Electromaterials Centre opens

The University of Wollongong is at the forefront of the revolution in electromaterials science, with the opening of the $12 million Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Electromaterials Science in February. Pictured at the opening are (from left): Professor Doug MacFarlane (Monash University), Centre Director Professor Gordon Wallace from UOW, UOW’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Margaret Sheil, ARC CEO Professor Peter Hay, Professor Maria Forsyth (Monash University) and Professor Graeme Blair (Bionics Program Leader).

UOW Medical School on track for 2007

The University of Wollongong’s innovative Medical School established primarily to address the chronic shortage of doctors outside the capital cities is on track to open next year.

The Australian Medical Council on 22 February gave the University approval to proceed with plans to accept its first Medical students to start the course in January 2007.

In a letter to the University, the Australian Medical Council said its Medical School Accreditation Committee had approved UOW’s Stage 1 Submission which set out the plans for the GSM’s operation, including curriculum, staffing, facilities, finances and clinical training arrangements.

The Federal Government announced funding for the establishment of a Medical School at UOW in 2004, with the prime objective of training doctors to work in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia to help overcome the shortage of medical practitioners working “in the bush”.

Since then the University has been working to develop a model for innovation and excellence in medical education.

The School will operate from new buildings currently under construction at the University’s Wollongong and Shoalhaven Campuses, and will incorporate many of the latest innovations in international medical education.

University of Wollongong Vice-Chancellor Professor Gerard Sutton said Stage 1 accreditation was an important milestone in the establishment of the GSM.

“This is great news for the University. Our GSM team has been working very hard to meet all the requirements of the accreditation committee.”

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Campus News is produced for community, industry, government and other educational institutions as well as staff, students and graduates of the University of Wollongong. It provides an overview of University news and achievements on a quarterly basis.

Submissions for publication can be made to the Media Unit.
Phone (02) 4221 5942 or email media@uow.edu.au

PRINT POST APPROVED: PP255003/00173
Sharks: dangerous or endangered?

By Associate Professor
Ron West
School of Biological Sciences
Director, Shoalhaven Marine and Freshwater Centre

When the conversation turns to sharks, it's usually to talk about a near encounter or a recent attack, not to discuss the low numbers that most populations have reached. In fact, of the more than 100 species of sharks in Australian waters, only three species (bull, tiger and white sharks) are thought responsible for most fatal attacks. Most of the shark species are actually considered to be at record low numbers. For many of our local shark species, as well as for many of the related group of stingrays, populations have reached such low numbers in our waters that they are in dire need of protection.

Most of us are probably aware of the plight of the grey nurse shark, which now number a few hundred. A relatively harmless but fierce looking animal, they have been hunted to near extinction, mostly through a lack of understanding that they posed little threat to us. But there are many other shark species, such as wobbegongs, carpet sharks and Port Jackson sharks, that are also in low numbers. For most of these species, so little is known about them that even identification is a problem.

While 28 people died on NSW roads during the Christmas-New Year holiday break, a single inter-state shark attack over the holiday period again ignited the media across the country, raising questions about beach safety, public risk and government responsibility.

There is personal tragedy associated with any death, but the statistics remain unchanged. People are still more likely to be injured or killed by a lightning strike than to be killed by a shark. In fact, no-one in NSW has died from a shark attack for over a decade (since 1993). This is despite the increasing population in the Sydney region and “sea-change” migration occurring right along the NSW coast. There have been no recent fatal attacks either in the Newcastle, Sydney or Wollongong “netted” areas, or in the 1300 km of NSW coastline outside these areas. And, while there is on average about one fatal shark attack in Australia per year, snakes are reportedly responsible for 2-3 deaths of Australians per year. Yet, there is no government responsibility taken for snake bites and no snake reduction programs. So why do we have a shark reduction program?

The shark netting program was introduced in 1937, after a series of high profile shark attacks. Prominent shark researcher Dr John Paxton considers that shark populations at the time were abnormally high. In a recent report, he points out that sharks were being attracted to the Sydney beaches by the discharge of abattoir wastes through the sewerage outfalls. For example, between 1916 and 1970, the blood, offal and other animal wastes from the Homebush abattoir was discharged from the Malabar outfall, a few hundred metres off the beach and no doubt drifting past many of the city’s most popular swimming areas. Little wonder that sharks were attracted inshore.

Over the years, the number of beaches netted for sharks has increased and the methods have changed. This is despite there being only one fatality on surf beaches since shark netting began in 1937. That fatality occurred in Newcastle shortly after meshing began there.

Currently, about 51 beaches in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong are part of the NSW shark reduction program. The nets are in place for about 13 days a month, eight months a year. They are about 150 metres long and six metres high, and sit on the sea bottom. In other words, they are absent more often than present and are not designed to be a barrier to sharks. Sharks can, and do, swim over and around the nets, as some 40% are caught on the beach side of the nets.

The only aim of the shark meshing program is to reduce the numbers of sharks and to particularly target dangerous sharks that might establish territories near popular swimming beaches. But a combination of factors, including the low populations of most shark species, means that the risk of a fatal shark attack is now much lower than it was 60 years ago, when the shark control program was introduced. And, as well as catching some dangerous sharks, the current shark netting program also catches a range of other less harmful animals including grey nurse sharks, dolphins, turtles and whales.

Several of the species captured are considered to be threatened with extinction. This is one of the main arguments against the use of nets – that they are indiscriminate and kill many more species than necessary. Better methods may exist, such as the drum lines used in Queensland, that actually target the dangerous sharks without having as large a by-catch of non-dangerous animals. It’s unlikely that many of us would be comfortable with suddenly stopping any form of shark control. But perhaps it is timely to at least review the risks and look for refinements in our approach.

No matter what controls governments decide to put in place, lightning does strike, snakes do bite and there will always be some risk of a shark attack. Of course, the risk is higher in some situations than in others, and we should all be taking some responsibility for managing that risk. After all, managing the risks at a personal level is always going to be the best safeguard against any threat. So my advice for a safe holiday - stop speeding. After all that’s the greatest risk to life that we all face. CN

Appointments underline research focus

The University of Wollongong’s focus on research has been underlined with the appointment of Professor Lee Astheimer as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Professor Margaret Sheil’s new role as Chair of the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee research group.

