**Council news**

IOP’s Council meeting on 29 April took several decisions that will have a significant impact on the Institute’s activities over the coming years.

- Council endorsed a new strategy for 2011–2015. Members were invited to comment on a draft of the strategy. More than 50 comments were received and these were incorporated into the final document approved by Council, which has been posted on MyIOP.
- Some comments, however, related to specific activities that might be implemented to take forward the new strategy; these suggestions will be taken into account in developing the Institute’s plans.
- The focus of April’s pre-Council discussion session was the Membership and Qualifications Board. Board members briefed Council on proposals for a new digital “Membership”, which could be offered in the UK and Ireland as well as internationally to facilitate the larger, broader and more diverse membership targeted by the IOP’s current and future five-year strategies. Council welcomed the proposals and invited the Board to take forward their development.
- A proposal from the Business and Innovation Board was approved: to create an IOP Business Forum, bringing together high-level representatives of companies from the physics-based sectors of industry. The aim will be both to inform business, industry and government of new developments in physics, and to understand and promote the interests and views of physics in business. The national forum will be backed up by several regional forums.
- In the light of concerns raised by the IOP’s evidence to the Science and Technology Committee’s inquiry into e-mails from the University of East Anglia’s Climate Research Unit, Council agreed a new process for approving policy documents. It will require wider consultation, allowing all members an opportunity to comment whenever possible, and sign-off by senior officers of Council.
- Council noted the appointment of Steven Hall as managing director of IOP Publishing. He takes over from Jerry Cowig, who retires in October after 15 years with the company, during which time he has built it into one of the world’s leading scientific publishers.

**Physicists eye the market**

There are no “quick fixes” in translating the results of research into a saleable product, Prof. Peter Dobson, director of the University of Oxford’s Begbroke Science Park, told an audience of potential entrepreneurs meeting in Trieste in May. Academics often underestimate the costs and timescales involved in commercialising research, but the effort is worthwhile, he said.

He was speaking at a workshop on “Entrepreneurial Skills for Physicists and Engineers from Developing Countries”, organised by the Institute jointly with the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the American Physical Society and Italy’s AREA Science Park. The IOP part-sponsored many of the 54 participants, who came from 30 countries.

Dobson, who is both an academic and an entrepreneur, said that it was important to respond to demand rather than to try to push an innovation onto a reluctant market. David Secher, chairman of PraxisUnico and a consultant in research commercialisation, said there were opportunities for universities in this area as many companies were closing down their research facilities. The financial rewards were uncertain, but there were other advantages including the benefits to society and the motivation that bringing real-world problems into the laboratory gave to researchers, he said.

The five-day programme included sessions on intellectual property, finance, business planning and marketing. The IOP’s director of communications, Beth Taylor, led a session on communication skills, and Sir John Enderby, chief scientist at IOP Publishing, spoke on the cultural and ethical dimensions of entrepreneurship.


**Outstanding postgraduates share prize**

Two PhD students from Ireland won the IOP’s Very Early Career Woman Physicist 2010 Award, which was organised by the Institute’s Women in Physics Group and sponsored by Shell.

Laura Russell, who is exploring the behaviour of cold atoms at the Tyndall National Institute in Cork, Eire, andLaura Harkness, who is working on single photon emission computed tomography technology for medical imaging at the University of Liverpool, who is originally from Belfast, each received £750.

The runners-up were Yara Jaffe of the University of Nottingham and Joanna Skilton of the University of Leeds. James Smith, Shell UK country chairman, presented the prizes at the IOP’s London office.

During the event a portrait of Helen Mason (see p4) and a copy of Dame Julia Higgins’ portrait were unveiled. Both women were chosen for the 2010 Women of Outstanding Achievement in SET Photographic Exhibition, (Interactions, May) and the IOP has welcomed the opportunity to house and display their photographic portraits.

**Astronomers see future for women**

Only 10% of astronomers in the UK are female, which is related to culture and has nothing to do with women’s brains, the Institute’s president, Prof. Jocelyn Bell Burnell told a conference hosted by the Royal Astronomical Society in April. “Celebrating Success and Seeking Solutions” was held to mark the end of She’s An Astronomer – a global project of the International Year of Astronomy.

Prof. Bell Burnell noted that in France, 25% of astronomers are female and in Italy the proportion is 20%. As well as addressing work-life balance and unconscious bias in selection procedures (which women had also been shown to display towards women), we had to alter the ethos and climate in science, she said. “What’s got to happen is that science moves towards women and women move a bit.”

The two-day meeting heard from speakers from seven countries. For details, visit [www.sheisanastronomer.org](http://www.sheisanastronomer.org).