

Press Release

The Great Western Research Symposium celebrated :

- **Funding 150 research projects in the South West**
- **Creating 20 new academic jobs at South West Universities.**
- **Helping to attract £6M of funding to South West Universities**
- **Investing over £6.5 M in research partnerships with SW businesses**
- **Supporting 40 SMEs in the South West through new University partnerships**

The South West's flagship research project Great Western Research (GWR) held its first research Symposium entitled "Future Imperfect?" on the 18th November at Hewlett Packard Laboratories in Bristol to showcase the research which it is funding. The full day event attracted over 160 delegates, academics, students, research fellows, businesses and other organisations including Sir John Beringer and several Pro Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors from the region. As part of its mission to support and develop collaborative research between South West Universities and South West businesses, GWR currently funds 130 full time PhD studentships and 20 full time research fellows spread across the region.

Each PhD studentship is jointly supervised by two regional Universities, and jointly funded by GWR and a SW business under a partnership agreement. The PhD projects were selected specifically for their value to the sponsoring business partner and for their potential impact on the South West regional economy. For example, over 40 small businesses (SMEs) are currently working with South West Universities under the GWR studentship program, on research problems key to their businesses, research which they would have found very difficult if not impossible to pursue otherwise. GWR has already invested £3.4M in this scheme which has been matched by £3.4M from businesses in the South West.

The 20 GWR Research Fellowships are being fully funded by GWR for 3 years with a firm commitment from the host University to conversion into a permanent academic job when the GWR funding finishes, thus creating 20 new academic jobs in the region. This scheme is helping to develop the talent pool in Universities in the South west, and GWR fellows have already attracted over £1M in new research funds to their institutions.

Plenary lecture sessions described how GWR is supporting clusters of research excellence in Sustainability, Aerospace, and Meteorology in the South West, whilst workshop sessions given by GWR students and GWR fellows described a number of specific research programs in Materials Sciences, Psychology and Sustainability. A research poster competition attracted over 50 entries from GWR PhD students who were required to describe their work *via* a poster and then defend their work to their peers, symposium delegates, and to a jury of Pro- and Deputy Vice-Chancellors from the region. The winning entry, which received a prize of £100 in book tokens, was "Robotic Humanoid Hand Research" presented by Craig Chorley who is working at the University of Western England and the University of Bristol.

Three very stimulating futurology or "future imperfect" sessions completed the program, in which acknowledged experts were invited to speculate on what *they* think that the future holds over the next 15 years in their areas of expertise: computing, environmental challenges and media entertainment.

In an innovative move, a detailed video record was made of the event, and webcasts of all of the plenary and futurology sessions are available for streaming to any internet connected PC from the GWR website : www.GWR.ac.uk .

Notes for editors :

Great Western Research is a £ 14 million 5 year project funded by the South West Regional Development Agency (SW-RDA), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Businesses in the South West of England, which aims to catalyse and develop new collaborations between University research groups in the South West and South West Businesses. To date research collaborations arising from GWR's activities have leveraged an additional £6M of investment into research programs in South West Universities, and much more is expected over the projects lifetime. Over 40 small businesses (SMEs) are currently working with South West Universities under the GWR studentship program, on research problems key to their businesses, research which they would have found very difficult if not impossible to pursue otherwise. Other sponsors include Airbus, Rolls Royce, Hewlett Packard, the Met office and the Environment Agency. GWR has already helped to develop clusters of excellence in meteorology, aerospace and sustainability. GWR is also developing a Regional Postgraduate Training Network delivering discipline specific PG training across the South West. Funded by HEFCE the network uses Access Grid multi-way video conferencing technology, and GWR has invested over £1.1M in state-of-the-art technology to this end based in the Universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth and the University of Western England. Training delivered over this network is available to all HEIs in the South West *via* desk top access to the Access Grid system provided by GWR.

Further information about the GWR project and the Symposium may be obtained from :

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Images to support this press release

May be taken from the attached case studies and newsletter , or are available from the above address and also available from : Bill Wells, 2dot0, 2 Barnfield Crescent, Exeter, Tel 845 337 2928 eMail bill.wells@2dot0.co.uk

Attached 5 case studies of GWR projects as pdf files, and the GWR *update* news letter.