Professor Astheimer will help Professor Sheil, who is UOW’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), to manage the University’s expanding research capacity.

Professor Astheimer has been part of UOW’s Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences for the past 13 years.

Professor Astheimer has been Deputy Chair (Resources) of the University Research Committee since 2002, served as a Faculty Research Chair from 1997-2003 and has been a long-standing member of other key URC committees including the current URC Standing Committee (and its predecessors, the URC Executive and the Audit Resources Allocation Committee) and the Thesis Committee. More recently she has had key roles as Chair of the Pre-Medical Course Development Committee and as Chair of the Research Quality Framework Working Party.

She brings to the role a distinguished personal research record and interest in comparative physiology and avian biology.

“My new role will comprise 40 percent research and 60 percent administration and I am looking forward to taking on new responsibilities to ensure that the University of Wollongong is prepared for the Research Quality Framework,” she said. CN

UOW’s new Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Lee Astheimer.
Vice-Chancellor takes on national leadership role

For the next two years Professor Gerard Sutton will combine his role as University of Wollongong Vice-Chancellor with that of President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC). Campus News caught up with Professor Sutton to talk about how he plans to combine his new role heading the nation’s university sector’s peak body with running UOW.

If Professor Gerard Sutton is feeling weighed down by the dual challenges of representing the interests of 38 universities across Australia as well as ensuring that the University of Wollongong meets its objectives, he isn’t showing it.

On the contrary, Professor Sutton says he is thoroughly looking forward to his two-year term as AVCC President, which started on 1 January this year.

He feels humbled by the unanimous endorsement of his peers – the Vice-Chancellors of Australia’s 38 publically funded and one private (Bond) universities – to represent their interests to the Federal and State governments and corporate Australia, and through the media to the community in general.

He knows the higher education sector faces a number of challenges, and feels this unanimous endorsement reflects both unity of purpose among the nation’s Vice-Chancellors and personal support for his capacity to tackle major issues.

As AVCC President he will also serve on the Prime Minister’s Science and Engineering Council (PMSEC), and feels privileged to have this opportunity to influence significant national initiatives in the sciences and research. He is also looking forward to working with the new Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop.

“Universities have a role to assist the economic and cultural development of Australia, and I understand the opportunities and responsibilities that come with that. I feel privileged to be in a position to influence the direction the country takes in these areas, and believe my experience and long tenure (11 years as UOW’s Vice-Chancellor) will help me deal with issues in a way that will benefit the nation,” he said.

However, 2006 is also shaping as an eventful year for UOW, with the ongoing development of the Graduate School of Medicine in preparation for receiving its first student intake next February and construction due to start on the first buildings at the much-anticipated Innovation Campus.

“It will be demanding combining the two roles, but fortunately I have great support from a very good senior executive here at Wollongong,” Professor Sutton said. “I am a hands-on Vice-Chancellor, but I also give my senior executive freedom to operate in their areas of responsibility. There is an excellent working relationship between all members of the senior executive, so in truth I don’t think the University will notice any difference.

“In fact, I believe there will be an overall positive outcome for the University in me being AVCC President, especially in terms of raising its profile nationally.”

He said the AVCC secretariat handled the day-to-day issues, so he should not be required to attend to AVCC business on a daily basis. Rather, he would become involved in important national issues that involved the university sector.

“I have to stick to the main game, and be selective about what I involve myself in,” he said.

Three major issues stand out as Professor Sutton’s priorities. The first is the Research Quality Framework – a new method being developed by the Federal Government to allocate research funding to universities. “We badly need the Government to increase funding to universities for research infrastructure to match the kind of investment India and China are putting up – otherwise we are going to be outripped by these countries very quickly,” he said.

“We also need to reduce the university sector’s regulatory reporting. (Former Education Minister) Brendan Nelson had some good reforms, but they are being stifled by excessive accountability. This is creating a huge cost to universities in dollar terms and in personnel, and proving a real drain on our resources. The money would be much better spent on research and teaching.”

Professor Sutton will also lobby for an appropriate form of indexing university operating grants. “Our grants are currently indexed below inflation, and at a rate half the indexed funding for schools. This must result in quality reductions.”

He would like to see operating grants indexed at 3.5 percent, up from the current 2.0 percent.

“This is so important for the nation that we need bipartisan agreement. The Labor Party already has it in its higher education policy, but we need to mount an economic argument to convince Cabinet and Treasury.

On the home front, Professor Sutton’s three main priorities are to:

• further develop UOW’s research profile, recruiting more high profile researchers to boost the University’s areas of strength and increase success in the Linkage Grants scheme. He has recently appointed Professor Lee Astheimer as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) to assist Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Margaret Sheil in this important strategic area (See P2);

• ensure the Graduate School of Medicine gets off to a flying start in 2007 so that it can fulfill its potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of health services in the Illawarra region in particular, and regional and rural Australia generally;

• commence construction of the first major buildings at UOW’s Innovation Campus, which is designed to become a major research and development precinct and generate thousands of jobs for the region. CN
$12m ARC Centre of Excellence to play revolutionary role

The world is on the verge of a revolution in electromaterials science and the University of Wollongong will be playing a significant role, the audience was told at the official opening of the $12 million Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Electromaterials Science based at the University of Wollongong.

Centre Director Professor Gordon Wallace predicted that the next five years would see an array of exciting developments in the fields of electromaterials science and nano (ultra minute) technology, particularly following discoveries such as plastics conducting electricity under certain conditions.

Professor Wallace said the ARC Centre would play a pivotal role in creating the electromaterials required for such areas as a new generation of bionic ear, artificial muscles, nerve repairs and, in collaboration with Monash University, developing the bio-batteries and the bio-fuel cells to drive them. The Centre promises to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing society such as enhancing human health, renewable energy and sustainable industries.

