Welcome to the July 2020 edition of the BEI newsletter, the first since the coronavirus pandemic took hold in the UK. When the UK went into lockdown in March, the School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) was quick to adapt to offer teaching and exams in an online format. The Easter period gave us a little more time to start work on the Summer term teaching, and I firmly believe that we have led the way in providing online support for our students. It has not been perfect, and I wouldn’t want to pretend it has, but moving to a new mode of delivery in a short space of time and engaging with a new form of pedagogy for many has been challenging. I appreciate all the efforts made by staff that have enabled us to deliver this term, and I really appreciate the patience and the willingness of students to work with us on this.

Despite coronavirus having dominated the last three months of our lives and much time and effort having been rightly given over to the immediate needs of our students, I am pleased that we have also continued to focus on research. One important development, that aligns well with our commitment to work towards the Principles of Responsible Management Education, has been the launch of the Responsible Business Centre, bringing together academics from a variety of disciplines who all believe in the need for organisational policies and practices to reflect a wider responsibility to the environment and society. Given the debate on the future of society, and the role that higher education institutions and business schools will play in this, the creation of this centre is extremely relevant and timely.

I am also pleased to say that many colleagues, particularly from Organizational Psychology, have been offering their expertise on areas such as wellbeing and remote working during this time. The debates on these issues will be critical for us, and for organisations, as we move towards different ways of working in the future.

In light of the move to remote working, we also launched the BEI Research Seminar Series in which we hosted seven weekly research-focused sessions delivered by academics from across BEI. There has been real diversity in the topics discussed, emphasising one of the fundamental strengths of BEI in its interdisciplinarity. Notably, Dr Pedro Gomes’ (EMS) talk on the four-day working week was added to the College’s Birkbeck Inspires series and has since become the most downloaded of all the talks.

A further notable success has been the appointment of Professor Sarah Hart, Professor of Mathematics and former Head of Department in EMS, to the position of Gresham Professor of Geometry. This is a prestigious position, and all the more important this time as Sarah is the first woman to be appointed to this position in the 423-year history of the Professorship. She will continue in the tradition of the College and deliver free public lectures within the City of London, with a focus in 2020-21 on Mathematics in Music and Writing.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank three long-standing members of BEI who will all be retiring this summer. Professor John Kelly (MGMT), Dr Kate McKenzie Davey (OP) and Dr Chris Dewberry (OP), will all be retiring...
after many years of service to their respective departments, to BEI, and to the College. I want to thank them for all their work across various roles in the College during their time at Birkbeck and wish them all the best in their retirements.

As the summer term draws nearer to an end, I want to thank all colleagues that have worked hard to ensure we have been able to continue to support our students. We have collectively responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic and I want to reiterate my thanks to everyone – students and staff – for all their efforts in adjusting to a very different way of studying and working. The summer months will, I hope, offer some respite, and ensure that we are all ready to face the new term in the Autumn with a strong offer for our new and returning students.

Dr Geoff Walters  
Executive Dean, School of Business, Economics and Informatics

Postscript  
Having guided the School through a period of significant upheaval as Interim Dean for the 2019/20 academic year, we are delighted to congratulate Geoff on his recent appointment as Executive Dean to the School and wish him every success in this role.

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SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

BEI SUMMER SEMINAR SERIES

While we have been unable to meet in person over the Summer term, the BEI Summer Seminar Series has provided an opportunity for the academic community to come together, share their latest projects and troubleshooting problems, such as how to carry out research while social distancing.

The seminars have covered a range of pertinent issues, from the economic impact of a four-day working week to the invisible work of digital housekeeping, demonstrating the breadth of practical, relevant research taking place in the School. We would like to thank everyone who has made these events a success, both through their presentations and lively engagement.

ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDENT SUCCESS

Students from BEI have performed exceptionally well in entrepreneurship activities this year.

Alexander Flint Mitchell (MSc Business Innovation with Entrepreneurship) won the Best Business Pitch award in this year’s Pioneer programme and has so far raised £100k to take his product, an innovative dating app called Blind Cupid, to market. Alexander wrote the business plan for Blind Cupid during the Entrepreneurial Venture Creation module and convenor Muthu De Silva is an innovation advisor for the business.
MSc Business Innovation with Entrepreneurship student Alexander Flint Mitchell (pictured above) has raised £100k so far for his business.

Two BEI students have also made it to the semi-finals of the Mayor’s Entrepreneur Competition. Kevin Tsai (MSc Business Innovation with Entrepreneurship) is a Creative Industries semi-finalist for his business Anywhere Bear, which helps users plan holidays around Europe without flying. Ethel Tambudzai (MSc Corporate Governance and Business Ethics) is a semi-finalist for the Smart Cities Award with her business Sonaaar, a platform connecting Black communities around the world.

