Engineering Hosts Indigenous Summer School

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Welcome to a 'new' academic year and millennium, and a special welcome to new students and staff. I hope that you will find the University an interesting, challenging and friendly place, as well as your second 'home'. For continuing students and staff members, welcome back after what I hope was an enjoyable summer break.

2001 will be a very important year for this University. We are now in our 36th year of autonomous operation and have the most comprehensive range of academic programs outside of the capital cities. Moreover, we enjoy an outstanding research record, being ranked 9th among 37 public universities in Australia. I am proud of this record on behalf of all of our staff (past and present), students and alumni, who have contributed so much to the University.

This year brings new challenges and opportunities. Firstly, we will embark on a period of restructuring and rejuvenation following a major review of the University's academic and organisational structure. This will be a major topic for all of us, particularly at the strategic planning 'retreat' being held this month. Proposals will be developed for discussion within the University community and for consideration by the Council. The planned outcome is to enhance our standing as a strong research based international university, and to improve the way in which we manage our resources, deliver our teaching and research programs, and administer our activities.

Secondly, DETYA has again been busy changing its policies, particularly in relation to research and research training, with the introduction of the Research Training Scheme (RTS). Of major significance is the performance based allocation process for the distribution of research higher degree (RHD) places during 2001. This is based upon a formula of successful research completions (50 percent), research income (40 percent), and research publications (10 percent), resulting in an allocation of 583 EFTSU for this university for 2001. This is short of the planned load for 2002 of around 700 EFTSU, to meet our goal of six percent of total load, although this latter figure includes fee-paying overseas RHD students. The new policy is a major challenge, however, I intend to continue pressing for significant growth in the number of domestic and international research students over the next three years.

The 2001 undergraduate admissions round went well for the University. While the total pool of UAC applicants for Newcastle universities was two percent lower than last year (largely as a result of a lower number of non school leaver applications), first preferences for this university increased by around one percent. This movement, against a State wide trend, indicates a strengthening of demand for places at Newcastle. We increased the number of offers this year by 112, and UAI cut-offs increased in 37 of our courses. In addition, new course offerings in human nutrition (Central Coast) and photonics (Science and Mathematics) have met or exceeded targets, with good UAI minimum entry figures. We will therefore reach 2001 admission targets, and will have maintained or increased UAI cut-offs in nearly all of our courses.

GraduateSchool.com, a key development planned as a major flagship for the delivery of coursework postgraduate courses online, will play an important role this year. Following a modest Australian-based launch of the GS.com website on November 1, we have 100 students (mostly Australians) enrolled for the first trimester with 150 subject enrolments confirmed. Planning is underway for the launch of these programs in Singapore and Hong Kong from the second trimester this year. I look forward to a successful initial year for GS.com and warmly thank all of those staff members who have contributed to this exciting development.

I am very optimistic about the University's future. We enjoy unparalleled support from the Hunter and the Central Coast, and are meeting our targets for growth in key areas, measured by:

- success in gaining research support from government and private sources;
- increased numbers of research students (now more than 1000);
- improved standard of students entering our undergraduate programs; and
- maintenance of a modest over-enrolment of domestic undergraduate places.

In addition, we are providing major educational and research training opportunities to Indigenous people and have the most successful enabling programs in the country, to assist with our equity initiatives and objectives.

May I wish all of you an enjoyable, successful and healthy year.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President

Classified advertisements and other contributions for Uninews should be sent to Rose Roohan, phone: ext 6463, email: prmr@plinga.newcastle.edu.au.

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Cover pic – high school students from across Australia attended the 4th Indigenous Engineering Summer School at the University in January. Dale Bunton of Renmark in South Australia and Ayesh Blanco of North Mission Beach in Queensland pose on the staff club balcony during a presentation dinner – story p11
Council endorses Review Report

The University Council endorsed the key principles of the report of the External Review of the University at its final meeting for 2000.

The External Review involved extensive consultation with members of the University. The report, which was given to University Council members and staff on Monday 4th December, recommends the University simplify its administrative structures and reorganise faculties and schools, to ensure greater teaching and research collaboration.

Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English, says the review sets out a way for the University to reorganise its structures and administrative processes so it can improve its teaching and learning activities, extend its collaborative research activities and better serve the community.

"The reviewers identified the changing external forces, and recommended that the University needs to go through a major process of strategic, cultural and generational change to meet the challenges posed by these forces," he said. "The University ranks ninth out of the 36 Australian public universities with respect to research funding, but as the report says, past successes do not guarantee the future."

The 20 recommendations in the report indicate pathways for the University to continue its leadership role in education and research. They include reframing the University Strategic Plan, rationalising the current faculty structure and replacing it with a much smaller number of academic groupings, and making the Central Coast Campus a College of the University with a status distinct from other faculties. The review report recommends that the senior executive structure of the University comprise the Vice-Chancellor and President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research/Outreach/Development), Vice-President (Corporate Governance).

The review report was mounted on the University's website at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/externalreviews/university/index.html and staff were invited to comment on the recommendations. Implementation of the recommendations will be considered at a meeting of senior University executives and academics to be held on February 15 and 16, and specific recommendations will be brought back to Council.

AVCC calls for increased funding for universities

The Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee (AVCC) has called on major political parties to increase funding for universities in the future in a paper released in December.

The “Our Universities Our Future” paper puts forward proposals for future funding of Australian universities, and calls for “a bipartisan commitment to both education and innovation from our major parties to ensure our future prosperity”.

The AVCC paper sets out the case for investment in the education of students to match the recommended investment in research and says that future funding needs require an injection of an additional $0.5 billion.

Aimed at encouraging wide public debate on the issue of university funding, the paper suggests a possible framework that would preserve the diversity of Australian universities. The current convergence around a single model is seen by the AVCC as inappropriate for the breadth and diversity of Australian conditions. The suggested framework is intended to accommodate the wide range of student, employer and community needs.

It has seven key elements: a shift from rigid targets to funding on achieved number of students; a rise in funding level per student; determination of the best mix of undergraduate and postgraduate course offerings to suit the needs of local communities; additional funding for places for students from under-represented groups; introduction of a fees option for universities choosing to follow that path; additional funding for research; and universities to support rational priority areas identified by government.

Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hughes welcomes the paper and urges participation in debate on the issues it raises.

“Australia needs to identify the role of universities for the future,” he said. “The debate on future funding must happen now if we are to establish clear directions for a strong, innovative and relevant higher education system for this country.”

Taking it to the streets

The University took education into the community in January when the Enabling Programs Unit set up information stands in local shopping centres to tell people about its Open Foundation and Newstep courses.

Open Foundation is a tertiary preparation program for mature-age students and Newstep is for people 17 to 20 years old who may have been disadvantaged during their high school study. Both programs provide a pathway to university study.

“We set up the information stands at Charlestown Square and Tuggerah Supercentre where people could approach our staff for information in an environment that they are comfortable in,” explained Dr Ralph Robinson, Director, Enabling Programs Unit.

The stands were staffed by members of the Enabling Unit who answered questions, provided course information and handed out brochures.

From left: Jon Watkins and Trish D'Acciera advise Pam Taylor and her daughter Karen Hughes at the Charlestown Square stand.
Keats endow research fund

Two long-serving academic staff members of the University's Department of Psychology have endowed a fund to encourage research.

Emeritus Conjoint Professor John and Conjoint Professor Daphne Keats, both of whom have pursued teaching and research careers at the University, established the fund last year to help provide much-needed funding for junior staff and postgraduate students' research projects.

John Keats came to the University as Foundation Head of the Department of Psychology in 1965 from the University of Queensland, where he was a reader in Psychology. He was made an Emeritus Professor on his retirement in 1986.

Born at Port Pirie in South Australia in 1921, John did his undergraduate degree in mathematics and physics at the University of Adelaide and planned to be a schoolteacher. He got into educational research, working for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in Melbourne, where he met Daphne.

John won a scholarship to Princeton University in the United States, where he did his PhD on Piaget and cognitive development of adolescents. This research area complemented his interest in quantitative studies and psychological testing. He has spent more than 50 years writing and publishing in the field and is currently co-authoring a book with the former President of the Psychometric Society, whom he met at Princeton in 1953.

Daphne studied English, history and psychology at the University of Sydney and did her Master of Education and PhD at the University of Queensland. It was at UQ in the late 1950s that she first encountered overseas students in Australia and began what was to become a continuing area of research into cross-cultural studies. She took part in a project by ANU researchers into the success of the Colombo Plan scholars who came to Australia from all over Asia and the Pacific. She began a long-term connection with Asia as she toured the region conducting research. She and John were among the first scholars to visit China when it was opened to Australians in the late 1970s and continue to have active links there.

Daphne and John both served as President of the Australian Psychological Society. Daphne was also elected Honorary Fellow of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology. John was elected to the Academy of Social Sciences and is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society.

The distinguished couple say it is difficult for early researchers to find funding, especially in their own fields of interest. They are hoping to foster interest in quantitative studies and cross-cultural research through their endowment.

"The social sciences generally are not well funded," Daphne said. "Cross-cultural research is seen as a bit esoteric, despite the fact that Australia has over 100 different ethnic and cultural groups."

