



# DEFINING FUTURES

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 13 /// NOVEMBER 2023

**Welcome to the first edition of the Defining Futures newsletter for the 2023/24 academic year! This edition covers activities that took place from the start of term in September until breaking up for half-term in October, plus a few from over the summer break to keep you up-to-date!**

As term started, we were delighted to welcome almost 1500 new students along with over 1200 familiar faces who progressed from courses last year, and it's been great to see everyone settling into the new term. Even though it's still early in the academic year, we're delighted that young people who are due to leave school in 2024 are already making plans for their future - with almost 300 attending our October open evening to talk to tutors about the best qualifications for their chosen career. The next open event is on Saturday 13 January 2024 - places can be booked [here](#).

## What's in this issue?

Although we're only a few weeks into the new academic year, there's already been lots going on! There's an overview of the fun activities organised to welcome students to the first week of term, a report on a visit to our drinks dispense academy by Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street and news about the launch of a new rail training centre in Dudley.

You can also get an update on the construction of the Advanced Technology and Automotive Centre at the Wellington Road campus, find out how we're engaging with local employers to help develop the workforce of the future, and read about two drinks dispense apprentices who have made history by being the first in the UK to complete the training programme.

As always, there's also a round-up of activities that have been going on in different curriculum areas to enhance students' learning experience - have a look through to find out more!

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## FRESHERS' WEEK

### Welcome week!

For all new and returning students, we hosted a week of activities and freebies at our Paget and Wellington Road campuses.

Freebies included candy floss, popcorn, ice cream and spin the wheel prizes!



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## MAYOR OF THE WEST MIDLANDS TOASTS NEW DRINKS ACADEMY

In the first week of our term, our new drinks dispense academy at the Paget Road campus welcomed a VIP guest when Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, dropped in to visit.



The Mayor met drinks dispense technician apprentices from across the UK who attend block placements at the academy as part of their 18-month training programme, as well as representatives from major brewing groups, soft drinks companies and equipment providers.

The academy is equipped with a range of industry-standard equipment – including a working cellar, beer pulls and pumps, drinks coolers and soft drinks equipment – and is used by employers in the beverage industry to train staff to install and maintain dispensing equipment in pubs, clubs, cafés, theatres and sports stadia.



## COLLEGE'S SECOND RAIL TRAINING CENTRE GETS ON TRACK

Courses to give people the skills needed to build a career in the rail and infrastructure sectors are set to be expanded with the opening of an additional training site in Dudley.



The college and its infrastructure training partner, National Infrastructure Solutions (NIS), have taken over space at the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO)'s Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre in Zoological Drive, enabling it to train more local people to meet the demand for skilled operatives to work on the construction and maintenance of train lines, tram routes and stations across the region.

The site boasts more than 2000 metres of conventional rail track, including two split-level platforms, an 870m tunnel and signalling components to give students hands-on training in multiple disciplines across the industry and enhance their learning experience by working with the same equipment as used in rail construction sites.

Courses are available for newcomers to the sector, as well as those already working in the industry who want to upskill and develop their knowledge further, and include a free six-week sector-based work academy programme for people who are registered as unemployed.

Find out more about what the centre will offer in this short **video**.



## STEELS ERECTED FOR NEW ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND AUTOMOTIVE CENTRE

Work has begun to erect steel framework for the new £8.1 million Advanced Technology and Automotive Centre at the Wellington Road campus in Bilston.



The centre – due to open in July 2024 – will be equipped with facilities for new electric, hybrid and traditional vehicles, as well as fabrication, manufacturing, welding, CAD and robotics and enables the relocation of the existing automotive and engineering workshops from the Paget Road campus.

To mark the milestone, construction students, college staff and representatives from the



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design and construction companies were joined by Councillor Stephen Simkins, Leader of City of Wolverhampton Council for a symbolic 'signing of the steel' ceremony.

Keep track of the development of the centre [here](#).

