

# RESEARCH MATTERS

Celebrating research success and opportunities at the University of Wolverhampton

ISSUE 10

## Dr Sarah Browne takes 'Hear Her Song' to the UN

A University of Wolverhampton academic has hit the right note with her work on an international project, and was recently invited to speak at the United Nations (UN) in New York.

Dr Sarah Browne, Head of the School of Performing Arts based at the University's Walsall Campus, was honoured for her work on the UK premiere of the Hear Her Song project.

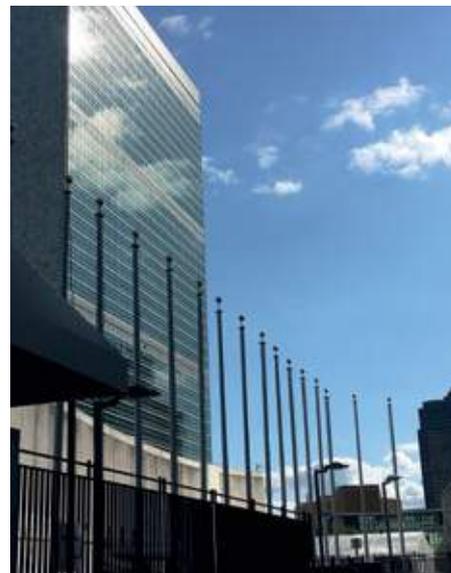
Following the success of the initiative, Dr Browne was appointed to the advisory board of The Canales Project – a US based organisation which aims to give voice to issues of identity and culture through music and conversation – and received her invitation to speak at the second annual SDG Convergence Global Summit, hosted by the UN and the Foundation for the Support of the UN, in September 2019.

Hear Her Song was originally conceived by The Canales Project, who worked in partnership with Sarah and the University

of Wolverhampton to commission ten songs written by British female composers. The songs recognised the work and achievements of ten honourees from across the world.

"The University of Wolverhampton hosted and produced the UK premiere of this project and, for the first time, featured the composers themselves as performers alongside a female vocal ensemble from the School of Performing Arts," said Dr Browne. The project was supported by the UN Decade for Women who identified the women to be honoured in song.

Speaking about her time at the UN, Dr Browne commented: "The experience was initially quite daunting, particularly given the venue. I was deeply honoured to represent the voices of women and



girls from the UK, and, more specifically from Wolverhampton. Being able to share more about my home city, having grown-up here, was a special honour and I was perhaps most moved by being able to speak about the students at University of Wolverhampton and how these young women have responded so viscerally and passionately to the project. I wanted to make sure their voices were heard clearly, rather than mine."

Audience members included the chief and permanent representative to the UN at Foundation for the Support of the UN, the chief senior advisor to the FSUN and the vice-president for Women B2B Marketing at IBM, in addition to female entrepreneurs, humanitarians, global innovators and board members of the UN Global Compact.

"The Hear Her Song project will continue to resonate around the globe," added Dr Browne. "I'm really proud to report that the Foundation for the Support of the UN has agreed to support the project for a further five years, and feel that the impact of the UK production helped to realise its potential."



# EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to this edition of *Research Matters*, where we are again showcasing a range of exciting research projects, appointments, conferences and awards.

We had some great news in the last few months that I want to share with you. We were successful in gaining the institutional Athena SWAN Bronze Award – many thanks to all of you who participated in the self-assessment, contributed to the gender equality

action plans in faculties and research institutes, and raised the profile of Athena SWAN. One of our key actions was to improve the gender balance in research, and I am pleased to say that our initial Equality Impact Assessment for REF2021 showed that we are closing the gap. We submitted our institutional Code of Practice for REF2021 in June to the funding bodies and it was approved without amendments in August. You can find a copy of the Code on our REF2021 webpages, and it is also due to be published by the Funding Bodies in December 2019.

We have also received an uplift to our 2019-20 QR allocation from Research England. This included an increase to our institutional QR Global Challenge Research Fund allocation. In line with our strategy, staff have been able to bid for pump-priming projects up to £3,100 and research students from developing countries working on projects directly addressing global challenges were able to bid for training and conference support up to £2,000.

**Professor Silke Machold**  
Dean of Research  
University of Wolverhampton



## UNIVERSITY ACHIEVES BEST EVER PRES RESULTS

The University of Wolverhampton is celebrating its best ever PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) results with the publication of the 2019 global rankings report by AdvanceHE.

