

Student View

Who comes first?

By Amy Jones
UNU President

Arriving at university three years ago, I was overwhelmed by the quality of opportunity, abundance of resources and excellence of teaching.

Today, I find myself asking the question: "Who is benefiting from this?" The students in Nottingham are typically of a well-off background from good schools.

I had worked hard to come to Nottingham but there were plenty of others at my school with huge potential, drive and ability, yet none came to Nottingham. Some did apply and were not offered places, others did not feel they would fit in.

This is seemingly a great waste of potential that possible students do not feel Nottingham would be a good place for them, or that the University does not feel these individuals would be good for Nottingham.

What are the reasons that this University does not even present itself as an option to many in certain sectors of society.

Obviously, there is great disparity between quality of schools which will impact on how potential students perform. This is a problem requiring long term solutions to be implemented by the Government.

On a more immediate level, what could be done for the admissions system to make it fairer and to encourage wider access?

When offering places, admissions tutors may look for good grades but also a wide range of extra curricular activity.

But how can a fair comparison be made between applicants who have been provided with and those who have been to schools where they don't compete across the country in sport or debates, have no prizes and awards, no head girls and head boys?

Equally, interviews and extra tests (as in law) do not provide a level playing field to those who have not been coached and groomed for such occasions.

Potential students should be judged on how they have used the resources available to them before university, not what resources were available to them.

Fiddling on the beach

By Dr Peter McGregor
Life Science

Six members of the Behaviour and Ecology Research Group in Life Science helped to make the 25th International Ethological Conference the largest gathering of animal behaviour researchers in the 50-year history of the subject.

More than 1,000 delegates from 43 countries attended the conference held in Vienna this August. While most delegates were buying T-shirts as mementoes, two Nottingham postgraduates had no such need. For Claire Latruffe and Fiona Burford, their first international conference was made unforgettable by the award of the prize for the best newcomers' poster paper. More delegates voted for their poster than for any of the other 450 presented at the conference — quite an accolade!

Their winning poster, entitled *Fiddling about on the beach 2: more on Uca tangeri behaviour*, used a squeaky soft toy to entice delegates to read about their research on fiddler crabs. The study was carried out in Portugal this summer. It was funded by the



Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour and supervised by myself and Rui Oliveira (ISPA, Lisbon).

"I had no idea this would happen, it was really the pinnacle of my time at Nottingham," Claire told **NewsLetter**. Fiona added: "We thought the poster was pretty good, but so were lots of others. How are we going to top this for the 26th conference in Bangalore in 1999?"

Before the prize was announced, the poster had attracted the attention of independent production companies from the USA and Europe who discussed the screening of Claire and Fiona's research on TV. Meanwhile, you can see the fiddler crabs on the poster outside the BERG research room (107) in Life Science.

Nottingham tennis success

Nottingham's tennis teams have always been strong, but this year they can be labelled champions thanks to the efforts of the 1997 summer team.

Confident

Consistently reaching the semi-finals or finals of the British Universities Sports Association competition for the past few years, Nottingham was confident having finished as runners-up in the winter premier league. The semi-final opponents were Bath University, whose team included four tennis scholarship players. Nottingham, however, managed a 7-2 win.

On the second day, Nottingham faced the

holders and winter league champions Loughborough University. Sports bursar and captain of the Nottingham team Jeremy Cross altered the team pairings for the final so that strength could be evenly spread. This proved an excellent tactical move as the Nottingham team went on to have a remarkable win to become the BUSA champions — the last time the University men's tennis team won the university championships was in 1954.

The Department of Physical Recreation has already been able to assist the team in order for them to benefit from good coaching, and arrangements are being made for the men's and ladies' teams to use the facilities at the tennis centre on University Boulevard and the new racquets and health club at West Bridgford.