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## Press release

**Date:** Tuesday, 23 May 2006  
**Title:** Reaching out to raise aspirations

The Welsh Assembly Government confirmed recently its commitment to fund the Reaching Wider initiative in Wales for *a further two* academic years.

£2m has been set aside to fund the initiative in 2006/07. The Assembly is also looking forward to funding the initiative at an additional £2m in the following academic year, 2007/08.

The announcement of support to July 2008 brings the total investment since Jane Davidson, Assembly Government Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, first announced funding for Reaching Higher Reaching Wider in March 2002, to more than £11m.

The four partnerships funded through Reaching Wider comprise university, college, school and other organisations in Wales working together to provide new and challenging learning opportunities within local communities. Events held by the Reaching Wider partnerships have attracted national recognition.

The *Wales Summer University*, run by the **West and Mid Wales Reaching Wider Partnership** was recognised by Universities UK in December 2005 as an 'innovative and successful widening access initiative'. At the 2006 Reaching Wider conference, held on 6 April 2006, Debbie Davies spoke of her time as both a Summer University student and a Summer University leader:

“The experience of being a student and a leader on Summer University has enabled me to grow in confidence and be far more outgoing. It is the reason I have chosen to go into a career in teaching, because I know what a difference a good education and having people who genuinely care about their students can make.”

*Aiming For A College Education (ACE)* events, run by the **South West Wales Partnership**, encourage local pupils to find out more about student life, the different routes into university and college and the variety of courses available, which led Jane Jones, Key Stage 3 Coordinator at Bishop Gore School, to say that the *ACE* day was “one of the best school trips” the pupils had enjoyed. More than 2,000 pupils from 21 different schools across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot have taken part so far in *ACE* days.

The **North Wales Reaching Wider Partnership** will be launching its *Welsh medium peer mentoring programme* at the Urdd Eisteddfod on 29 May 2006. The programme aims to raise the aspirations of Welsh speaking pupils, encouraging them to continue their studies in Welsh, at university or college. The older mentors become both advisers and positive role models for the young pupils.

The **South East Wales Partnership (First Campus)** is piloting an *Act on Science* programme which will be extended across Wales from the autumn. *Act on Science* aims to raise awareness of maths, science and health-related subjects at Key Stage 3 and above in schools and community groups across Wales. *Act on Science* aims to encourage pupils to consider applying to study science subjects in universities and colleges.

Speaking at the 2006 Reaching Wider National Conference, Christine Chapman, the Deputy Minister for Education, with responsibility for 14-19 Education, said:

“Those of us involved in education recognise that the Reaching Wider Partnerships play a crucial role in the Assembly Government’s widening access and equality of opportunity agenda right across Wales.”

Professor Phil Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said:

“The Reaching Wider Partnerships have developed a wide range of innovative activities to inspire people of all ages to improve their skills and apply to higher education. This further two-year commitment to Reaching Wider by the Assembly is a

positive endorsement of the initiative's success and ensures the continuation of the four Reaching Wider Partnerships in Wales.”

Reaching Wider, which is managed by HEFCW, is a long-term widening access initiative. It aims to improve learning skills and educational aspirations to enable more school-aged pupils and adults to study at university or college. Reaching Wider offers an extensive range of innovative programmes to help them learn new skills and study with confidence. Hundreds of events are take place all year round throughout Wales, in schools, colleges, universities and local communities.

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### **Media contacts**

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **1. Background - HEFCW**

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the National Assembly for Wales on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

### **3. Further Education Colleges**

HEFCW directly funds some higher education provision within Further Education Colleges (FECs). Funding for their HE provision forms only a very small part of the income for FECs. The mainstay of financial support for these institutions is the Welsh Assembly Government. For this reason, the Council has never sought to moderate the funding outcome (by uplifting to GDP) for these institutions in terms of their higher education provision. This means that year-on-year funding for higher education provision in FECs can vary considerably as a consequence of their performance in terms of student numbers.