

## Continuum one year on

It is now a little over a year since Continuum was fully established at UEL. During the past year development at Continuum has exceeded all expectations. Our portfolio of research projects has grown at a much faster rate than anticipated and the range of work being undertaken at local, national and international levels has been very satisfying. It has indeed been a busy and productive year. A core staff team of six members is now in place as well as four centre associates. Partnership and collaborative working is a key feature of our work and this has involved both UK and international partners.

Good progress has been made on the development of Continuum as a research resource for widening participation studies. The newly established Continuum website, <http://www.uel.ac.uk/continuum>, incorporates a growing range of materials and information which can be freely accessed, and there is also a wide range of links to other relevant sites related to widening participation and lifelong learning. Furthermore, three editions of the Newsletter have been produced during our first year, another example of our concern to share and establish links. I should be glad to hear from any colleagues who wish to discuss forms of WP related research and development partnerships.

**John Storan**

Director, Continuum

## CONTINUUM STUDY VISIT TO SWEDEN

Over the past year Continuum has hosted a series of study visits to the UK for Swedish academics working in the field of WP. In May the Centre was part of a return study visit to Stockholm. The party also consisted of representatives from the UK funding bodies - Kevin Whitson, Clare Streatfield and Jenni Newman from the HEFCE and Pat Morrison from the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.

Our thanks to Kristina Julin, Head of the Special Committee on Recruitment to Higher Education in Sweden, for arranging the visit. The UK group were treated to a packed programme of meetings with policy makers, practitioners and government officials engaged in widening participation in Sweden. The Vice Mayor of Stockholm Erik Nilsson, who has responsibility for education throughout the city, hosted a meeting to discuss the varied initiatives and



The UK delegation with representatives from universities and university colleges in the Stockholm region at Stockholm Academic Forum.

developments taking place in Stockholm. The UK group also learned about the wide range of WP work taking place throughout Sweden, where development projects designed to widen participation and reach out to under-represented groups have been set up to reach the target of a 50% participation rate in HE. The visit also provided an opportunity for valuable comparative discussions on WP issues. You can find further information on previous study visits on the Continuum website:

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/continuum/events/retention.htm>

## Professorship to Continuum Director

We are very pleased to report that the University of East London has awarded a professorship to John Storan, Continuum Director. The Chair is in recognition of the significant contribution which John has made to widening participation nationally and internationally: his policy role within HEFCE's Action on

Access, his practitioner support as Chair of FACE and his European contribution via the Executive of EUCEN. These, and many other kinds of involvement, are reflected in the range of work undertaken by Continuum. Congratulations to John for this richly deserved recognition.

# MENTORING IN WALTHAM FOREST

Earlier this year Continuum was commissioned by the Waltham Forest Learner Support Task Group to carry out a mapping study of mentoring arrangements for young people in schools, colleges, and agencies throughout the borough. This project has now been successfully completed, and the resulting report includes a description of eleven mentoring programmes across seven sites in the borough.

The study revealed great diversity in how the concept of mentoring is

approached, from innovative phone mentoring to community mentoring to activities that might be described as peer tutoring. This diversity can be seen as a strength in that mentoring appears to have developed in the borough to meet the needs of learners in different contexts. At the same time, the diversity may make certain comparisons across programmes difficult.

The study also served as an initial inquiry into the perceived successes and benefits of mentoring. Those interviewed for the study commented

that mentoring appears to increase the mentee's confidence and self-esteem as well as moving them toward personal goals in small increments. It was further suggested that mentoring is about "planting seeds" and thus may result in impacts that are only evident in the long-term.

**If you would like further information, please contact Dr. Julie Andreshak-Behrman at [j.andreshak-berhman@uel.ac.uk](mailto:j.andreshak-berhman@uel.ac.uk).**

## Staff update

Two research fellows have joined the Continuum team to take forward the Ethnicity and Employment project, Rahila Ahmed and Maki Kimura.

Rahila has participated in research within the fields of urban regeneration, domestic violence, ethnicity and equality. She has a background in Humanities and Gender studies and research interests in issues concerning gender, identity and culture. Maki has research experience in the issues of gender, race and ethnicity. In her Ph.D. research she examined socio-historical construction of race and gender, looking at the relationship between modernity and the regulation of sexuality.



Research fellows Rahila Ahmed, Maki Kimura and Research Manager Tony Hudson.

## Ethnicity and Employment Update



As we have signalled in earlier editions of the Newsletter, Continuum is the lead partner in the national Ethnicity and Employment research project, critically exploring the relation between ethnicity and employment within Higher Education. A few months on, the project is now firmly in its stride – partners have met together, have held a video conference, and are in the process of preparing an institutional profile as their first formal contribution to the project. In addition to this, Continuum is about to launch a website dedicated to the project. The site, accessible via the Continuum site, will include information on the project, updates, information on our partner universities as well as links related to the project in hand. We do

hope that you will log onto the site on [www.uel.ac.uk/continuum](http://www.uel.ac.uk/continuum) and then on the Ethnicity and Employment site.

The Ethnicity and Employment project team at UEL has a new member, Tony Hudson, who is now Research Manager for the project. Tony's expertise in research methodology and research management is a welcome addition to the project. He also brings with him management experience from the not-for-profit sector where he was General Secretary of a professional and learned society. For the past three years he has been a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Westminster where he taught on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.