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Growing funds to build on London 2012

An organisation that aims to build on the success of the Olympic Games has succeeded in doubling its surplus thanks to expertise from Northumbria University.

TASS - a government-funded partnership between talented young athletes, universities and national governing bodies for sport – asked Northumbria University for help in developing a strategy to expand its range of support services to elite athletes, coaches and supporting bodies with a view to boosting its income.

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) was established which saw graduate

Colin Allen employed as an Associate at TASS where he worked on a marketing strategy, supervised by Fraser McLeay, Professor of Strategic Marketing, Marketing lecturer Dr Matthew Sutherland and Prof Kevin Thompson, a former Head of Department of Sport and Exercise Science at Northumbria University.

Using the latest software, Colin was able to carry out analysis of the organisation's customer base and integrate marketing into the business. Colin looked at ways in which TASS could expand its services through new strategic developments including sponsorship and Continuing Professional Development courses. As a result of the KTP, TASS was able to diversify income streams which led to a doubling of its surplus.

Guy Taylor, Chief Executive of TASS said: "The results of the research carried out during our KTP with Northumbria University have had a significant impact on TASS. We have developed new approaches to satisfying customer needs and enhanced the TASS Brand. As a result, we can now be sustainable without government funding and have been able to employ new staff to take advantage of new market opportunities." Colin was able to study for a Masters in Sport Management and has also secured a permanent position at TASS while Marketing student Abbey Foreman has a placement there.

Prof Thompson said: "This KTP was able to provide independent evidence about the strategic direction TASS needed to take beyond London 2012. As such, it has had a major role to play in persuading funders to invest in TASS over the next Olympic cycle."

Prof McLeay said: "Prior to this KTP, most of the business TASS received was through word of mouth recommendation. By taking a proactive approach and placing marketing at the heart of the organisation, we were able to put TASS on the map. That has paid real dividends in terms of doubling their surplus which means they can help more talented young athletes and capitalise on the success of London 2012."

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme aims to help businesses and organisations to improve their competitiveness and/or productivity through the use of the knowledge, technology and skills that reside within higher education. The funding enables a recent graduate to work full time on a (typically) two year project, supported and supervised by academic staff.

One student who is benefiting from TASS is Design student and member of the London 2012 Volleyball team Peter Bakare.

TASS provides much-needed support ranging from physio treatment to lifestyle advice and help with the expense of travelling to away games.

While most of his team mates went overseas after the Olympics to follow their sporting careers, Peter chose to pursue his sporting dreams at Northumbria while also studying for a Degree.

Peter, who transferred from Sheffield Hallam University and is now in the second year of a Degree in animation and motion-graphics, said: “You have to recognize that you have to seize the day in terms of your sporting career because it’s so short-lived but, at the same time, you must never forget that education is important. Studying at Northumbria means I can keep up both elements.”

Through a generous Northumbria University Sport Scholarship, Peter gets his tuition fees paid, and receives a whole package of support including coaching from Team Northumbria.

He said: “David Goodchild, who is recognised as one of the best coaches in volleyball in the UK and was at the Olympics, is now coaching me here at Northumbria.

“There’s also been a massive investment in sport at Northumbria. The £30 million sports complex, Sport Central, offers facilities that are of a higher calibre than I’ve seen at any other university.”

Peter’s ambition is to continue to be selected for the national team and combine a career as a freelance web designer – something he has already started by creating a website offering advice for student athletes. The site - yourstudentbody.com – draws on Peter’s personal experience at Sheffield University where he trained with the English squad in preparation for London 2012 and offers advice to student athletes on issues such as fitness, nutrition and budgets.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk