

## Press release

**Date:** 20 June 2007

**Title:** £7.5 million for south west Wales education collaboration

Three south west Wales higher education institutions are to receive £7.5 million for an innovative partnership which integrates a range of services for students and staff.

Funding has been awarded to Swansea University, Swansea Institute of Higher Education and Trinity College Carmarthen from HEFCW's Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund.

The funding is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government under its *Reaching Higher* agenda to support higher education institutions in Wales make the types of 'landscape-changing' developments that can improve performance, enhance competitiveness, and increase value for money in public services.

The collaboration builds on earlier work between the three institutions and will lead to the integration of a range of services and administrative functions, including student records and intranet systems, the creation of a south west Wales 'virtual' library and careers service and staff development. It will also give a co-ordinated approach to environmental sustainability and estates management.

Minister for Education, Culture and the Welsh Language Carwyn Jones said: "The benefits of collaboration between these three HEIs will be wide-reaching. The funding put in place by the Welsh Assembly Government will improve services and provide exemplary facilities for the many students attending the Universities."

Professor Sir Roger Williams, Chair of HEFCW, said "This significant development will increase value for money and improve the learning experience of students in south west Wales. It is in keeping with the Beecham Review recommendation that organisations collaborate to deliver better public services".

Professor Richard B Davies, Vice-Chancellor of Swansea University, said: "By working harmoniously together we are improving the quality and effectiveness of higher education throughout South West Wales. The funding allows our three institutions to build on previous collaboration with a positive partnership approach to joint projects.

"In addition to the benefits for the institutions, their staff and students, the funding brings 47 new jobs to the region. I have no doubt that the partnership provides a strong platform for future collaboration and change."

Professor David Warner, Principal of Swansea Institute of Higher Education, said: "We are delighted with the announcement that our joint proposal has been successful; the process has generated a great energy and momentum for collaboration in all three institutions.

"This exciting development will further strengthen the positive relationships between our institutions, ultimately supporting improvements in the quality and cost efficiency of the services we provide to our most important stakeholders – our students and staff."

Dr Medwin Hughes, Principal of Trinity College Carmarthen, said: "This is indeed a very welcome development for the south west Wales region – this partnership will bring significant long-term benefits for students and staff, and for Welsh higher education as a whole.

"The initiative not only addresses the needs identified in *Reaching Higher* for institutional clustering and Networks of Excellence, but, through collaboration, it also satisfies other priority areas, including widening access, excellence in teaching and learning, and developing a skilled workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond."

Ends

**Notes for editors:**

- **Functional Administrative Collaboration in South West Wales**

The Functional Administrative Collaboration between Swansea University, Swansea Institute of Higher Education, and Trinity College Carmarthen has been developed against the background of the need to improve cost-efficiency, identified in the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Reaching Higher' strategy for higher education and the 'Beecham Review' recommendation for collaboration to improve value for money in public services.

The collaboration consists of thirteen interrelated projects across a range of functional and administrative areas:

1. The integration of student records and intranet systems to underpin collaboration.
2. The development of a South-West Wales E-learning Centre of Excellence based around a joint E-learning system. This will enable the institutions to offer a higher level of service than is currently possible on an individual basis and will underpin future academic collaboration.
3. Linkage between computer systems to enable data backup and recovery in the event of system breakdowns, together with the development of disaster recover scenarios and a joint Business Continuity Model. These developments will improve the resilience of the institutions' systems and bring substantial savings in the event of an emergency.
4. Creation of a South West Wales 'Virtual' Library to greatly enhance the service to students at all three institutions. This will include the development of reciprocal borrowing, document delivery services, a single portal for electronic access to the library catalogues of the three institutions, as well as a shared approach to library staff development.

5. Student Services collaboration involving the establishment of a South West Wales Mentoring Scheme for students with mental health difficulties and a South West Wales Assessment of Needs (Disabled Students Allowance) Centre.
6. The extension of Swansea University's Recording Centre for the Blind to serve all three institutions, increasing the number of courses in Wales that are available to visually impaired students.
7. The creation of a South West Wales Virtual Careers Service across the three careers centres in order to enhance the service to students, with greater access to resources out of hours and new learning materials.
8. The collaborative development of alumni services, including introducing a customer relationship management system to build networks with past graduates and underpin marketing activity.
9. The creation of a south west Wales Central Procurement Unit, drawing on the existing expertise at the three institutions, delivering forecast cost savings of £1.2 million per year after five years.
10. Collaboration in Estates Management functions around facilities, space and asset management, and security.
11. A coordinated approach to environmental sustainability, including the implementation of Swansea University's Environmental Management System across the three institutions and a collaborative approach to energy, water and waste management.
12. Collaboration in staff development including in the planning and provision of staff training.
13. Collaboration in the institutions' approach to equal opportunities and diversity through the development of a network of excellence to share expertise and develop policy.

- **The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund**

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund was launched in July 2002 to support the reshaping of the Welsh Higher Education Sector in the interests of achieving major performance gains and enhanced competitiveness. Several partnerships were supported in this first phase of the fund including the merger of Cardiff University and the University of Wales College of Medicine.

In June 2004, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning reiterated the Welsh Assembly Government's continuing commitment to pursuing reconfiguration and collaboration as a means of securing a robust, dynamic and competitive higher education sector in Wales. HEFCW launched a second phase of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund in July 2004 with the aim of encouraging proposals for well-found mergers, clusters and networks of excellence and the rationalisation of provision between institutions.

- **The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales** (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:
  - the provision of education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
  - the undertaking of research by HEIs; and
  - the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

HEFCW is also 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, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

- **Swansea University** is a world-class, research-led university situated in stunning parkland overlooking Swansea Bay on the edge of the Gower peninsula, the UK's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Founded in 1920, the University now offers around 500 undergraduate courses and 100 postgraduate courses to more than 12,000 students.

The University, winner of the 2005 *Times Higher Education Supplement* Award for the UK's Best Student Experience, was shortlisted for the award in 2006, and once again was the only Welsh institution to make the shortlist. The Best Student Experience Award is voted by students, who are polled on facilities, prospects, social life, and course satisfaction at their Universities.

- **Swansea Institute of Higher Education's** three founding colleges were all established in the nineteenth century. Swansea Institute of Higher Education is committed to widening participation, diversity and a student-centred approach and has about 6,000 students.
- **Trinity College Carmarthen** is one of the key providers of high quality bi-lingual education within the University sector in Wales. Established in 1848, it is a specialist Community College that promotes widening access and lifelong learning.

#### **Contacts for further information**

**HEFCW:** Emma Raczka, Communications Manager, 029 2068 2225  
[emma.raczka@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:emma.raczka@hefcw.ac.uk)

**Welsh Assembly Government:** Matthew Flye, Communications Officer, 029 2089 8938

**Swansea University:** Bethan Evans, Public Relations Officer, 01792 295050 or email  
[press@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:press@swansea.ac.uk).

**Swansea Institute of Higher Education:** Tom Cadwalladr, Head of Marketing, 01792 481003 or email [tom.cadwalladr@sihe.ac.uk](mailto:tom.cadwalladr@sihe.ac.uk)

**Trinity College Carmarthen:** Eleri Beynon, Marketing Manager, 01267 676767 or email  
[e.beynon@trinity-cm.ac.uk](mailto:e.beynon@trinity-cm.ac.uk)