Physicists hear rallying cry

The physics community should be passionate about making the case for science funding and should never give up, the IOP’s outgoing president, Prof. Jocelyn Bell Burnell told an audience gathered for the Institute’s annual Awards Dinner. Speaking on 30 September before October’s announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review was made, she said: “Keep speaking out on the case for science. It is about a vision for the future of our country, not just a special interest argument.”

Among the awards presented by Bell Burnell at the dinner was that of Juno Champion, which is for university physics departments that are making a substantial contribution to addressing the under-representation of women in higher education physics. The award was received by Prof. Valerie Gibson on behalf of the Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge, which has investigated gender inequalities and developed good practice in the department to address them.

Liberal Democrat peer Lord Willis of Knaresborough also spoke at the event in London.

Heather Pinnell

Laboratory praised for developing people

The IOP’s Best Practice in Professional Development Award went this year to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), which is part of the Ministry of Defence. The award is given to an organisation for exemplary behaviour in the training and development of its physicist employees.

Around 450 people with a physics-related degree are employed by DSTL and it has shown a “well thought-out and comprehensive approach” to developing its people, according to Steve Prosser, chair of the IOP’s Professional Standards Committee, which is responsible for conferring the award.

DSTL’s achievements include a chartership and accreditation scheme linked to 12 professional bodies, including the Institute.

Jane Weir, mentor for the IOP chartership scheme, received the award on behalf of DSTL at this year’s Awards Dinner from the Institute’s outgoing president, Prof. Jocelyn Bell Burnell.

During their stay the speakers from the workshop were invited to suggest recommendations on innovation policy to Fernando Audebert, adviser to Argentina’s science minister, Lino Barañao. Two of the speakers also met Barañao to discuss collaboration with the UK. The IOP’s international development manager, Dipali Chauhan, said: “It was good to be able to really make a difference at the highest level.”

Heather Pinnell

IOP designs event for Argentina

Around 60 people took part in a workshop on Entrepreneurship for Scientists and Managers of Technology Transfer that was held in Argentina in September. The five-day workshop was organised by Argentina’s Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation, which funded the event, and the IOP, which was invited by the ministry to devise the programme because of its expertise in running similar workshops.

The event included speakers, discussion and role-play, and Argentinian contributors shared local examples of good practice. It was aimed at those with some experience in entrepreneurship or innovation.

Heather Pinnell

Many of you will be aware of the confusion and mixed messages around the issue of safeguarding children and what checks are needed when. The government has vowed to remodel the existing Vetting and Barring Scheme and to “scale it back to commonsense levels”, but in the meantime legislation that was brought in late last year remains in place.

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Focal point

Working with children and vulnerable adults

Caitlin Watson is the Institute’s physics in society manager.