BIRKBECK CONNECTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Department of Organizational Psychology has launched a new initiative to bring staff, students, alumni and people with an interest in organizational psychology together to connect and share best practice.

While we wait for the opportunity to meet face-to-face, Birkbeck Connections has begun with a short video interview series sharing recent research.

If you would like to stay up to date with Birkbeck Connections, please join their LinkedIn group.

LAUNCH OF THE RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CENTRE

Global challenges such as climate change, supply chains and high-profile corporate scandals have increased pressure on businesses for more accountability and responsibility on social and environmental issues.

The newly launched Responsible Business Centre (formerly the London Centre for Corporate Governance and Ethics) aims to develop and promote a better understanding of how social and environmental issues affect businesses and how businesses can affect them.

Dr Ioanna Boulouta, Director of the Centre, said: “The Responsible Business Centre’s vision is to create a better world through more responsible and sustainable business. I am delighted to be working with such a passionate group of academics to further this vision in line with the School’s commitment to the Principles of Responsible Management Education.”

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Work by Professor Yunus Aksoy, H.S Basso, Professor Ron Smith and Dr Tobias Grasl (EMS) on demographic structure and macroeconomic trends has been mentioned in speeches/presentations by the Governor of the Bank of Spain, Pablo Hernandez de Cos and by Bank of England MPC external member Michael Sounders, informing their views on the impact of demographic transitions.

- Dr Jo Yarker and Professor Gail Kinman (OP) contributed to the Society of Occupational Medicine return to work toolkit for occupational health professionals and small businesses.

- Dr Pamela Yeow (MGMT) was an invited speaker at a Green Alliance panel event exploring how to put an end to UK throwaway living to make consumption patterns more sustainable.
AWARDS, HONOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

- **Professor Sarah Hart** (EMS) has been appointed Gresham Professor of Geometry, the first woman to hold the position in its 423-year history. The Professorship in Geometry and Other Mathematical Sciences at Gresham College is considered to be the oldest mathematical chair in Britain.

- **Professor Hélyette Geman** (EMS) has been awarded an Erasmus Knowledge Alliances EU grant on ‘Green Energy Finance’. Birkbeck will receive €100,000 over a period of three years, involving fourteen partners from Europe and Brazil, seven universities and seven companies in the energy sector. The grant aims to create a two-year MSc programme.

- **Professor Kevin Ibeh** (MGMT) was appointed external assessor for senior academic appointments by City, University of London, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana. Professor Ibeh was also appointed external PhD examiner by Manchester Metropolitan University and external PhD supervisor by the University of Leeds.

- **Dr Pamela Yeow** (MGMT) and colleagues Dr Danielle Tucker and Dr Alison Dean were awarded a £9,997 Eastern Arc grant for their research project ‘Rethinking ethical consumerism: understanding differing household roles in effecting sustainable change’.

- **Dr Raluca Matei** (OP) project on ‘What should musicians' health education sound like?’, was Winner in the category ‘PhD and Early Career Research’ at the 2020 Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards.

- **Dr Walter Beckert** (EMS) received a BEI Impact Grant of £4,920 for his project ‘Vulnerable Consumers and Price Discrimination’.

COVID-19: BEI ACADEMICS RESPOND

Academics in the School have been sharing their advice and expertise throughout the pandemic:

- **Professor Alexandra Beauregard** (OP) discussed the implications of work and family care during the crisis for frontline workers and parents of children with disabilities in the British Sociological Association's Everyday Society.

- **Professor Kevin Ibeh** (MGMT) shared thoughts on the impact of COVID-19 on Africa in a video interview with the International Business Club, Greenwich University, 21 May 2020.

- **Dr Caroline Kamau** (OP) wrote on a number of health-related issues in Psychology Today, including Why You Need a Face Mask in the Coronavirus Pandemic, Can 21 Minutes of Aerobic Exercise Boost Your Mood? and Is Nudge Theory the Right Approach to Coronavirus? Dr Kamau’s research was also quoted in the Daily Mail, the BBC and The Week.

- **Professor Gail Kinman** (Visiting Professor of Occupational Psychology, OP) co-wrote the British Psychological Society’s guide to working from home during the coronavirus pandemic and guide to dealing with trauma at home. Professor Kinman was also interviewed on BBC Radio 4’s All in the Mind programme about starting new jobs during a pandemic.

- **Professor Gail Kinman** and **Dr Kevin Teoh** (OP) contributed to a webinar entitled ‘What can we do to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of clinicians on the frontline during COVID-19’.