"On just an everyday basis, people will see the ‘revolution’ in changes from the types of mobile phones they carry to the computer screens on their desks,” Professor Wallace said. He said the breakthroughs in electromaterials science were being achieved through a “unique team of researchers combining their individual talents” along with a recognition from the ARC and various commercial collaborators who shared his centre’s vision.

Officially opening the Centre, ARC Chief Executive Officer Professor Peter Høj stressed the strong competition for ARC funding. Professor Wallace’s application was one of 11 that were successful from 97 applications.

The Centre will be one of the first research units to relocate to UOW’s Innovation Campus at Fairy Meadow. It will be joined by Professor Shi Dou’s Institute for Superconductivity and Electronic Materials.

UOW’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Margaret Sheil described the opening as a tremendous day for UOW and its partners and an acknowledgment of the world-class research being undertaken.

"It’s a clear example of how we, as a University, are reaping the benefits of not trying to be excellent in everything in research but to concentrate our resources in our areas of strength such as electromaterials science," Professor Sheil said.

The Centre draws its core expertise from its partners: the Intelligent Polymer Research Institute (UOW), the ARC, the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, Monash University, the Bionic Ear Institute, and St Vincent’s Health. The Centre has already attracted 21 visiting scientists from eight different countries since the Federal Government announced plans for its introduction in 2005.

This combination, with the input of other distinguished collaborators, brings together some of the foremost researchers in chemistry, materials science, physics, biology and mathematics in Australia.

The Centre will carry out collaborative research with four different Cooperative Research Centres - CRC Polymers, CRC Smart Print, CRC Intelligent Manufacturing and CRC Cochlear Implant and Hearing.

Coinciding with the opening, the new ARC Centre hosted the first international symposium on electromaterials science held at UOW involving researchers from leading scientific institutions in Germany, Italy, France, the US, Canada, The Netherlands, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. The inventor of the bionic ear, Professor Graeme Clark, was among the leading scientists who presented to the conference.

The University of Wollongong will mount a display in the Sciences Buildings to mark its involvement in the discovery of a new human species, Homo floresiensis (nicknamed the “Hobbit”).

The discovery of the miniature human species on the Indonesian island of Flores triggered a worldwide sensation when it was announced in October 2004.

Now two casts of the skull of the female Hobbit unearthed at Flores have arrived at UOW’s School of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

The casts, made from silicon gel, were constructed based on a CT scan of the original unearthed skull just before the original skull was, unfortunately, permanently damaged. A laser was used to craft out the replica silicon gel skulls.

The damaged original skull is in Jakarta, Indonesia.

One of the model casts will go on display in the foyer of UOW’s Sciences Building along with a painting depicting how the hunter-gatherer Hobbit may have appeared. The other skull will stay with Dr Chris Turney from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Dr Turney is part of a team from UOW which used its world-class expertise to date the age of the skeletal remains.

The UOW “Hobbit” research team (from left to right) Professor Bert Roberts, PhD students Kira Westaway and Douglas Hobbs and Dr Chris Turney inspect cast models of the new human species discovered on Flores.

The UOW “Hobbit” research team (from left to right) Professor Bert Roberts, PhD students Kira Westaway and Douglas Hobbs and Dr Chris Turney inspect cast models of the new human species discovered on Flores.
UOW Council elects first female Deputy Chancellor

The University of Wollongong Council has appointed its first female Deputy Chancellor with the election of the Chief Executive and Managing Director of NATA Certification Services International Sue Chapman.

Ms Chapman was elected unopposed to fill the position previously held by George Edgar since 1998. Mr Edgar, who was President of BHP Flat Products before his retirement, decided to step down from the position of Deputy Chancellor but remain on Council.

Ms Chapman is a UOW graduate, with a Bachelor of Arts (French and Psychology), a Master of Business Administration and a Diploma in Health Administration from the University.

The organisation she runs, NATA Certification Services International, is the second largest management systems certification body in Australia with offices in every state, and internationally in India, South Korea and Chile.

Ms Chapman has previously been employed as Deputy Director-General, NSW Department of Community Services (1997-1998); Registrar and Deputy Principal, University of Sydney (1993-1997), Director of Corporate Services, Illawarra Area Health Service (1988-1993); Manager of Personnel, UOW, (1987-1988); Deputy Executive Officer, Wollongong Hospital (1986-1987); and Manager of Personnel Services, Illawarra Area Health Service (1980-1986).

She said she was delighted to have been appointed to the position of Deputy Chancellor.

“It’s a tremendous honour and I hope to follow in the footsteps of George Edgar who has made a significant contribution to the University,” Ms Chapman said.

Chris Grange, the University’s Vice-Principal (Administration) and Secretary of the University Council explained that the Deputy Chancellor can be called on to deputise for the Chancellor at University Council meetings and at public University functions, particularly graduations both within Australia and overseas.

In addition, the Deputy Chancellor chairs the Council’s important Administrative Committee and provides advice and support to both the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor.

The Council governs the University. It consists of 19 members: three ex-officio members (the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chairperson of the Academic Senate), six Ministerial nominees, two members elected by students, two members elected by academic staff and one by general staff, two members elected by graduates and three members appointed by Council. Council’s four major committees are the Administrative Committee, the Audit Management & Review Committee, the Ceremonial and Honorary Awards Committee and the Nominations Committee.

UOW Medical School on track for 2007

continued from page 1.

“We can now move to Stage 2 of the accreditation process with confidence, and continue preparing for the arrival of our first Medical students next January,” Professor Sutton said.

“This is a hugely significant development for the University of Wollongong, both domestically and internationally. It is also significant for the nation, because of our focus on training doctors primarily to work in rural, regional and remote areas where currently there is a great shortage of medical practitioners.

“This is also important for the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. Experience tells us that training doctors locally will ultimately deliver a major dividend to the region by significantly improving the provision of health services in the future.”

