

Community Connections

University of Wollongong - Special Supplement No. 2

David's showing the way

Committee fosters links with University

It took prominent Wollongong businessman David Morgan Williams more than 20 years to re-connect with the University of Wollongong as a student, but he says a whole new world opened up for him when he did.

Mr Williams started a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in psychology at UOW in 1975, but didn't complete it. Instead, he moved interstate with his career returning in 1982 to establish the highly successful DMW Group, specialising in staff recruitment and employment services.

His return to UOW 24 years later, however, was a vastly different experience and he is now working to encourage more people to take advantage of what the University has to offer in his new role as Chair of the University's Community Engagement Committee.

Mr Williams enrolled in a Master of Business Administration degree at UOW in 1999, graduating in 2001. Since then he has pursued his interest in leadership studies, and is now a candidate for the Doctor of Business Administration.

Last year Mr Williams delivered an academic paper at the Centre for Leadership Studies in Exeter in England and is building an international network of contacts in the leadership field. He will present another paper on leadership in Leeds during May to further support his doctoral studies.

He has also been made a Fellow of the University and has served on the UniCentre Board.

Meanwhile, the DMW Group has gone from strength to strength.

"Study has been an incredibly important way for me to qualify my 20 years of business experience, as well as opening up a whole new world," Mr Williams said. "It made me realise how many outstanding opportunities the University and its engagement with its associated communities can provide. And while study was the trigger for me to engage myself with the University, it's not the only way."



WELCOME to the second special supplement highlighting aspects of community engagement the University of Wollongong shares with the Illawarra region. It has been prepared by the Media Unit in the University's Office of Public Affairs.

Mr Williams said not everybody has the time or resources to study at the University, but he believed there were many other opportunities for people to participate in UOW activities without enrolling in courses.

"The University of Wollongong is an absolutely fabulous asset for this region. It is part of us, and we are part of it," Mr Williams said. "Yet so many people drive past it all the time without ever venturing in. Our role on the Community Engagement Committee is to 'open

up the gates' and encourage the community to engage with the University."

The committee of community and University representatives was formed late last year, and Mr Williams said it was currently developing and confirming an action plan.

"The University already engages with the community in many important ways. Public lectures like the *Frontiers in Science* series and *Uni in the Brewery* (at the Five Islands Brewery) already provide opportunities for the community

The University of Wollongong's Community Engagement Committee chairman David Morgan Williams wants to "open up the gates" of the University to the community.

to connect with the University, and we're looking at ways we can build on these kinds of activities," Mr Williams said.

"We're looking at all kinds of links from schools to industry, and I'm particularly interested in developing the opportunities for the University to participate in leadership issues, which is a special interest of mine."

Other members of the Community Engagement Committee are Mike Archer (BlueScope Steel), business consultant Bryce Fraser, University staff David Fuller, Robbie Collins, Associate Professor Heather Yeatman, Monique Harper-Richardson, Martin Smith, Lynn Woodley and Dr Glenn Mitchell, and UOW student representative Belinda Foster.

'The University of Wollongong is an absolutely fabulous asset for this region. It is part of us, and we are part of it...'

David Morgan Williams

UOW in fight against cancer

Researchers at the cutting edge

University of Wollongong (UOW) medical researchers are at the front line of the fight against cancer. Cancer is the number one cause of death among 45-64-year-old women and men and the number two cause of death among 25-44 and 65-84 year-old women and men. Breast and prostate cancers are the most commonly diagnosed cancers. Here is a snapshot of some UOW research in this vital area.

PhD student Andrew Wroe from the Centre for Medical Radiation Physics (CMRP) is researching ways in which protons can be used to treat cancers.

Andrew's groundbreaking research has been recognised internationally, with a prestigious Fulbright Award which gives him the opportunity to visit the United States to continue his research in collaboration with the Loma Linda University Medical Centre (LLUMC) proton facility in California.

His Fulbright Award will support 12 months of research with LLUMC and Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Radiation therapy seeks to maximise damage to cancer tumours while minimising damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

Mr Wroe is conducting innovative research into the interaction of proton radiation on the cellular and DNA level. Further understanding of exactly how radiation interacts at this level will allow for more accurate cancer treatments using protons.

Mr Wroe's research will also aid advances in manned space exploration, including future missions to Mars. Humans exploring space are exposed to Solar Particle Radiation and Galactic Cosmic Radiation composed of high-energy protons that cause permanent damage to human DNA.

His research will allow for radiation shielding to be optimised, affording the best possible protection to the crew and spacecraft. "My research measures the radiation interaction with DNA at a measurement of two nanometres or two millionths of a millimetre," he said.