- **Dr Rachel Lewis** (OP) took part in a webinar for International SOS on Maintaining Your Wellbeing at Home. Dr Lewis also contributed to a Huffington Post article entitled Working From Home Indefinitely? Here’s How To Keep Some Work-Life Balance.
• **Professor Almuth McDowall** (OP) ran some sessions for Barclays Eagle Labs on how to recognise and cope with stress. Professor McDowall also wrote a Birkbeck Blog on managing our organisations and families out of the COVID-19 crisis and contributed to an article on managing the shift to remote working.

• **Professor Almuth McDowall** and **Dr Kevin Teoh** (OP) presented webinars through the NHS Practitioner Health Programme on managing stress, anxiety, and resilience. McDowall and Teoh also presented a webinar for all Birkbeck staff entitled ‘Crisis or no crisis: A proactive approach to managing well-being and worklife balance’.

• **Professor Stephen Wright** (EMS) spoke for The CORE Project about the Economics behind COVID-19 in a video that has been viewed almost 3,000 times.

• **Dr Jo Yarker** (OP) presented on a Human Resource Management webinar led by Tiger Recruitment on managing mental health remotely. Dr Yarker also presented in a webinar hosted by the Society of Occupational Medicine, Vocational Rehabilitation Association and British Psychological Society focusing on key practices and health, safety and psychological implications for return to work.

• **Dr Jo Yarker** and **Dr Rachel Lewis** (OP) wrote a post on ‘Working Well from Home’ for We are the City. Yarker and Lewis were also part of the Expert Insights Q&A for Santander with HR professionals and business leaders working to manage the impact of the pandemic on their teams.

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**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Since the beginning of the lockdown in March, we have worked swiftly to move our extra-curricular international student activities online, consulting our students to find out what activities they would like to participate in.

The first Summer term event – a virtual pub quiz - proved to be a hit, demonstrating that our students want to connect with us and each other.

As we are currently unable to use the School of Arts cinema, we moved to Netflix and offered an interactive film party. Our first screening was of the Mexican film ‘Roma’ (2018). The School also arranged a successful virtual tour, with a guide leading a group of students on a virtual walk through the City of London. We are offering weekly hangout sessions in which students can log on and chat with us and fellow students.

We will host a second quiz in July to bring together students from around the world. We will also offer a virtual ‘Beatles walking tour’ and screen one more film – this one is produced by a Birkbeck student.

We have developed a comprehensive international student activities calendar for the academic year 2020/21, with a mix of campus-based and online events. We offer a great variety of social, study skills and employability events and we also understand the importance of networking with home students and ensure that there are plenty of opportunities to do so.

If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact **Will Richards** or **Andrea Williams**.
NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to the following colleagues on their recent promotion or appointment:

**Economics, Mathematics and Statistics**

- **Pedro Gomes**, promoted to Reader
- **Kenjiro Hori**, promoted to Senior Lecturer

**Management**

- **Federica Rossi**, promoted to Reader
- **Benedetta Crisafulli**, promoted to Senior Lecturer
- **Christine Guo**, promoted to Senior Lecturer
- **Libon Fung**, promoted to Senior Lecturer
- **Richard Tacon**, promoted to Senior Lecturer
- **Claudia Rehm**, appointed Team Leader
- **Jide Gbadamosi**, appointed Administrator
- **Zoe Hart**, appointed Administrative Assistant

**Organizational Psychology**

- **Alexandra Beauregard**, promoted to Professor of Organizational Psychology
- **Nimali Udukalage**, appointed Team Leader (previously Team Leader in the Department of Management)
John Kelly has been Professor of Industrial Relations at Birkbeck since 2003. Retiring this Summer, he reflects on a forty-year career in academia.

(BEI): What first caught your interest about the study of industrial relations?
(JK): I became interested in the study of work as a Psychology undergraduate. I found it fascinating to consider how jobs could be redesigned or improved by management, workers or unions. When I started lecturing at LSE, they told me I’d be teaching a postgraduate class on Industrial Relations. I knew very little about the subject at the time and was only about a week ahead of graduate students on my reading, but because I was active in the union, it was a longstanding interest that just continued. Over time, I’ve realised that the field of industrial relations is very broad – even if you stay in the same subject area, you can move around in different topics and find something new that interests you.

You’re perhaps best known for the book *Rethinking Industrial Relations*. Did you have any inkling that it would be so influential?
Historically, the field of industrial relations has been tied to unions and the State. When I started reading for the book in the early 1990s, it was clear that the unions were in decline, so I thought, if we carry on studying these topics, we could end up going down with the field!