Professor Sutton said the University had received strong support from the Federal and State Governments, and paid tribute to Prime Minister John Howard, who had personally signed off on the University’s submission to establish the Medical School in 2004.

“We have received tremendous support from Illawarra-based politicians in the Federal Government, Member for Gilmore Joanna Gash and Senator Connie Ferravanti-Wells, as well as Dr Brendan Nelson when he was Education Minister,” Professor Sutton said.

“The NSW Government, through the then Health Minister now Premier Morris lemma strongly supported the Medical School with funding for five Professorships. And the partnership with South East Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service CEO Professor Debora Picone has also been critical to this announcement.”

The GSM will actively recruit students who demonstrate ties to regional and rural areas, and seek to strengthen those ties throughout their training with clinical placements at hospitals, clinics and medical practices in regional areas.

“It will also give us the opportunity to apply for greater National Health and Medical Grants research funding, further strengthening our already strong research activities,” Professor Sutton said.

GSM Foundation Dean Professor John Hogg said Stage 1 approval meant the GSM team could now concentrate on filling its remaining professional and academic staff positions.

“We have already recruited key professorial and administrative staff, and can now concentrate on filling the remaining positions and work with the AMC in preparing to deliver our curriculum,” Professor Hogg said.

He said Illawarra and Shoalhaven doctors had embraced the concept of the Medical School, with more than 200 signing up as honoraries and committing to on-going involvement at the GSM in roles including planning, teaching, governance, clinical supervision, research, student mentoring and assessment.

“The support we have received from many of the region’s doctors has been magnificent,” Professor Hogg said.

The GSM will accept 80 students each year, with 56 based at Wollongong and 24 at the Shoalhaven campus. Candidates must have completed an undergraduate degree, with special consideration given to those who can demonstrate ties to regional, rural or remote communities.

1300 367 869  www.uow.edu.au  University of Wollongong  Campus News March 06 5
UOW wins Microsoft grant

The University of Wollongong has won a coveted Microsoft Research Asia grant for internet security, with grant recipient Professor Rei Safavi-Naini and her research team from the Centre for Information Security beating dozens of contenders from universities across the Asia-Pacific.

It is the first time a research team from a regional university has won the grant and Professor Safavi-Naini is the first ever Australian winner of a security-funding research grant. Team members are Associate Professor Willy Susilo, Associate Professor Yi Mu, Dr Jeffrey Horton, Dr Joonsang Baek and Dr Wangqi Li.

Senior researchers at the Microsoft Research Asia Labs in Beijing have now invited Professor Safavi-Naini to present the proposed research project at a regional workshop to be held in China in March involving over 200 Asia-Pacific professors. The grant, worth over $20,000, will fund cutting-edge research into building tougher security for online transactions such as online banking.

UOW will provide matching funds to increase the support for the research. The Centre for Information Security is part of UOW’s Telecommunication and Research Institute.

“The research team brought together experts from the network security and cryptography area to develop a highly targeted proposal that was ranked very highly by three lab managers in the Microsoft Asia Labs,” said Professor Safavi-Naini.

“Our research partnership with Microsoft Research Asia is of strategic importance for the Centre because of their interest in security and our wide range of expertise in the area. Mr Craig Peden (Manager of Innovation and Commercial Research) played a vital role in starting this relationship with the industry giant.”

“As Australia strives to remain competitive with the emerging economies of Asia, the need to innovate has become more important than ever. Through IT research grants and great Australian technology innovators like Rei and her team, Australia can hold its own against the most technologically advanced nations in the world,” said University Relations Manager for Microsoft Research Asia John Warren.

UOWD hosts 10th graduation

University of Wollongong Chancellor Michael Codd AC presided over the 10th annual graduation ceremony for 444 graduates at the University of Wollongong in Dubai last December.

The graduation took place at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel on 1 December in the presence of a capacity crowd of approximately 1,200 proud families, parents and distinguished guests.

In his address, UOWD Chief Executive Officer Professor Nicholas van der Walt said: “Over the past 12 years UOWD has clearly established itself as a pre-eminent member of the academic community in the UAE. As we experience some of the greatest change in the history of humanity, our high quality, career-oriented academic programs, combined with our strong links with industry ensure that UOWD graduates will be the leaders of the next generation. They are the ‘employees of choice’ highly sought after by both the private and public sectors.”

Professor van der Walt also thanked Montblanc, the Dubai Quality Group, Dubai, GAC Logistics, Standard Chartered Bank, Australian Business in the Gulf and Blue Chip Computers for their generous support in sponsoring awards for UOWD’s Top Graduates of 2005. “This is yet another example of industry acknowledging the quality of our graduates,” he said.

Alan Comyn, graduating with a Master of Business Administration (with Distinction) proposed the Vote of Thanks. He reflected on the sacrifices he and his fellow graduates had made during their studies and thanked their respective partners, children, parents, siblings and friends for their support. “We will always treasure these degrees as we recognise that they belong not only to us, but to those who gave up a part of themselves so that we could achieve our goals,” said Mr Comyn.

UOWD’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Rob Castle, confirmed before the Graduation Ceremony that the new graduates would receive University of Wollongong in Dubai testamurs, but measures were in place for the graduates to receive University of Wollongong, Australia testamurs, if they so wish. This information was conveyed to the new graduates in writing at the Graduation Ceremony.

Sheik Maktoum tribute

UOWD mourned the death of His Highness Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who died during a visit to Australia in January.

In a special edition of the UOWD staff newsletter, in house, Sheikh Maktoum was described as a visionary who had worked hard to develop Dubai, paying particular attention to education and the promotion of law and order.

Sheik Maktoum was appointed the first Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and given the task of forming the fledgling state’s first Cabinet in 1972. He remained in the position until 1979, when he stood down in favour of his father, Sheik Rashid. When his father died in 1990, Sheikh Maktoum became Ruler of Dubai and Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE – positions he held until he passed away on 6 January.

Public Speaking success

University students from around the UAE competed in the Wollongong Cup Public Speaking Competition on 16 February at UOWD. Over 80 students from 10 universities participated across six speaking categories.