"I transfer the data I collect into a computer program I am developing to measure the effects which in turn will help us to improve radiation therapies, such as groundbreaking proton therapy, as well as how humans can stay in space for extended periods."

At the same time, Dr Marie Ranson from Biological Sciences is also using her biological knowledge of how cancers progress to help devise a new generation of cancer therapeutics.

Dr Ranson said one critical process in the way cancers spread (or metastasise) to various parts of the body is through the breakdown of tissue barriers by cancer cells.

"We and others have shown that a particular protein is involved called uPA. This uPA system is used by human breast (and other) cancer



Above: Dr Marie Ranson from UOW's School of Biological Sciences is using her biological knowledge of how cancers progress to help devise a new generation of cancer therapeutics. Below: Dr Nancy Humpel

cells when they are most malignant, to allow them to spread throughout the body and form secondary tumours. The malignant cancer cells over-express uPA, and this is linked to an increased ability of cells to metastasise. Elucidation of the significance of the uPA system in malignancy provides us with a way of targeting an anti-cancer strategy at uPA," Dr Ranson said.

The uPA system is specifically recognised by a natural inhibitor protein, called PAI-2. Dr Ranson's project is testing the idea that attaching a highly effective cell-killing agent to PAI-2 would allow researchers to deliver the killing agent directly to the cancer cells - leaving normal cells unaffected. PAI-2 labelled with highly effective cell killing agents (eg, high energy, short range radioisotopes) selectively kills cancer cells by targeting the uPA system on these cells only. Normal cells are unaffected.

These studies form the basis of a pre-clinical study researchers are now conducting to determine the best dose schedule for effectively treating metastatic cancer.

Meanwhile, Illawarra residents with breast and prostate cancer are participating in the first trial to be conducted in Australia to investigate the benefits of special exercise programs in respect of their illness.

The three-year University of Wollongong project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) sought 100 breast and 100 prostate cancer patients aged up to 75. The volunteer recruitment program is continuing until the end of 2005.

Research Fellow Dr Nancy Humpel, of the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, said the incidence of breast and prostate cancers had increased significantly over the past 25 years and this, combined with improvements in treatment, meant that an ever-increasing number



of people with these cancers were survivors.

"While people diagnosed with breast and prostate cancers live longer than before, the treatment process often results in severe psychological and physical side effects," she said.

The aim of the ARC project is to see whether cancer patients who do some regular walking and/or gentle strength exercises cope better as they go

through the treatment process and during rehabilitation.

Dr Humpel said patients for the study could be currently receiving treatment or have completed treatment up to two years previously.

The study is not recommended for people who are already very active, and those with a physical or medical problem that would stop them from being able to walk regularly.

The interventions are being conducted over a 12-week period. Participants are randomly assigned to one of three groups:

- A home-based walking program (individualised for each person)
- The same walking program plus a gentle strength training program (using a resistance band)
- A comparison group receiving 'usual' care

Eligible participants are required to come to the University of Wollongong twice during the 12-week program to complete a questionnaire and do a walking test on a treadmill.

"As this is the first such trial to be conducted in Australia, the people of the Illawarra have an important role to play and we need their help. If these physical activity programs prove effective, doctors and patients will benefit from having access to an inexpensive, effective and safe option for managing symptoms from cancer and its treatments," Dr Humpel said.

Indigenous outreach focus at Woolyungah

The Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC) at the University of Wollongong is becoming a major focal point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on and off the campus.

And WIC's community outreach will be strengthened even further with the formation this year of an external advisory body (including local Indigenous people). WIC is working in liaison with the University's Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) Unit targeting employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

WIC Director Professor John Bern said that as a vivid example of the University/community interaction, the inside wall surrounding the Centre's headquarters on campus will soon be adorned with a mural courtesy of the Wollongong Koori Youth Network.

Computer workshops are also run for the Koori Youth Network, while Indigenous school children attend the centre for various functions.

Aboriginal Studies Lecturer and playwright Ernie Blackmore works with the South Coast Writers' Festival and the Kenny Street Koori Centre located in the heart of Wollongong. Ernie is currently undertaking his PhD.

Indigenous students at UOW have 24 hours a day/seven days a week access to lounge facilities at WIC and during session students run weekly barbecues for fellow students and local Indigenous visitors.

The name of the centre, Woolyungah, is one spelling of the word said to be the correct name for the Wollongong coast. The meaning of the word is not settled. However, most suggested meanings contain references to the sound of the sea and its productivity.