The book was about rethinking the field of industrial relations and what we do as academics. We can’t tie our fate as an academic discipline to a set of institutions; we need to find out what those unions represent, and ultimately it’s about these themes of individuals, collectivism, power and justice. I presented papers at conferences that drew big crowds, along with a lot of criticism. I wasn’t surprised at the controversy, but I was surprised at the impact. I had no idea that it would ever end up with almost 1800 citations. I had no idea either that I’d regularly have PhD students call me up and say “I read your book and because of that I’m now doing research in this area. Can I meet you and talk to you?” It’s really heart-warming to feel that something you’ve written has made a difference.

What have been your proudest accomplishments over your career?
I think it would have to be bringing up three children who are now grown up, working and settled! Having children really puts your academic work in context. It’s also wonderful seeing my former students doing well: watching people you first met as students become big names in their field and knowing you’re one of the people who’s made a difference to their life is really rewarding.

What have been the most memorable moments from your time at Birkbeck?
One moment that really sticks in my mind was around the 2005 London terrorist attack. One of the 52 people who were killed in the attack was an Italian Birkbeck student. The College continued to award her degree and invited her family to the graduation ceremony. I was a member of the platform party and then-President Eric Hobsbawm was giving his speech. At one point, he paused and turned to the family of the student and started speaking to them in Italian. Even now, I just find it so emotional and for me it summed up the ethos of Birkbeck. It isn’t just a large organisation with huge student numbers and international prestige; somehow Birkbeck represents something bigger. You realise how important the students are, and not just the students, but the families. I’m not cynical about that kind of thing – there is something about this place that is different.
Have you noticed many changes to the education landscape from when you first started working in academia?

A huge change that’s taken place while I’ve been in academia is the transition from what was an elite system of higher education to a mass system. When I was a student, less than 10% of eighteen-year-olds went to university. We’ve now progressed into a mass system where 50% of eighteen-year-olds or more go to university and there’s a much more heterogeneous range of motives for being there. It’s good that the notion of going to university has become much more accessible – many students who wouldn’t have had the chance to go when I was an undergraduate now go and do very well, and the classrooms are much more diverse.

On the flipside of that, you have the introduction of fees, which I think is criminal. For someone like me, who was one of six kids in an Irish working class family, I quite possibly wouldn’t have gone to university at all if there had been fees - I think the prospect of debt puts a lot of people off.

What do you enjoy about teaching?

I still get a buzz out of lecturing: going into a big lecture theatre, standing in front of a group and starting. It’s always very gratifying at the end of a lecture if a student comes up and gives you good feedback – you forget the ones who were falling asleep in the back row!

What are your plans for your retirement?

I’m a great movie fan, so once the lockdown eases, I’ll be back in Bloomsbury frequently to visit the Curzon cinema. I’m planning a project looking at representations of unions and strikes in British and American cinema from the mid-twentieth century up to the present day. I’ll also be swimming, gardening, walking the dog and spending time with my kids. I’ll still be busy, but it’s all things that I’m interested in.

We wish Professor Kelly all the best for his retirement. The School will also soon be saying goodbye to Dr Kate Mackenzie Davey and Dr Chris Dewberry, who are retiring this year. Look out for more details in the next BEI newsletter.

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles


• Holtom, T.C. and **Brooms, Anthony C.** (2020) Machine Learning with Laser Focus. The Actuary, pp. 30-33. ISSN 0960-457X.


**Books, Chapters and Reports**


• **Kinman, G.** & Wray, S. (2020) Wellbeing in academic employees in the UK – a benchmarking approach. In R. J. Burke & S. Pignata (Eds.) Handbook of
Research on Stress and Well-being in the Public Sector, Elgar.


**Conference Output**

- **Professor Alexandra Beauregard** was an invited speaker at the University of Birmingham's Work Inclusivity Research Centre (WIRC) seminar on "Work Responsibilities and Care Commitments during the COVID-19 Pandemic – Towards a new division of labour?" in May 2020. Professor Beauregard was also an invited speaker on "Work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic" at the 1st CYGNA (Supporting Women in Academia Network) Global Virtual Meeting in May 2020.

- **Dr Benedetta Crisafulli** has been invited to present findings from the paper “How the Intensity of Cause-Related Marketing Guilt Appeals Influences Consumers: The Roles of Company Motive and Consumer Identification with the Brand” at an Insights Studio organised by the Advertising Research Foundation in August 2020.

- **Dr Kevin Teoh** was invited to speak on healthcare worker wellbeing: antecedents and interventions at the "Moral Injury and Psychological Wellbeing in Healthcare Special Interest Group Symposium" held at Barts & St. Thomas NHS Trust.

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**BEI DIGEST**

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**School of Business, Economics and Informatics**

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