## COLLEGE INVITES EMPLOYERS TO HELP DEVELOP THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

In October, we welcomed around 50 local employers to a business breakfast to give them the opportunity to help develop training programmes for the workforce of the future.

Guests were able to talk to staff from different curriculum areas about skills gaps affecting their particular industry, with feedback enabling tutors to adapt learning programmes to ensure students gain the skills and knowledge required by employers in the chosen sector.



## COLLEGE APPRENTICES MAKE HISTORY!

Two brothers from Eastbourne who completed their drinks dispense technician apprenticeships at the college have made history by being the first candidates in the UK to do so!

Aaron and Brad Santos, who work for LWC Drinks Ltd – the UK's largest independent drinks wholesaler – at its Eastbourne depot, combined working for the company with attending block release placements at the college's specialist drinks dispense training academy during the 18-month training programme.

The pair, who are employed as technical beer and soft drinks engineers, gained skills in plumbing, electrics, refrigeration, gas pressure systems and pipework, as well as fault finding, problem solving, customer service, training, product quality, time and workload management, health and safety and industry codes of practice.

During the programme they attended five two-week training blocks at the college and, when returning to their field job, used their newly-gained skills to install drinks dispense equipment and provide a breakdown cover service in a wide range of venues in the south-east.



## CURRICULUM ROUND-UP

### APPRENTICESHIPS

Rail apprentices from McGinley Support Services who are learning their skills at our rail training site at the Wellington Road campus were interviewed by reporter Joan Cummins, from BBC Midlands Today, about HS2 and working in the rail industry.

The interviews were broadcast on the lunchtime and evening bulletins on October 17 and a corresponding article is on the BBC website – read it [here](#).



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At the start of the term, an appeal went out to employers in the automotive, brickwork, carpentry and engineering sectors to help meet the growing demand from young people wanting to pursue apprenticeships in these areas.

The college has a talent pool of enthusiastic, work-ready candidates keen to start working in the sectors, but needs employers to take them on as apprentices and support them through their training.

Employers wanting to discuss taking on an apprentice can contact the college on **01902 837165** or email **employerenquiries@wolvcoll.ac.uk**

In other news from the team, Richard Hewitt, former apprenticeship sector lead, has been appointed as the college’s new head of apprenticeships and will be working with local employers to ensure the training offered meets the needs of their business and the wider industry sector.



## AUTOMOTIVE

In the last edition we reported how automotive and engineering were working together to construct a soapbox kart to compete in Wolverhampton Krazy Races in August – and we’re proud to say that we beat off tough competition and our Back to the (Defining) Futures kart came third!



Once the new term was underway, representatives from Lucas Oil Products UK visited the Paget Road campus to talk to students about motor oils, the importance of using high-quality lubricants to extend the life of vehicles and the future of vehicle technologies!



## BAKERY

New Level 2 bakery students got the term off to a great start, mastering the art of making delicious Danish pastries and croissants, which were sold in the on-site bakery shop at the Wellington Road campus.

The shop is open to the public, so if you’re passing by call in and pick up some tasty treats!



## CONSTRUCTION

Bricklaying students working towards Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications have been getting hands-on in the workshop, learning how to build straight walls, pillars and corners.



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Students studying for electrical qualifications benefited from a visit from Gary Hayers from EFIXX – the leading multi-media platform for professionals working in the electrical industry. He shared his insights and experiences of working in the trade, talked about what it takes to have a successful career, delivered workshops in conjunction with representatives from Pegasus Electrical, gave away prizes to lucky winners – and even had time to record a quick video with his advice for anyone wanting to get into the trade.

Watch the video **here**.

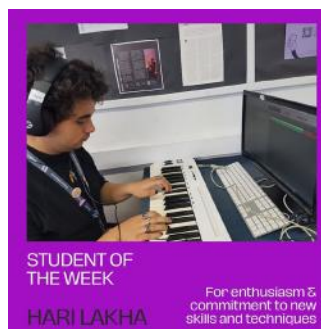


## CREATIVE ARTS

Performing Arts student enjoyed a trip to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to see the production of The Ocean and the End of the Lane.