"Unlike the name Wollongong, Woolyungah and its variants are recorded from Aboriginal informants," Professor Bern said.

WIC was formerly known as the Aboriginal Education Centre.

In the mid 1980s there had been a major move to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into study programs - mainly in teacher education. Since then, the operation expanded to support Indigenous students across the University's nine faculties.

Today, Woolyungah has developed a close relationship with the Shoalhaven City Council, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Nowra Aboriginal Land Council.

From Cairo to Wollongong...

Program offers the hand of friendship

By RENEE PEARCE

It's a big step for a young couple with a new baby to leave their home and relatives to study at university – especially when that move is from Egypt to Australia.

It makes it even harder when you live on the same street as the Great Pyramids!

However Anass, Shaimaa and their 11-month old son Youssef have found the transition from Cairo to Wollongong a lot easier because of the University of Wollongong's International Friendship Program (IFP), a program that provides an opportunity for cultural exchange between international students at UOW and members of the community.

Volunteers from the University and community host individuals and families from overseas and keep regular contact with them for a session or more of their studies.

Anass Attya is studying a PhD in Civil Engineering and he and his family are being hosted by Suzanne Lipu, Information Literacy Co-ordinator at the UOW Library, who has previously hosted Chinese and Malaysian students through the IFP.

"I lived in Papua New Guinea for over eight years so I know what it's like to be thrust into a new country and experience a bit of culture shock," she said. "The program is very flexible and has allowed my family to learn more about the culture and language of Egypt."

"We still can't believe that the Attya family wake up to a view of the Pyramids and ancient tombs every day!"

The Attya family live in a high-rise building in the bustling city of Cairo, one of the world's largest cities. They are used to shops, cinemas and clubs being open until midnight and are still adapting to their 'quiet life' in Wollongong.

"It has been a great way for us to interact with an Australian family and for my wife, Shaimaa, to have some company while I am studying," Anass said.

Shaimaa said she has enjoyed having a female friend to meet.

"We have met up a couple of times and I have really enjoyed it. It's nice to just catch up and have lunch or a coffee on campus."

Co-ordinator of the IFP for 10 years, Ms Denise Hull, said the program continues to grow in both host and international student numbers.

"The IFP has a number of links with community groups and we organise different activities and events for the hosts and international students to attend."

"We always get great feedback about the program. The hosts and their students will often form very close, even life-long friendships."

Denise said the International Committee of International Students (ICIS), a non-profit community organisation that also aims to help international students settle in to life in Wollongong through meetings and activities, is a strong supporter of the program.

Denise encourages anyone interested in becoming an IFP host (university or community members) to contact Student Services on 4221 3173 or email hull@uow.edu.au. For more information visit: www.uow.edu.au/student/services/isa/IFP.html

(From left to right) Information Literacy Co-ordinator at the UOW Library, Suzanne Lipu, with her Egyptian host family Shaimaa, Youssef and Anass Attya.



...from Wollongong to Washington

By RENEE PEARCE

While most University of Wollongong students spent their summer holidays relaxing and enjoying time off from study, Kirstan Fulton spent hers in Washington DC, working full-time in an office of the United States Congress.

Kirstan, a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws student from Barrack Heights, was one of 12 university students from across the country who participated in the Uni-Capitol

Washington Internship Program, designed to give select students a unique insight into the workings of the US political system.

The program was founded (and is directed) by Eric Federer, Director, Business Public Policy, Government Affairs at accounting firm KPMG, and was sponsored by Community Sector Banking. Kirstan worked as an intern for eight weeks during which time she was trained in the administrative functioning of the office and participated in constituent liaison and legislative research and support.

"It was a fantastic experience working at the centre of one of the world's most powerful political systems," she said.

"I developed my research skills, attended briefings and receptions, met people from a number of lobby groups and conducted community tours around the Capitol building."

Kirstan worked as an intern in the office of Representative Sam Farr (Democrat) of California, who is a congressman particularly committed to the issues of trade and the welfare of the environment.

"Sam Farr is involved in a large-scale project that involves the expansion of affordable housing in his area and, as I was being sponsored by Community Sector Banking, I was required to regularly report back on my research in the form of a brief. So I was constantly connecting with my community back home."

But it wasn't all just work and study.

Kirstan said she lived with other interns in Washington and made a number of friends. She also spent time in New York and Boston and travelled around Europe. She is now in the second semester of her honours degree at UOW, researching the politics of economic development and trade, and lending her new skills to the community.

