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## Future perfect - Education.

By Sally Morris.

The Times Student Awards 2000 unearthed an impressive seam of talent, reports Sally Morris

If evidence were needed that students no longer fit the image of idealistic, unworldly pleasure-seekers, protected from the pressures of the commercial world, the entrants for The Times Student Awards 2000 can provide it in abundance.

When The Times launched the awards this year with the help of five sponsors - Barclays, Dell, KPMG, Sky News and Raymond Weil - we knew that there was a wealth of entrepreneurial talent in the universities and colleges of Britain. What we did not know was how widespread and advanced that talent was.

Times are changing for the young people of Britain - and they are responding positively. Students are under more pressure than ever. They are taking out loans that often leave them saddled with debt before they start work, the competition for jobs is greater than ever and the pace of change in new technology means that they must keep adapting and learning or risk being left behind.

Fortunes and reputations are being made at a younger and younger age and the changing market means that knowledge and expertise have to go hand in hand with a new flexibility - a willingness to be creative yet commercial.

All the shortlisted students in the five categories - business, website, virtual entrepreneur, composer/songwriter and news journalist - displayed a confidence and vision that impressed the judges, and the standard of the winning entries in each section was exceptionally high.

The winners were announced last night at a ceremony at The Scala nightclub, London, where they received prizes of up to #5,000 in cash or equipment - together with, in some categories, work experience with the sponsor.

For Greg Scott, collecting his prize for The Times Student Website Award with Dell, it was a particularly emotional evening. Last Christmas Greg was told that he had a rare brain tumour. Anxious to discover as much as possible about his condition, he found information

difficult to access and spread over many media sources.

"I didn't get so much as a leaflet from the hospital dealing with my case and, although there are many sites on the Net with information about brain tumours, many of them are American and there was no one site that seemed to address all my concerns," says Greg, 19, who is studying computing at Imperial College, London. So Greg began building a website that included not just medical details - including types of tumour, symptoms, treatments, links with epilepsy and legal implications - but also gives personal accounts from other patients, a message board of encouragement and support and Greg's diary of his hospital stay.

"My own consultant has been helpful and I have researched from books and papers, so there is a huge range of information gathered under this one website. It is what I needed and I hope other people find it as useful. There is lots of information on relevant organisations to contact for further support and advice."

The judges commented: "The graphics helped to ease the viewer into a difficult subject and were accompanied by simple explanations of complex ideas. If you wanted to study this subject we suspect it would be a better starting point than any other medical site."

Greg had surgery three months ago and has now recovered. His prize was a Dell Latitude notebook computer and accessories worth #5,000. His site is [www.brain-tumour.net](http://www.brain-tumour.net)

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The #5,000 prize for The Times Student Composer/Songwriter with Raymond Weil was won by two talented young musicians. Virginia Prout and Steve Patterson are in their final year at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, where Virginia majors in music and Steve in sound technology. They entered three songs that they had written, performed and produced themselves, each of which satisfied the judges' standards of excellence.

Virginia, 20, explains: "Steve and I clicked together musically as soon as we met and have been writing and performing for two years. I play piano and guitar and Steve plays drums, keyboard and guitar. We are hoping for a record deal when we graduate this summer."

Winning the award will give them an advantage, as will the fact that Sir Paul McCartney recently produced one of their songs in the studio and sang backing vocals for them.

"It was wonderful to have Paul McCartney say he liked our stuff so much and to have the benefit of a really professional production. Steve and I are keen to get a deal together and we are moving to Brighton in search of work."

Further evidence of the creative use of the Internet was provided by the winner of The Times Student Virtual Entrepreneur Award with Barclays. Steve Saxon, 21, is in his final year at Trinity College, Cambridge, studying computer science. His idea for a website involves the development and storage of photographs. "I take lots of photographs and don't want them just stuck into albums, so I thought a service that developed photographs and scanned them into a website for you to see would be more useful," he said.

"Access to the pictures would be through a personal password and would be free, although

we would charge for any prints then requested. The site would be funded by banner advertising and I also want to develop the facility to e-mail pictures to friends and family. Although the award is just for the idea, I am developing the project and have some funding in place already. The #5,000 prize money will also go towards the project."

Two students tied for first place in The Times Student News Journalist Award with Sky News, and both win a valuable six-week work placement with Sky News in addition to receiving #4,000 each.

Johann Hari, 21, studying social and political science at King's College, Cambridge, impressed the judges with a vivid magazine interview with the veteran Labour MP Tony Benn and a film dealing with attempts to "cure" gay men.

Hugh Miles, 23, studying English at Trinity College, Dublin, produced a well-balanced film on the impact of foreign workers on Dublin, and an outspoken magazine piece on the sex war. Judges praised both candidates for their passion for the subject, awareness of the needs of the media and their honest approach.

The importance of a business plan to the running of a charity was perfectly understood by Amit Patel, winner of The Times Student Business Award with KPMG. Amit, 21, who is in the third year of a medical degree at Bristol University, drew up a well-researched plan for how a #5,000 charity donation could be used to develop a communications system run by CLIC, a charity dedicated to helping children and young people suffering from cancer. It won #5,000 each for the charity and Amit.

"In the South West the main cancer treatment centre is in Bristol, which is a long haul for families in Devon and Cornwall," he says. "By using a computer camera link between the consultants and families they can have access to medical knowledge without needing to travel all the time."

KPMG also donated #1000 to each of the charities chosen by the shortlisted candidates. For a full list of winners, turn to page 33 of the main paper.

