



# Student Recruitment Project

## 2001 - 2010

**Dr DAN MITCHELL offers a progress report: with the Project ongoing, over 2,000 students have been recruited so far and still counting!**

BEFORE I took over as your President, I was deeply concerned that we were declining in membership and had no strategy for growth.

The total membership when I was President Elect was 1,658 (now in 2010 over 2400 including student members) and looking at the membership breakdown we had only 12 student members. Without a strong student membership, any Engineering Institution is building in its own decline.

A key part of my strategy as President was to recruit students (and Eminent members) and the project has been funded and supported throughout by the Douglas Bomford Trust.(DBT)

I have benefited from Membership of IAgrE throughout my career, from Student onwards and without it

on my CV and the contacts made, life could have been very different

The idea for the project started from visits to the Engineering Departments of leading Universities with our two sons, Colin and David who wanted to enroll for accredited Mechanical Engineering and Computer and Electrical Engineering degree courses respectively. In total, we visited 8 universities and in the entrance of each Engineering department, there was a poster for free student membership of I.Mech E or for Colin's course I.EE (now IET) throughout their courses.

So why did we not offer free membership of IAgrE for Agricultural Engineering students at all levels ?

Clearly this project would need financial support as there

was no way that I would want members to subsidise it so an application was made to The Douglas Bomford Trust (DBT).

When the application for funds was made, I was a DBT Trustee and only Clive Last of CLAAS - a fellow Trustee at the time - supported the project After some discussion, Clive said in frustration, "For goodness sake they are only asking for £2,000 (later increased to £3,000 )per year".

Thank you Clive for giving this project the kick-start it needed! The DBT Chairman at the time also said that I would be lucky to find 50 students, so obviously the first year's target was 75 students and this was achieved!

Funds were required from DBT for free membership throughout a student's course and if they progressed from Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) then the membership would still be free.

I must stress that at no time have the members of IAgrE subsidised this project and I give thanks to DBT for their continuous support.

In the first year 75 students were recruited by initially recruiting the Agricultural Engineering students at Writtle College and Harper Adams University College.

### SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TO DATE

- 75 students were recruited in year one and as word spread, more colleges asked to be included so the year two target was 150 students. 150 students were recruited in year two and as more Colleges joined the project, approx. 300 students were recruited each year for the next 6 years with over 400 in 2008 - 2009. A total of over 2,000 students have now been recruited over the last nine year and 10 % retained as members. (This is a higher retention rate than the larger Institutions but still not good enough) Over 2,000 young engineers now know that we exist and from experience with our own sons in both IMechE and IET, who dropped out after graduation then rejoined later, others may decide to return further on in their careers. If nothing else, the project has made over 2,000 students and many lecturers aware that we exist and the benefits of membership - 'warts and all'!
- 17 Colleges have been visited on a regular basis and contacts between colleges and the Institution strengthened. Contacts between Colleges and several manu-



Barony College's tractor simulator with Drew Easton Head of Ag Eng on the right demonstrating it to Will Turner lecturer at Harper Adams

facturers and dealers have also developed.

- 3 I have been asked by five lecturers for mentoring through to IEng and CEng level and they have all reached these levels.
- 4 18 students have been individually mentored to progress from FE to HE.
- 5 The number of Colleges, which are academic members of IAgRE has increased from 7 to 17, with 8 College open days having been supported.
- 6 In most of the Colleges, the lecturers were not members of IAgRE and a surprising number were not aware of our role, so over fifteen have been recruited. It has been strange in some Colleges to recruit students in front of lecturers, who supported the project but were not members themselves!
- 7 6 College Principals have also been recruited in key colleges as Eminent (now called presidents Invitation route) members to increase their awareness and knowledge of Ag Eng. As a consequence of involvement with us, they have taken Ag. Eng more seriously within their colleges and appreciated the involvement with the Institution.
- 8 Recently we tried writing to another 10 lecturers, who were not members and another 3 more have been recruited.
- 9 One College wants to raise the Professional standing of its staff and now pays the IAgRE membership fees for its staff. I would like to see this approach grow across the Colleges.
- 10 In 2008 - thanks to an initiative by David Morris - the scheme was extended to give free membership during the first year of a student's career and the cost has again been covered by the DBT.

11 8 IAgRE members now recruit students at their local colleges and have taken ownership of the project locally, which is excellent as it will ensure its sustainability in the long term.

I would particularly like to thank the following for volunteering to work with me and for recruiting in their respective colleges:-

- **David Morris**, Greenmount College and two more Colleges in Northern Ireland
- **Steve Peirson**, Askham Bryan College
- **Geoffrey Wakeham**, Harper Adams University College (one year )
- **Phil Amos**, Oatridge College (for two years)
- **Graham Higginson**, Reaseheath College
- **Chris Jaworski**, Bicton College
- **Phil Spencer**, Brooksby College
- **David Frizelle**, Tralee ITT (one year )  
More volunteers are required to ensure that all colleges are covered by local members!

12 The project takes approx 20 days of my time per year. There is preparation before each visit and talk. Time is taken to answer enquiries from both students and staff. Annual mentoring sessions have been requested at several Colleges. I also aim to respond to enquiries within 24 hours of the visit.

Early on it was clear that, as an Institution, we needed a mentoring service and this was established with a good range of skills across those mentoring. Thank you to all who have volunteered to be IAgRE Mentors all of whom are listed on our website.

13 DBT has also supported two disadvantaged students that I found during the College visits and 12 trips by students to manufacturers in Ireland and Europe .DBT has also supported student



Coleg sir Gar year 2 student members in 2007 with their lecturer John Hancock presenting details of their DBT funded trip to Southern Ireland

visits to Harper Adams when FE students have wanted to consider progressing to HE.

### NEGATIVES

I list a few for those of you, who have a glass half empty rather than half full view, before members write in!

- 1 1,800 students have been members and initially have dropped out. Why? Due to cost or benefits found of membership and frankly because we are still seen as a secret society. We have failed to answer their enquiries, be friendly or could not be bothered to mentor them. I am amazed how many members have said that they did not have free student membership in their day so why should today's students have this benefit? The world has moved on! If it benefits the larger Institutions then we need to be in line. Why should Ag.Eng students be at a disadvantage?

Some, like both of our sons will rejoin later in their careers. For Instance, our son David rejoined because he is determined to become a CEng via I.MechE and has an I.MechE mentor.

- 2 This is a big challenge for all of us. If you simply do not like student engineers, then please do not get involved. We need folk, who are both positive about the Institution and positive in nature. The project also needs members who believe

in mentoring young people. Members, who also have sons who are Engineers, have been particularly supportive.

- 3 Several people who are not involved directly with this project have written about it and have sadly published inaccurate data . Simply let me see your draft material and we can then be all singing from the same hymn sheet!
- 4 There are a lot of Colleges that we have not yet been able to visit. I get messages from members who have spent maybe a day in a College to tell me that the staff and students are not yet members. I ask why they have not recruited them as they have the both contacts and opportunities !?

TO finish on a positive note there are several Colleges that wish to join the scheme and we still have not recruited any Horticultural, Forestry or Farm and Land management students.

If you want to volunteer then please get in touch and tell me clearly how you have benefited from your membership of IAgRE, we need enthusiasm first and foremost !

Finally I would like to thank all the College Principals and staff who have allowed and encouraged me to recruit their students and also all the students for listening and firing excellent questions

There have been many very lively discussions across the Colleges in the last nine years!

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