Nisin Mathew from UOWD was named the top public speaker, winning the Firstnet Public Address category. Another UOWD student, Sonia Manek, won the Original Storytelling section.

The American University in Dubai was named the overall winner, followed by runner ups UOWD and BITS-Pilani.

Tournament director Melissa Bos stated “The public speaking ability of the student competitors was phenomenal and a true testament to higher education in the UAE. Public speaking skills are truly a necessity in today’s business world.”

Acclade for UOWD student

UOWD third year student Nisin Mathew presented a paper titled “Environmental Threats of Transportation in the UAE” at the Green Gulf Youth Conference held at The American University of Sharjah on 8 February and was selected as a top 10 finalist.

Nisin’s presentation won 2nd place overall, winning him a very handsome plaque and a trip to Germany next year to attend the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) conference. Nisin’s paper will be published in the Green Gulf Report, a joint report between the Gulf Research Centre (GRC) and The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI).
Reach your destination with Student Central

University of Wollongong students now have a one-stop service facility for their enquiries.

As the name implies, Student Central is situated right in the heart of the UOW Campus in close proximity to popular services and facilities such as the library, café, shops, post office, bank, food hall and UniBar.

The smart new centre – built at a cost of $700,000 – combines services core to student activity including Student Fees, Accommodation Services, Information Technology Services, Study Abroad and Exchange, International Student Advisers and Client Services.

Student Central staff are skilled in proactively resolving students’ needs. With facilities ranging from inter-active computer terminals to private interview rooms, and further plans for lounges where students can relax in comfort and browse through brochures and up-to-date information, Student Central is fast becoming a prominent feature of the UOW campus.

UOW Academic Registrar Dr David Christie said Student Central’s innovative design and even its name came from extensive consultation with staff and students. “The concept behind the creation of Student Central has always been to provide seamless, integrated services and support that not only address but anticipate students’ needs. The centre, which places UOW at the leading edge of service provision to university students, is a comfortable and welcoming “one-stop shop” which caters to the broad spectrum of students within the University.”

“It made sense to bring all these services into one place,” Dr Christie said. “It is centrally located and surrounded by other student facilities, and we consulted widely with students and staff to find out what features people wanted.”

New information technology systems such as the Q-MATIC ticketing system are playing an important role in Student Central by allowing students to take a seat or browse through the Student Central library while they wait for their ticketed number to appear on the monitors (which can be seen from the Sal Paradise café across the arcade, allowing students the mobility to order a coffee while they wait).

“The ticketing system allows us to monitor waiting times, and adjust our staffing levels to suit the needs of the students,” Dr Christie said.

Senior Manager of Client Service Katherine McPhee, who oversees operations in Student Central, said the new facility had proved an immediate success when it opened in late January.

She said there were plans to add new features such as self-help desks with computer terminals. “Our staff will be working with the students showing them how to help themselves find the answers to some of their enquiries, so that next time they will be able to go straight to the computer terminal rather than wait to get help,” Ms McPhee said.

“We also have three ‘quiet rooms’ where people can have privacy when they need assistance with sensitive matters.” CN

Police Commissioner’s leadership message

Victorian Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon returned to Wollongong in February to join over 300 eminent and emerging educational leaders and practitioners attending the University of Wollongong’s Fifth International Conference on Education Leadership.

Commissioner Nixon, who is a former Wollongong Regional Commander, was one of the keynote speakers at the conference titled Distributive Leadership: Implications for Practice. It focused on the need for collaboration and team building and the empowerment of people working in rapidly changing, turbulent, diverse and complex organisations.

Commissioner Nixon, who has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from UOW, has been the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police since 2001. She is responsible for 14,000 staff with 550 work locations and an annual budget of $1.4 billion.

She spoke about what makes a great leader and educator and the importance of effective partnerships in working towards achieving goals.

“The key to making great leaders is talking to the people you work with. The people who do the job are the people who have the answers,” she said.

“Educational leadership is about communities, schools and organisations, no matter how big or small, coming together and sharing the load. And if you are going to be a leader, you have to do it and not just talk about it.

“In my role I have come across so many systems and practices in place in organisations that stop people being the best that they can be. It’s important to assess the different things that stop people learning and work out how to fix these issues.”

As a leader, Commissioner Nixon said it was vital to listen and learn from others and to allow your employees to maintain their individuality, freedom and the capacity to think and circulate ideas.

“Be open to suggestion and change. It can be the smallest thing - like listening to requests to add baseball caps and new jackets to the police uniforms. I even had John Wood from Blue Heelers ringing me up asking me if I could change the police uniform trousers because they had been itching him for 12 years!”

The conference was presented by UOW’s Australian Centre for Education Leadership, and was co-sponsored by the Faculty of Education, NSW Department of Education and Training and the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong.

Keynote speakers included Professor Stephen Dinham from the Faculty of Education, Professor Bill Mulford (University of Tasmania), Professor Patrick Duignan (Australian Catholic University), Cheryl O’Connor (CEO Australian College of Educators) and Associate Professor Neil Cranston (University of Queensland). CN
The University of Wollongong’s Michael Birt Library has received a significant donation of 700 books from the personal and working library of one of Australia’s pre-eminent philosophers, Professor John Passmore.

The wife and family of the late Professor Passmore travelled from Melbourne to officially hand over the collection in February.

Professor Passmore was a major figure in the history of ideas and one of the first to give shape to the field of applied philosophy.

He studied at the University of Sydney obtaining a Bachelor of Arts, gaining first class honours in Philosophy and English Literature. From 1935-1949 he taught at the University of Sydney before becoming Chair of Philosophy at the University of Otago in 1950. He was Reader in Philosophy at the Australian National University from 1955 to 1957, Professor of Philosophy from 1958 until his retirement in 1979 and Head of the Philosophy Program from 1962 until 1976.

He was Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at ANU and an Honorary Graduate of the University of Wollongong.