"I can't wait to go back to the US," she said. "My ultimate goal is to work in trade and negotiation overseas using my new understanding of the dynamics and functional nature of politics."



Left: Barrack Heights student Kirstan Fulton

Scholarship fuels drive, determination



By RENEE PEARCE

When Anji Cvetkovic applied for a Mature Age Scholarship at the University of Wollongong last year, her covering letter said that she was 'motivated'.

That word took on a whole new meaning for the scholarship panel when they read further to discover that Anji drove a four-hour round trip and used a tank of petrol each day to study at UOW.

'Motivated' she certainly was.

Anji has been awarded a Mature Age Scholarship for 2005 worth \$1,000 to assist with the expenses of studying. The University of Wollongong has a number of scholarships on offer to commencing and current students, sponsored by corporate partners and various community groups.

For Anji, a resident of Milton, receiving the scholarship has literally changed her life.

"To say I am on a tight budget is both euphemistic and an understatement," she said. "On top of the travel expenses I support myself and work a part-time job to pay for my living costs and tuition.

"This scholarship will make things so much easier for me and help me keep up with the everyday expenses that come with studying far from home."

Anji is in her second year of a Bachelor of

Anji Cvetkovic has a Mature Age Scholarship to assist her with study expenses – which include driving from Milton to Wollongong each day.
Photo: Mark Newsham.

Teaching (Primary), having transferred to UOW from the University of Sydney.

"I was ready for a change and Wollongong really appealed to me. Aside from being the closest university to my family, I was attracted by its reputation for turning out teachers who are sought after for their practical experience," she said.

"It also spoke to me because of its 'non-metro' location. I realised after a short time in Sydney that it wasn't for me – I was a gumboot girl in a stiletto world."

Anji currently lives in a flat on a property in Milton where she does maintenance duties and cares for the property's horses in exchange for half her rent each week. She said that while getting up every morning at five and getting home late at night is tough, she is driven by her desire to make a difference in the community.

"The most influential and inspiring people to ever touch my life were teachers," she said. "Now I am striving to give back what was given to me."

*** The University of Wollongong is eager to talk to potential partners willing to help support students such as Anji. If you would like more information, please call the Development & Scholarships Coordinator Patrick O'Connor on (02) 4221 3073 or email poconnor@uow.edu.au. Students interested in applying for a scholarship should visit the website: www.uow.edu.au/about/scholarships/index.html**

Lectures open up UOW to the public

More than 2,700 people have attended public lectures at the University of Wollongong so far this year and more are planned in the coming months.

Highlights have included Dr David Suzuki, the award-winning geneticist, environmental activist, distinguished author and well-known science broadcaster, who addressed two packed audiences at the University where he spoke about the environmental challenges that lie ahead.

Other distinguished speakers have included Professor Stephen Hill, the Regional Director of UNESCO in Indonesia and an Honorary Professor at UOW, and Professor Matt Sanders, Director of the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland.

Professor Hill spoke from first-hand experience about the re-building of tsunami-ravaged Banda Aceh and the challenges that lie ahead for the Achenese people. Professor Sanders' talk was pitched at parents and provided practical advice on raising children in today's modern world.

The University aims to make its research accessible to the public. Community members can come and find out how our researchers are

extending the frontiers of knowledge in science in the bi-monthly *Frontiers in Science* lecture series. Recent topics have focussed on climate change in Australia and the impact of ozone depletion in Antarctica on local plant species. The next lecture is entitled *Weighing molecules: How do proteins shape up?* on 27 July. Science teachers and students are especially welcome to attend these lectures.

In addition to talks at the University, members of the public have the opportunity to learn about the various research projects conducted at the University as part of the *Uni in the Brewery* series held bi-monthly at the Five Islands Brewery in Wollongong. Private sector practitioners are also invited along to present their ideas and provide feedback on the topics being discussed.

The remaining three sessions for this year will showcase research in the areas of law, psychology and new materials. Upcoming topics include river health and management on 8 June, emotional intelligence and the fear of driving on 10 August.

Those interested in the performing or visual arts are also catered for. The University hosts a series of art exhibitions throughout the year which are open to the public and free of charge. Entries

in the Victor Yang Memorial Art Prize will be on show from 2-24 June in the University's Long Gallery. This is a "must see" event.

Student musical and drama productions generally play to packed audiences. One upcoming performance to watch out for is *The*

Happy Prince, a music-theatre adaptation from Oscar Wilde's much-loved short story by selected Performance students which will be staged from 20- 23 July.

For further information about public events at UOW visit www.uow.edu.au/about/community

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