John says that today's emphasis on economic rationalism has seen some fields of research (particularly those involving high-tech equipment) receive more funding than others. "Rather than see young people constantly knocked back on their research proposals, we wanted to do something to help."

The inaugural grants from the Keats Endowment Research Fund have been awarded to three projects in psychology with Dr Kerrie McCarthy, Dr Michael Allen, and Dr Mick Hunter and his PhD student Mr Sean Fardell as the principal researchers. The Keats hope that their endowment will encourage others to consider contributing to research in the social sciences.

Clearer communication for breast cancer patients

Guidelines for developing clear communication strategies between breast cancer patients and medical staff have been informed by research conducted at the University. The guidelines were produced by the National Breast Cancer Centre (NBCC) and Nicole Rankin researched the importance of clear communication as part of her PhD thesis through the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

"The survey results have been used in the development of psychosocial clinical practice guidelines for use by medical staff to help women to better understand and manage their breast cancer diagnosis and treatment," Nicole explained.

The study surveyed 140 women diagnosed with breast cancer in NSW and SA about issues such as access to information about their condition and the communication skills of doctors and other health care providers.

The research discovered that 94 percent of women considered it essential that their doctor provided opportunities for patients to ask questions about their diagnosis or treatment. Eighty seven percent of women said it was essential that their doctor ensure that information is understood, and that they are willing to repeat it.

Eight out of 10 women also rated information booklets, such as those produced by the NBCC, as a reliable and vital source of information.

"The project aimed to determine women's views of the draft NBCC 'Psychosocial clinical practice guidelines; providing information, support and counselling for women with breast cancer'," added Nicole.

Nicole's PhD thesis, titled 'Accessing and participating in psychosocial care: Australian women with breast cancer', received a scholarship grant from the NSW Cancer Council.
Prize to encourage urban design

Architecture graduate and Land and Environment Court Commissioner Kevin Hoffman has endowed a prize to encourage final year architecture students to learn more about urban design.

Having served in the Land and Environment Court for the past six years, Kevin has seen developments from all parts of New South Wales come across the bench.

"It gives you a perspective on the evolution of the urban fabric of our cities and towns," he explained. "The preservation of an acceptable quality of life with minimal environmental impact requires excellence in the formulation of town planning policies, design of infrastructure, the protection of ecosystems and the use and conservation of outdoor spaces. Excellence in the preparation of briefs and the design and construction of buildings and physical works in the townscape and landscape is of paramount importance to ensure ultimate success in these endeavours."

Kevin believes that architects can be of great benefit to society by widening their design skills to include whole precincts of cities and towns and that their abilities in three-dimensional design are needed beyond the individual project level.

Kevin graduated from his Newcastle architecture studies in 1966 and worked for a number of years in Canada and the United States. His interest in town planning and urban design continued on his return to Australia and in 1978 he was appointed Chief Town Planner of Wyong Shire. He was responsible for urban, rural and conservation planning during this high growth period for the area, which includes the southern parts of Lake Macquarie and the Tuggerah Lakes and their hinterlands.

In 1986, Kevin went into practice in Newcastle, becoming a Director of EJE Architects, in charge of their town planning and urban design section. He took up his commission with the Land and Environment Court in 1995.

Although Kevin studied at the University when it was a college of the University of New South Wales, he considers himself to be a graduate of the University of Newcastle and has maintained contact with the architecture faculty over the years.

"I wanted to give something back to the university," he said. "The provision of a prize in Urban Design in their final year project is one way of attracting the enthusiasm of graduate architects in the new directions society needs to take in order to manage its urban affairs in the future.

Appropriate recognition of the place each project should take in the urban fabric, and indeed redesign of the fabric when needed, can produce better urban design outcomes with each generation."

The inaugural Commissioner K.G. Hoffman Prize in Urban Design will be offered this year.

Helping to put social work on the Vietnamese agenda

A Newcastle academic took part in an international workshop in December aimed at having social work recognised as a profession in Vietnam.

Dr Jill Gibbons from the Department of Social Work attended the 'Social Work Training, Research and Practice in Viet Nam' workshop as one of 11 participants from western countries, including five Australians. The workshop, held in the Women's Studies Department of the Ho Chi Minh City Open University, included a presentation on the history of social work in Vietnam by Mme Nguyen Thi Oanh.

"Following 'reunification' in 1975, the government believed there was no need for social workers in a communist state," Jill explains. "Vietnamese social workers either left the country or obtained other work. With the opening up of the country in the last few years, these social workers are striving to re-establish an identity for the profession and see high quality university training reinstituted."

Jill said there is no social security program in Vietnam. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs offers limited support programs for people with disabilities, veterans and children. Other community services are provided by NGOs and various international children's organisations and church groups.