Professor Passmore was principal speaker at the World Conferences of Philosophy in 1978, 1983 and 1988 and held many distinguished visiting appointments at overseas universities including Princeton, Oxford and Cambridge. In recognition of his service to education he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1992.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of his attendance at the Annual Conference of Australasian Philosophers in Wollongong.

In addition to lecturing, Professor Passmore was a prolific contributor to articles and reviews in many Australian and overseas academic journals. The latest donation builds on previous donations to the Library over a period of 20 years, the first of these occurring in 1988 when Professor Lachlan Chipman was head of Wollongong’s Department of Philosophy.

At that time, Professor Passmore’s generous donation was widely recognised as making a significant impact on the Library collection of a young but growing university. The UOW Librarian Felicity McGregor said the overall collection of more than 2,000 books was a valuable addition to the Library and supplements Professor Passmore’s personal papers and writings that have been donated to the National Library.

“It reflects the breadth of Professor Passmore’s work in applied philosophy covering the areas of philosophy of the environment, art, science and teaching. They are an indication of the eclectic nature of his interests - ethics, logic, moral thought, and history of thought, with some crime writers and French literature included as well,” she said.

Of his many published works, all of which are held at the UOW Library, his book titled A Hundred Years of Philosophy is recognised as a major feat of scholarship by the international philosophical community. CN
Schizophrenia research keeps getting Beta

The community fund-raising campaign that gave the University of Wollongong the Southern Hemisphere’s only Beta Imager for schizophrenia research is already paying major dividends.

The Beta Imager has had a dramatic impact on the University’s research into the devastating brain disorder, putting UOW at the front-line of the fight to improve schizophrenia treatment.

The number of schizophrenia researchers has tripped in less than three years since the Beta Imager was installed at UOW.

The presence of the Beta Imager has also contributed to UOW’s Neurobiology Research Centre for Metabolic and Psychiatric Disorders attracting significantly increased research funding - $2.1 million for the years 2002-05, compared to $382,0000 in the four years from 1998 to 2001.

This inevitably has had a major impact on the quality and quantity of UOW’s research into the brain pathology of schizophrenia sufferers, according to the Centre’s Director Associate Professor Xu-feng Huang.

The $200,000 Beta Imager was purchased in 2003 after a schizophrenia awareness and fund-raising campaign headed by Wollongong Lord Mayor Cr Alex Darling, combined with a significant donation from the Neuroscience Institute for Schizophrenia and Allied Disorders (NISAD).

“We really want to thank everyone who supported the fund-raising campaign, and let them know that they have made a major contribution in a very difficult area of research … looking at what happens inside the human brain,” Professor Huang said.

Professor Huang and his team are researching various neuro-chemicals in brain tissue. The researchers use brain tissue from a “brain bank” called the Tissue Resource Centre to compare the levels of the neurochemicals in tissue of schizophrenia sufferers with tissue from people who did not have the disorder.

The research is helping to develop new drugs to treat schizophrenia, while the team is also looking at ways to overcome the main side-effects of current schizophrenia drugs – including a high incidence of obesity among people under treatment.

“The Beta Imager makes our research so much quicker, giving results in a matter of hours where previously we would have had to wait three months,” Professor Huang said.

He explained the previous method of researching chemical changes in brain tissue involved applying the tissue to a sensitive, radio-active film and then waiting three months to bring up an image of the changes. The Beta Imager gives the same results in a few hours.

Professor Huang said the huge time-saving had many benefits, not least the ability to take risks with the research. He pointed out that some of the greatest scientific discoveries had been made by researchers taking risks, and now that his team could obtain results in hours instead of months they were more likely to think “outside the square” for solutions to problems because they knew almost immediately whether they were on the right track.

One of the Centre’s PhD researchers, Kelly Newell, said the Beta Imager had made a “huge difference to the outcomes and quality of our research”.

“We’re getting a lot of results, and people are really taking notice,” she said. “Recently, our group gave 10 presentations to 700 people at the Australian Neuroscience Conference in Sydney, our largest number of presentations at a neuroscience conference.”

Researchers from a number of other Australian medical research institutions including the University of Sydney, the Garvan Institute, Queensland University and the University of Newcastle are also interested in using the Beta Imager at UOW.

Professor Huang said the Centre communicated regularly with psychiatrists and other mental health professionals and researchers working with schizophrenia. He is looking forward to the collaborative research opportunities that will emerge with UOW’s new Graduate School of Medicine. CN

Overseas interest in forensic accounting

Picture during the Audit Board of Indonesia’s UOW visit (from left): Yudi Ramdan (Senior Auditor of The Audit Board of Indonesia), I Gusti Agung Rari (Board Member of The Audit Board of Indonesia, the delegation leader), Ani Nigeriawati (Indonesian Embassy, Canberra), Dharma Bhakti (Secretary General of The Audit Board of Indonesia), Dr Kathie Cooper (School of Accounting and Finance and Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention (CNTCP)), Associate Professor Doug MacKinnon (CTTCP), Dr Annamaria Kurtovic (School of Accounting and Finance and CTTCP), Associate Professor Damien Considine (Acting Dean, Faculty of Law), Parulian Silaen (School of Accounting and Finance) and Paul Schwerdt (Visiting Fellow, CTTCP).

The University of Wollongong was the first university in the world to conduct a Masters degree in Forensic Accounting with the first four students – two from Australia, one from Poland and one from Canada - completing the full-time online course late last year.

Forensic accounting has been a part of life at big firms for years but UOW was the first university to take the discipline, previously taught in-house, to the university level.

This year, 35 students from across the world have signed up for the one-year program.

The forensic accountants are being trained to look for “red flags” even before they get to the financial records room. This includes interviewing techniques looking for dishonesty and evasiveness, judging the demeanour of management and staff to evaluate the state of a company; and analysing in finer detail the mountains of data they will mine.

News of the degree is spreading. UOW in February played host to executives from the Audit Board of Indonesia which requested to visit the University and see a presentation of what the degree could offer.

Dr Kathie Cooper (Director of Forensic Studies) and Dr Annamaria Kurtovic provided a joint presentation for the visitors and the executive team later met executives from UOW administration and members of the Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention.