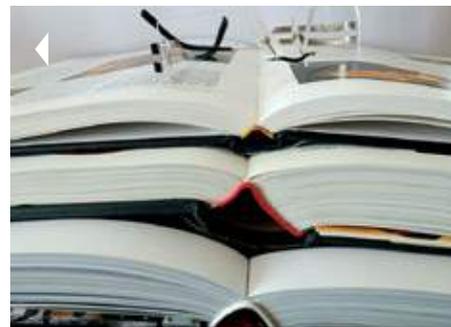
Overall, the University is placed 28th out of 103 UK higher education institutions/universities for doctoral students' satisfaction with their experiences of their research degree programmes. The University is ranked 11th out of 103 by our research students for satisfaction with supervision and supervisors, 22nd for the University's overall research culture, and 28th for clarity of organisational roles around doctoral research.

"The PRES survey is open to all doctoral research students, and 77 per cent responded. So to receive such fantastic results is a great achievement for the University," said Dr Benjamin Halligan, Director of the Doctoral College.

## ERAS Fellows for 2019/20

Congratulations to the following colleagues who have been selected as the University of Wolverhampton's ERAS (Early Researcher Award Scheme) Fellows for 2019/20.

- Dr Manpal Bhogal - Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing
- Alison Forbes - Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing
- Simon Harris - Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences
- Clare Jones - Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing
- Dr Stefano Kaburu - Faculty of Science and Engineering
- Dr Joanne Meredith - Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing
- Dr Opeolu Ojo - Faculty of Science and Engineering
- Dr Metka Potocnik - Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences
- Dr Chelsea Slater - Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing



A cohort of ERAS Fellows are selected annually at the University following an application process, with the scheme running for a year. The Fellows will undertake an individual research project that will yield outputs in terms of publications, further research and/or development of funding opportunities, and participate in a support programme to develop and enhance wider research-related skills through workshops, action learning, mentoring and progress reports.

The closing date for 2020/21 applications is Friday 13th March 2020. Find out more at: [wlv.ac.uk/eras](http://wlv.ac.uk/eras)

## Grant win enhances design of greener buildings

The University has secured a grant to develop state-of-the-art software which will be used by future industry leaders to design greener buildings.

Professor Mohammed Arif, Head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment, has been successful in a grant application for total funding of \$400,000 from the Qatar National Research Fund, a governmental funding body that supports original, competitively selected research by

both local and international researchers for projects that fit with Qatar's national research strategy, and that incorporate a Qatar-based partner.

Professor Arif is leading a team of two senior researchers and three early career researchers. The mentoring pyramid, developed by Professor Arif, is an example of how Professors and Readers can mentor early career researchers and succeed in bidding, as well as developing an effective team for the future.

The project grant builds on research undertaken by Professor Arif and the team after he previously secured \$1million to assess green building guidelines in relation to how they affect the health and wellbeing, productivity and behaviour of occupants.

The grant will be used to develop a website and a mobile phone app designed to disseminate the research findings to construction, design and build practitioners with the aim of addressing all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.



## New medical professors appointed to drive forward research

A team of seven new professors have been appointed by the University of Wolverhampton and The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust to drive forward medical research in the region.

The new Professors in clinical practice and medicine will lead joint research projects aimed at improving patient care and treatments.

They join Professor Baldev Singh, who was appointed in 2015 to lead the partnership's ground-breaking Clinical Fellowship Programme.

The new professors are:

- Professor Rousseau Gama, Professor of Laboratory and Metabolic Medicine
- Dr Supratik Basu, Professor of Haematology
- Dr Thillagavathie Pillay, Professor of Neonatology
- Professor James Cotton, Professor of Cardiology
- Dr David Churchill, Professor of Obstetrics
- Professor Matthew Brookes, Professor of Gastroenterology
- Dr Helen Steed, Professor of Gastroenterology

## ANNUAL RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE 2020 – SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual Researchers' Conference (ARC) 2020 will take place at the University of Wolverhampton's City Campus on 15th-16th June 2020, as part of Researchers' Week (15th-19th June 2020).

The week aims to provide postgraduate researchers with the opportunity to develop their research skills and knowledge development, as well as their networks with other researchers and their community of practice. Whether you book for the whole week or just a couple of days, we look forward to seeing you there!

The 2020 conference will build on the success of ARC 2019 themed on 'Addressing Societal Changes', which featured a keynote lecture by Dr Henry Kippin, director for public sector reform



from the West Midlands Combined Authority, a lecture from renowned herpetologist Professor Mark O'Shea and presentations and posters from postgraduate researchers at the University.

