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Northumbria graduate joins government leaders to discuss UK future of business and enterprise

A Northumbria graduate who was supported by the University to start-up her own business will be speaking alongside Vince Cable, Ed Balls and William Hague at a conference focussing on the future of British business.

Jules Quinn, founder of design-led tea company TheTeaShed, will be taking part in a panel discussion at the British Chambers of Commerce annual conference in London next week.

The conference, which brings together the country's business and political leaders, will focus on how Britain's next government can encourage a pro-enterprise, pro-growth landscape for business.

Northumbria University is already renowned for its work in supporting students and graduates to become entrepreneurs and start-up their own business. The University's Student and Graduate Enterprise team supported Jules to set up The TeaShed as she was finishing her degree in Fashion Marketing in 2011 and have provided ongoing support and advice since then.

Jules has since built and expanded the company to introduce new ranges and products. She is now focussing her efforts on the international market, with a distributor in Japan and many direct overseas customers. She was named the Young Business Woman of the Year in 2014 and was selected by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and UKTI to launch the government's Business is GREAT initiative last year, which named her one of the top 10 female entrepreneurs to watch in 2015.

According to the latest data from the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), Northumbria is the number one university in the UK for graduate business start-ups based on estimated turnover. Since 2009, Northumbria has supported the development of more than 100 graduate companies, including The TeaShed. These companies employ 950 staff, mainly in the North East of England, and are trading nationally and internationally with a combined estimated turnover of £62.2 million.

Speaking about her invitation to take part in the conference, Jules said: "I'm absolutely flattered to have been asked. It will be amazing to be up there with some extremely successful and influential people. Hopefully I can provide a voice for young people in business."

Northumbria's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Andrew Wathey said: "Northumbria University is committed to investing in enterprise and innovation. We are already recognised as the UK's leading university for graduate businesses based on turnover.

"It is indicative of the quality of this new generation of graduate entrepreneurs produced by Northumbria that Jules has been selected to represent the future of British enterprise, following in the footsteps of other

renowned innovative Northumbria graduates such as Jonathan Ive and Tim Brown.”

The British Chambers of Commerce annual conference will take place at the QEII Conference Centre in London on Tuesday 10 February. In addition to Vince Cable, Ed Balls and William Hague, other speakers include Martin Wolf CBE, the Chief Economics Commentator at The Financial Times, John Holland-Kaye, Chief Executive of Heathrow Airport, and António Horta-Osório, Group Chief Executive of the Lloyds Banking Group.

Northumbria University actively encourages its students to start-up their own businesses. It is currently running a £1.1 million project, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, to support the creation of 30 new businesses and provide graduate interns to support SMEs in the North East region.

The University recently launched an Enterprise and Innovation Fund which aims to create and support more entrepreneurial student and graduate businesses. The fund was launched at a special event attended by the University’s most well-known alumnus, Sir Jonathan Ive, Senior Vice-President, Design at Apple Inc.

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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