Meanwhile, the first cohort of graduates from the course have plans to start up an industry body. CN
Lecturer makes a name for himself

When University of Wollongong Management lecturer Peter McLean prepares for a new semester he starts by memorising his students' names - up to 250 of them.

His next step is to check which of his students are from overseas, so that he can learn an appropriate greeting in their native tongue.

Mr McLean’s determination to put humanity at the forefront of his Human Resources teaching has won him the ‘Pearson Education ANZAM Management Educator of the Year Award for 2005’ awarded by the Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management in recognition of achievements in teaching excellence.

“I like to greet my international students in their native language to show respect for where they have come from,” Mr McLean said. “It’s a nice way to tell them their identity is special … although sometimes my attempts can range from the humorous to the pathetic!”

“I treat every student as an individual. I like to make learning a safe environment, by concentrating on my students’ sense of identity and sense of worth,” Mr McLean said.

“Knowing students by name encourages them to participate rather than remaining anonymous and disconnected.”

Not that lack of participation seems to be an issue in Mr McLean’s classes. School of Management and Marketing Head Professor Trevor Spedding’s submission to the ANZAM award judges noted: “Students demonstrated their appreciation for his commitment and outstanding teaching by bursting into spontaneous applause at the end of the final exam.”

Rossiter honoured with Fellowship

Australia’s most-cited Marketing scholar since 1988 Professor John Rossiter from UOW’s School of Management and Marketing, has been made a Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC).

The Fellowships recognise members of ANZMAC who have shown outstanding leadership in research, marketing education and discipline development within both their institutions and the Academy.

Over his research career Professor Rossiter has published eight books, many of which represent leading thinking in advertising and marketing communications. In addition, he has published more than 100 articles and conference papers, and has attracted numerous research grants to support his work.

Professor Rossiter's outstanding contribution to marketing research was recognised in 2003, when he was named the ANZMAC Distinguished Researcher of the Year.

Professor Rossiter has supervised nine PhD students, all of whom now have academic careers of their own. He has been a visiting professor at some of the leading international business schools and holds permanent visiting appointments at Justus-Leibig University, Germany, and the Rotterdam School of Management in The Netherlands.

He has also provided extensive administrative support to each of the universities at which he has taught and, in particular, he has played a major role in fostering and supporting research at the University of Wollongong.

Teaching excellence recognised

The University of Wollongong’s status as number one in the country for teaching and learning performance has been further reinforced, with Associate Professor Roger Lewis from the Faculty of Engineering being recognised as one of the State’s most outstanding teachers.

Professor Lewis was one of nine NSW academics to receive a Quality Teaching Award at a ceremony at Government House in December.

The Australian College of Educators and Minister for Education Quality Teaching Awards are presented annually. The selection process involves each teacher submitting a portfolio and undergoing a rigorous investigation by the award team that visits the teacher’s classroom and interviews parents, students and colleagues.

NSW Education Minister Carmel Tebbutt presented the awards to recipients working in early childhood, government and non-government schools, TAFE NSW Institutes and NSW universities.

“Quality teaching is at the heart of our education system, and these award winners reflect that,” Ms Tebbutt said. “Great teachers inspire, encourage, and challenge their students.”

“These awards highlight the dedication and professionalism of our teachers. They’re a fitting way to highlight some of the talented people across the range of teaching institutions.”

While Professor Lewis is an accomplished teacher his primary academic activity is research within...
PM's Employer of the Year

The University of Wollongong's commitment to employing people with disabilities was recognised when it was named the Prime Minister’s Employer of the Year for the higher education category in 2005. The awards, which were presented at Parliament House in Canberra last December, recognise Australian businesses and organisations which have made a strong commitment to employing people with disabilities.

The University of Wollongong was nominated for the award by Essential Personnel, a Wollongong-based organisation that provides recruitment, training and support services to people with disability. Staff with disabilities enjoy full careers at UOW and are employed across all salary levels.

"The University of Wollongong has had a long-term commitment to equity, which includes people with disabilities," said UOW's Director of Employment Equity and Diversity Robyn Weekes.

"We’re not stars in terms of any particular programs, but we have been there for the long haul and have made a sustained effort over a significant period of time. We have had constant achievements in encouraging people into the workforce, to perform alongside other employees without any differentiation," Ms Weekes said.

The University has a Memorandum of Understanding with Essential Personnel.

"One of the key elements in encouraging people with disabilities into the University has been our partnership with Essential Personnel. We’ve had an agreement with them for more than 15 years. We’ve been looking at placements of two people a year with disabilities through this partnership," Ms Weekes said.

Participation of people with a disability in the workforce is closely monitored at the University. "Out of a workforce of 1,500, about 8% of staff have a disability," Ms Weekes said.

She said that the University would like to improve its representation of people with disabilities in the workforce to at least equal their representation in the general population which is now at about 12% in NSW. "That is our current target. We’re a bit short at the moment, but we’re getting there," she said.

$250,000 to help deal with bird flu

Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott has announced funding of $250,000 to a research team led by the University of Wollongong that will play a significant role in minimising public panic in Australia over any potential bird flu pandemic.

Research team leader and Director of UOW’s Centre for Health Behaviour and Communication Research Associate Professor Sandra Jones said the National Health and Medical Research Council funding for the project, Potential Avian Influenza-Induced Pandemic: Minimising Public Panic, would be used to develop communication strategies that relevant organisations could use to increase the public's understanding of the disease.

"Communication appearing in the Australian media regarding a potential bird flu epidemic can serve to accurately and effectively inform the public or misinform and contribute to panic and undesirable behavioural responses," Professor Jones said.

She said the Australian Government has time to develop communication strategies and specific messages that can effectively convey desired information at different stages of the anticipated pandemic.

"We propose to develop communication strategies that government, medical authorities, non-government organisations and other relevant organisations can use to increase the public's understanding of the risk.