Meanwhile, Level 3 music technology student Hari Lakha, was named student of the week for demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment to learning new skills, followed the next week by Level 2 music technology student Lukas Horvat who won the accolade for the work he did in the studio towards his end-of-term performance.



## FUTURES FOUNDATION LEARNING

Students held a coffee morning and sold cakes and slushies to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support, and also held a sale of new and pre-loved handbags as part of the enterprise module of their course.



They have also benefited from a donation of art and cooking supplies from Tesco's Wolverhampton superstore which will help them to learn new skills and express their creativity.



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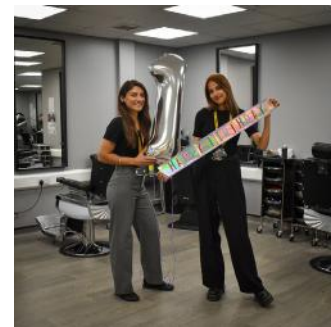
## HAIR & BEAUTY

The New Era hair salon at the Paget Road campus celebrated it's first birthday!

The salon is staffed by trained stylists, as well as students and apprentices who are studying for hairdressing and barbering qualifications giving them the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of working with clients in a commercial salon during their training.

The salon is open to the public and offers blow-dries, trims, cuts and restyles, perms and texture release and colouring techniques such as highlights, balayage and colour removal, as well as male grooming services and children's cuts.

Prices start at £13 for a cut and blow-dry and £20 for a colour , with discounts available for students and NHS and council staff and free on-site parking for all customers. Get a price list [here](#) or to book an appointment call 01902 821321.



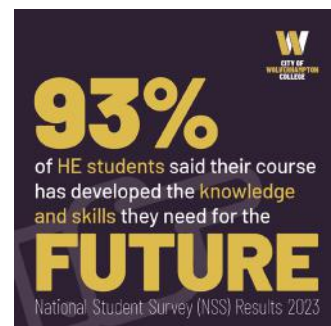
## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

New health and social care students got hands-on with practical activities, learning the basics of first aid and creating 3D cells.



## HIGHER EDUCATION

Over the summer the results of the latest national student survey for higher education were published, with 93% of our HE students stating that teaching staff made their subjects interesting, their courses challenged them to achieve their best and they developed the skills and knowledge they need for their future career.



## SPORT

As part of their course, sports students took part in first aid training to teach them essential skills needed in an emergency, such as responding to a sport injury or medical situation.



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## TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism students went on a Caribbean cruise, swam with sharks in the Maldives, flew over Mount Everest in a helicopter, attended an Aya Napa festival, flew Emirates first class and viewed the Northern Lights from an igloo... all via virtual reality!

The experience gave them the chance to see places they've always wanted to visit and gain further insights into the topic they're studying.

Closer to home, the students visited the University of Wolverhampton to find out more about the BA in Business and Tourism Management and, at the same time, gained valuable insights into a career in the travel industry.

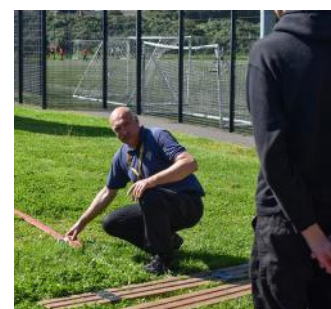


## UNIFORMED PUBLIC SERVICES

New Public service students got a taste of what their course entails today during enrolment week when tutor Richard Jones organised a range of practical activities to warm them up before beginning their course.

Once courses were underway, they headed off to an employment day at West Midlands Police headquarters in Birmingham where they talked to serving officers about the wide range of roles available in the police force, took part in a Build a Barracks challenge with the Army, testing their creative and problem-solving skills and had a trip to Wolf Mountain for a day of rock climbing, bouldering and archery to challenge themselves and learn how to work as part of a team.

And, over the summer, cadets from 3WV police cadets - run by West Midlands Police Cadets in partnership with the college - many of whom were public service students, completed their training and were presented with certificates of achievements.