## 'Diva: Hip-Hop, Feminism, Fierceness' symposium runs at the University

Dr Benjamin Halligan, Director of the Doctoral College, convened the recent symposium 'Diva: Hip-Hop, Feminism, Fierceness', with the support of the Centre for Film, Media, Discourse & Culture.

Speakers came from universities across the UK, as well as Italy, Finland and North America. Many were early career researchers, and were speaking at such an event for the first time, so the mutually supportive environment that was collectively created was particularly welcome.

The acclaimed visual artist Dr Pogus Caesar introduced his little-seen

documentary on the late hip-hop icon Aaliyah, and then engaged in a lively Q&A, chaired by Natalie Graham, to close the event.

Keynote lectures were also provided by Dr Kirsty Fairclough, on Beyoncé, and Dr Shara Rambarran, on Mariah Carey. Themes that emerged included intersectionality and Third Wave feminism, self-performance in an age of social media, and creative autonomy for marginal groups in the music industry. The symposium will form the basis of a coming co-edited collection, for publication in 2021.



Find out more about our research at: [wlv.ac.uk/research](http://wlv.ac.uk/research)

## Dr Denise Doyle interviews STARTS Prize winner

Dr Denise Doyle, project lead for 'Identifying Successful STARTS (Science, Technology, and the Arts) Methodologies' (funded by the University of Wolverhampton's International Research and Innovation Scheme (IRIS) Scheme) recently met with interaction designer and STARTS Prize 2018 winner Giulia Tomasello.

Their meeting at the Wellcome Collection in London was an opportunity for Dr Doyle to interview the designer about her project 'Future Flora', which won the Grand Prize for Artistic Exploration.

Even though invisible to our eyes, our microflora has a symbiotic relationship with the interface between our body and the environment—our skin. Giulia's project aims to encourage the symbiotic relationship that raises the beneficial presence of microbes and bacteria in the human body, suggesting an alternative: to wear probiotics and keep our body healthy.

The interview forms part of a series of interviews with artists, scientists, and technologists who have contributed to successful STARTS Prize projects with the aim of understanding how inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary collaborations succeed in addressing key societal issues such as sustainability, innovation, inclusiveness, and education.

In February 2019, Dr Denise Doyle, Dr Richard Glover, Dr Martin Khechara, Professor Sebastian Groes, and Dr Roya Rahimi were awarded £76,000 as part of a University of Wolverhampton funded IRIS to join the STARTS Prize initiative co-ordinated by Ars Electronica. Together, the team will be 'Identifying Successful STARTS Methodologies' in projects recognised by the Prize.

## 'BUILDING BRIDGES' ACROSS APPLIED ARTS AND HEALTH, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

Over 100 leading global practitioners from the arts, health and education gathered in Telford recently to collaborate on creativity and wellbeing in education and the community at a major international conference.

Professor Ross Prior convened 'Building Bridges' in Applied Arts and Health, Education and Community. Professor Prior is editor of the prestigious Journal of Applied Arts & Health, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

Delegates met for five packed and absorbing days, giving the event a truly intercontinental flavour. Professor Mitchell Kossak from Lesley University led a dynamic and vibrant pre-conference programme that set the tone for the rest of the conference, while the conference closed with Lifetime Achievement Award presentations and a celebration of the Journal of Applied Arts and Health's longevity and future prosperity.

The conference programme itself was a balanced mix of paper presentations, workshops, performances and keynotes – all of which created a relaxed and intimate environment that allowed delegates to explore and engage with



current, often very moving and inspiring, developments in research, theory, and practice being carried out by applied arts and health scholars and practitioners in the field.

One delegate summed up his experience this way:

"As a seasoned conference delegate and presenter, I found this conference to be one of the most stimulating and enjoyable I have participated in in a long time – a view endorsed by many fellow delegates I spoke to during and after the event."

## Researcher visits Sweden for refugee project

A University of Wolverhampton researcher has visited Sweden as part of a refugee project.

Professor John Traxler travelled to Kalmar in Sweden for the final meeting of the Erasmus MOONLITE project.

The project focussed on methods and materials that would enable refugees entering the EU to use MOOCs, massive online open courses, such as those on the FutureLearn platform, to access higher education and thus move back onto the job market.

Professor Traxler said: "The emphasis was on developing language and business skills.



"The project team had previously met refugee projects in Berlin and Madrid and hosted various webinars and workshops.

"The University also hosted a conference featuring contributions from several leading academics looking at the design of online courses specifically targeting the language skills of refugees."



Find out more about our research at: [wlv.ac.uk/research](http://wlv.ac.uk/research)