas. The *Pseudomonas putida* T6SS is a plant warden against phytopathogens. *ISME J* 2017, DOI: 10.1038/ismej.2016.169.

Marius Kaucikas, Karim Maghlaoui, Jim Barber, Thomas Renger & **Jasper J. van Thor** - Ultrafast infrared observation of exciton equilibration from oriented single crystals of photosystem II *Nature Communications* 7, Article number: 13977 (2016) doi:10.1038/ncomms13977.

Matteo Fumagalli was a co-author on a [paper - Archaic adaptive introgression in TBX15/WARS2](#) on *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, on adaptation to cold in Inuit due to archaic introgressions from Denisovans.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

Cesar Terrer (PhD student) won the Peccei Award with Honours among more than 50 participants worldwide in the context of the Young Scientists Summer Program (YSSP) at the [International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis \(IIASA\)](#).

Christopher Adams received the Faculty of Medicine Dean's Prize for Molecular Basis of Human Disease Research for his MRes in Biomedical Research.

Jim Barber was awarded an Hon. Degree by NTU, Singapore.

MEDIA/OUTREACH ACTIVITIES/EVENTS BEING HOSTED

The Higher Education and Research Bill, currently being considered by the House of Lords, will entail profound changes for teaching and research at UK universities. Although some amendments have been won, there are still significant risks for the sector, [outlined in the Guardian](#) by Prof **Stephen Curry**.

On the other major risk for UK research – Brexit – the campaign group Science is Vital is organising a petition, a letter-writing campaign and a lobby of parliament to make parliament aware of the importance of maintaining access to EU research funding mechanisms: see <http://scienceisvital.org.uk/christmas-present-for-science/> for details.

Matteo Fumagalli's co-authored paper - Archaic adaptive introgression in TBX15/WARS2 received some media attention (e.g. [NYTimes](#),) because of the topic (neanderthal-like contribution to human physiology) being timely.

Jasper van Thor was quoted in an article "[Ultrafast imaging of photosynthesis could help development of green fuel](#)" by Institution of Mechanical Engineers which was appeared at the [BBSRC news site](#).

USEFUL INFORMATION

Imperial Festival - call for proposals - the sixth Imperial Festival will take place on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 May 2017. As announced in [Staff briefing #158](#), staff are reminded that proposals for the Festival programme should be submitted by mid-day, Monday 6 February. Find out how to [get involved](#) and [complete the proposal form](#).

Erasmus+ programme - staff training and travel grants - staff who wish to broaden their knowledge of the higher education sector or enhance skills development are invited to apply for grants to support short training, job shadowing or study visits within the European Economic Area (EEA), Croatia, Turkey and FYR Macedonia. The deadline for applications is 10 February 2017. [Find out more](#)

Tech News

National Technical News

Laboratory News: <http://www.labnews.co.uk/features/committed-technicians-19-12-2016/>

Useful Article on Technical Careers: [Performance metrics: Forge a clearer path for technical careers](#)
Nature 540, 199 (08 December 2016) doi:10.1038/540199c

DoLS Technician News

DoLS Technicians' meeting was held on the 14th December with the following talks:

- Suhail Islam, Senior Research Officer Life Sciences, gave a talk on: 'What is Bioinformatics?'
- Fiona May – Senior Laboratory Technician: Update on University of York Biotechnology Insight Day
- Dave Featherbe – Chief Teaching Technician: Introduction to Lynda.com: teach yourself software packages

The Professional Registration event by Agne Sniukstaite from the Science Council on 23rd November helped 15 technicians to go through the requirements of filling out the competency report as part of the registration process. Technicians are encouraged to look at the [website](#) and start the registration process. A refresher session can be arranged – any staff interested should let Allison Hunter know.

[HEaTED: 16th February 2017 1 day event at Reading University](#) Tour of plant growth rooms and conference. Please register to attend if you are interested and let Allison Hunter know.

Equipment news: The autoclave tender specification for replacement of the large autoclaves in SAFB and SECB has been completed and sent out to prospective manufacturers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE: DoLS 2nd International Women's Day Lecture will be held on **Thursday 9 March 12.30-1.30 pm (South Kensington)** followed by drinks reception - further details to be confirmed.

TWO WORKSHOPS AT SILWOOD:

While field-based research has inherent risks for any scientist, new research has shown that young female scientists face an increased risk of harassment while pursuing fieldwork. These incidents may discourage female scientists from pursuing further fieldwork or from even staying in the scientific community. To address this issue, **Sarah Gluszek** and **Gabby Salazar** (MSc students Silwood Park who were awarded a grant by the European Society for Evolutionary Biology) and are organising two events to increase the capacity of female biology students and staff members to stay safe during remote fieldwork. Both events will be held Imperial College's Silwood Park Campus on International Women's Day, **Wednesday 8th March 2017:**

- 1.30-3pm: **Panel discussion** about gender equality in the sciences (Fisher-Haldane Lecture Theatre)
- 3.30-6pm: **Self-defence workshop** for female biology students and staff (Upstairs room of CPB Building) – [sign up here](#)