## LIFE ON CAMPUS

Reception is often the first point of contact for students or visitors and Chloe, one of our welcome hosts, made a short video to give an overview of what she and her colleagues can help with.

Watch the video **here**.



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During the first week of term, students took part in an immersive induction orientation challenge using augmented reality and practical activities to help them get to know their respective campus.

Conrad Taylor, business learning & technologies manager, explains the challenge and how it works - take a look **here**.

And here's the team that won the challenge! They completed all the missions and solved the riddle to spell out the mystery word EMPOWERED!



During breaks and lunchtimes, the Food Hub is a popular area for students to meet up with their friends and socialise between lessons. There's a wide range of food and drinks available to purchase and the catering team have made a few short videos to show how some of the most popular items are prepared - click on the pictures to watch!



Watch us make salad



Watch us prepare some pork



Watch us make a slush



## GETTING LOCAL PEOPLE IN TO WORK

The Careers and Skills Hub at the Wellington Road Campus is a one-stop shop for anyone who is aged 19 or over and either looking for work, in a job but wanting to retrain and change career, wanting to find out about free training courses or just needing general careers help and advice. Find out more **here**.

Participants in the Steps into Work - NHS course - run by the college in partnership with The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust - benefited from using the Bodyswaps virtual reality programme to practice their skills ahead of interviews for a range of vacant positions in the organisation. And, on completion of the course, they were invited to a presentation to celebrate completing the programme and had the opportunity to share their experience of doing a work placement in an NHS setting and how the course has led to job success.



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We've also been speaking to student on a range of employability courses to find out about the skills they have gained and how what they've learnt is helping them move towards their chosen career. Click on their picture to find out more...



Christian Marshall - rail training



Michelle Goss - rail training



Mike Starbuck - rail training

Read more student stories here [https://www.wolvcoll.ac.uk/our-college/student\\_stories/](https://www.wolvcoll.ac.uk/our-college/student_stories/)

## ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

### Wolverhampton Business Week

During Wolverhampton Business Week in September, representatives from the college participated in a range of workshops and events:

Conrad Taylor, business learning and technologies manager, and Dr Adam Dwight, learning innovator, delivered a masterclass on 'Unleashing the Power of AI: Transforming Business with Chatbots and Intelligent Systems' to local businesses.



The session explored the impact AI can have on day-to-day tasks - such as providing virtual customers service, administrative assistance, report writing and content creation - and they shared insights into how Chatbots and intelligent systems are revolutionising industries and reshaping customer experiences.

Dan Degg and Dipesh Patel from the employer engagement team attended the Let's Talk Sustainable Growth event to showcase opportunities available at the college and find out how Wolverhampton is leading the region's green growth.



We hosted our monthly business breakfast, in partnership with the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, which focused on T Levels and how they can benefit businesses!

### Midwest Mechanical and Electrical Service Ltd

We're proud to be working with Midwest Mechanical and Electrical Service Ltd which will be taking on a number of electrical and property maintenance apprentices this year through their academy scheme and, to recognise the partnership, new branded signage has been installed in the Construction Centre at the Wellington Road campus.



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## Budweiser UK&I

As the drinks dispense apprenticeship provider for Budweiser Brewing Group UK&I, we have also supported two of the company's staff through our learning mentor programme, delivered by learning innovator Dr Adam Dwight.

James Fitzgerald, technician, and Luke Gabica, drinks dispense engineer, will be using the mentoring knowledge and skills they gained on the programme to support the company's drinks dispense technician apprentices through their 18-month training programme.



## Interplas 2023




Interplas is the UK's leading plastics exhibition and conference and we were proud to be the one of this year's 500 exhibitors.

The team from the Polymer Training and Innovation Centre in Telford, showcased the wide range of courses on offer at the specialist training centre, which specialises in injection moulding and blow moulding, and also provides a range of health, safety and environmental IOSH, NEBOSH and NVQ qualifications, as well as Polymer processing and business improvement/lean manufacturing apprenticeships.



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