"Such strategies will ensure that we can minimise fear, refute misinformation the public may encounter from individuals (e.g. co-workers) or media sources, and enhance the likelihood of the public taking the recommended preventive and remedial actions should an Avian Influenza pandemic occur," Professor Jones said.

The research team will then use these communication strategies to develop evidence-based guidelines for communication strategies to be used in cases of similar serious health threats in Australia.

The team includes a main media health promotions expert (Associate Professor Jones); two marketing communications experts, one of whom has an academic focus and the other a practitioner focus (Professor John Rossiter, UOW and Professor Max Sutherland, UOW and Lightmore P/L); a public health and medical expert in health behaviour change (Professor Don Iverson, UOW’s Dean of Health and Behavioural Sciences); a senior public health campaigns expert (Professor Chris Puplick, UOW); and an expert in communicable diseases and infection control education and programs (Professor Julian Gold, The Albion St Centre and UOW). The project manager is Ms Fiona Baikie (UOW).
BlueScope Steel sings car team’s praises

BlueScope Steel has helped the University of Wollongong’s Formula SAE motorsport team become Australia’s most successful over the past five years, and the company paid a glowing tribute to the team when it helped launch its 2006 international and Australasian campaign on February 17.

Speaking at the campaign launch at the Kembla Grange Kart track, BlueScope Steel’s Automotive Technical Specialist John Szalla said BlueScope Steel had been a proud sponsor of the UOW Formula SAE team since it was established in 2001.

“The team has been enormously successful, especially considering it has only been in place for five years,” Mr Szalla said.

“BlueScope Steel sells 150,000 tonnes of steel into the Australian automotive industry each year. Our sponsorship (of the UOW team) has given us the opportunity to retain a high profile in the Australian automotive scene.”

Formula SAE is a competition between universities conducted by the Society of Automotive Engineers with support from the world’s biggest car manufacturers, who see it as an ideal way to encourage young engineers and give them experience in a highly competitive environment. Students design, build and drive the race cars for the competition which involves a variety of speed, endurance, handling and braking events.

Mr Szalla said it was also in BlueScope Steel’s interests to support the competition that helped young engineers excel in their studies.

“The company is committed to seeing outstanding education of engineers because of the long-term benefits, adding value to the Australian manufacturing scene,” he said.

At the launch attended by media, sponsors, Wollongong Lord Mayor Cr Alex Darling, UOW Vice-Principal (Administration) Chris Grange and Faculty of Engineering Dean Professor Chris Cook, the UOW team showcased its car in a series of demonstration laps around the testing Kembla Grange Kart track.

The team is preparing to travel to the United States to compete against 70 other teams in an international Formula SAE event at California Speedway in Fontana, near Los Angeles. It hopes to emulate the feats of the 2003 UOW team that won the world title in Detroit.

UOW has been Australia’s most successful participant in Formula SAE competition. Its victory in the United States in May 2003 was the first by a non-American team and capped off a remarkable run of success by UOW teams. The 2003 car is now on display at Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum.

Since building their first car in 2001 teams from the University’s Engineering Faculty have competed in eight campaigns - five in Australasia and three in the United States. UOW has won four times - three in Australasia (2001, 2002 and 2004) and the 2003 event in Detroit against 130 competitors. Last December the team finished third overall in the 2005 Australasian title in Werribee against 24 other teams.

Team Manager Nathan Simiana, a final year Electrical Engineering student, said the team had been working hard to prepare the car for the Californian trip.

“There are some big improvements on the 2005 car. Rule changes mean we’ve been able to make significant improvements to the chassis, while we’ve also modified the engine, suspension system and body work. We’re very happy with the car and quietly confident of doing well against some very tough competition in California,” he said. CN

Rugby club reunion

Calling all former University of Wollongong and Wollongong Teachers College rugby union players.

UOW Rugby Union Club is holding a reunion in June for all former players from the University and Teachers College clubs.

Founded in 1962, the University club amalgamated in 1981 when the Teachers College became part of UOW. Now known as the Mallee Bulls, the combined clubs have a proud record. Representative players include former Wallabies captain Peter Sullivan (15 Tests for Australia between 1971 and 1974), Peter Rowles (two Tests in 1972 and 1974), John Lambie (four Tests between 1974 to 1976) and Mark Giachetti (Australian under 21 in 1991 and Italy in 1994).

In 2005 the club achieved its first-ever Illawarra club championship and made the grand final, eventually going down to Tech Waratahs 24-16 in the premiership decider.

The reunion will involve a series of activities on Friday 30 June, Saturday 1 July and Sunday 2 July. The weekend will start with an informal gathering at the North Gong Hotel on the Friday evening.

Reunion attendees are invited to attend the Mallee Bulls’ home game against old rivals Vikings on the Saturday afternoon, followed by a dinner at Wollongong’s Master Builders Club.

The reunion will wind down with a Golden Oldies game on Sunday.

Reunion organiser Glenn McGuiness has urged all former players, coaches, officials and supporters to attend. For more details, contact Glenn after hours on (02) 4283 6573 or by email at glennmcg@hotmail.com.au

News in brief

Youth adviser

University of Wollongong Economics and Politics student Nicholas Kafer has been appointed to the NSW Youth Advisory Council – a 12-member body that provides advice to NSW Minister for Youth Reba Meagher. Nicholas, 19, said the council would be looking at issues ranging from mental health, alcohol and narcotics use to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Young Citizen

Second Year Nursing student Samantha Beck has been named Wollongong’s Young Citizen of the Year for her work with people with disabilities. Samantha, 21, is a disabilities worker with the Department of the Ageing and Disability Home Care. Two years ago she raised $7000 to travel to Kenya to spend three months working with disabled and orphaned children.

EOWA awards

The University of Wollongong and its largest subsidiary, Illawarra Technology Corporation (ITC) have both been recognised for the employment opportunities they provide for women. ITC and UOW were among the 116 organisations across Australian named as an “employer of choice for women” by the Federal Government’s Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA).

Campus News is produced by the Media Unit.

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CRICOS Provider No: 001202E ISSN 0312-2018