"One theme of the workshop was whether training should be short term and skills focused or general and located in universities," Jill said. "There was concern that university based education would be too theoretical."

Jill discussed the unique integrated and experience based model of social work education offered at the University and provided a number of leading participants with a paper describing the Newcastle model. She presented a number of social work texts (donated by Nelson/Thomson Learning) to the workshop organisers.

During the visit, Jill toured a residential program for adolescent girls who had been sexually assaulted and met with local Australian Education International (AEI) representatives. She was joined at the workshop (held in Ho Chi Minh City from December 17 to 20 last year) by Newcastle masters student, Chris Bate, who has been working for the Red Cross in Hanoi and is writing a minor thesis about social work in Vietnam.
Seeing the good in students

2000 Teacher of the Year Dr Siva Muthaly says his upbringing played a big part in his attitude to students. Siva, who is Malaysian by birth, says his parents were very welcoming and that their first response to meeting someone was always to ask, "how can I help you?"

Awarded the inaugural teaching award offered by the Newcastle University Postgraduate Student Association (NUPSA) in December last year, Siva says he didn’t plan to become a teacher.

"I did my undergraduate and Master’s degrees in the United States and was working as a group financial controller and accountant back in Malaysia, when a friend asked me if I’d like to try some part-time teaching," he said. "I enjoyed it so much, I decided that was what I wanted to do."

Siva came to Australia in 1990 and did his PhD on international marketing at Monash University while teaching and heading a group of marketing staff. He was Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Monash for eight years. He came to Newcastle at the beginning of 1999, teaching undergraduate classes at Callaghan before moving to the Graduate School of Business (GSB) in University House this year.

"Whenever I give a lecture or class, I try to put myself in the students’ shoes to see for myself if I would enjoy learning whatever I’m teaching. We are here for the students and if they weren’t there, we wouldn’t be either."

Siva feels a particular affinity for international students and was responsible for their pastoral care at Monash. Once again, he credits another for his benevolence, saying he remembers the influence of a professor in the US who was kind to him during his own tenure as an overseas student.

"He was so very nice to me and so when I think back to my own days as a student, I feel I’d like to give that back," Siva says. "I get a lot of satisfaction when a student I have taught comes back to me and says I was able to shed light on a difficult topic for them and help them relate it back to their own workplace."

Siva teaches classes in International Marketing, Marketing Research, and Marketing Concepts. He is involved in research into Internet marketing and multimedia marketing.

"Research is there to advance me in my career path," he said. "We have to update our knowledge for our students in order to keep up, especially in an area like Internet marketing."

Siva operates an open door policy with his students, who are free to seek his help at any time – day or night. He says his wife has supported his approach and has never stood in the way of him receiving calls and visits from his students at home or during the evening.

"I give the students my mobile number and if they apologise for calling at 10pm to ask for help on an assignment, I say that’s OK – this is the time that you guys are working. I do it to give something to others." Siva gives without expectation of reward. He failed to pursue a Monash nomination for a teaching award because it would have required him to produce a self-promotional submission. The NUPSA award is decided by students and Siva was unaware he had been nominated. The award came as a complete surprise.

"You have to put your ego aside," he said. "When students come up and thank me for teaching them, I thank them for giving me the opportunity to teach them. I learn from my students all the time."

While he enjoys teaching undergraduate courses, Siva finds it particularly gratifying teaching postgraduate students.

"They aren’t just here as a life phase between school and work as many undergraduate students are – they really want to study and are motivated to learn."

His rapport with his professional students has led to opportunities for the GSB, with more than one paving the way for corporate sponsored prizes for his courses. He sees the importance of fostering links with local corporations and organisations.

Siva has also initiated contact with two polytechnics in Singapore that has resulted in the University offering multi-discipline short courses in multi-media marketing to more than 60 students, with more courses planned.

Siva says he has been fortunate to have had two excellent supervisors at the University – Professor Janet Aisbett from the Department of Marketing, and Director of the GSB Professor Tony Travaglini. He says there are two kinds of teacher – those who pursue an authoritarian role and expect the worst of students, an approach which he despises, and those who see the good in students.

"If you have confidence in your students and you know they are doing well, you will respond to your expectations of them," he said. "I try to see the good in everyone and I want my students to be friends to me. I always tell them they are no different to us and that we are learning from them as well."

The Teacher of the Year Award will be offered annually by NUPSA, which has awarded a Supervisor of the Year award for a number of years. Dr John Jenkins of Leisure and Tourism Studies was 2000 Supervisor of the Year.
Painless pet sterilisation receives research funding

A project to develop a non-surgical method to sterilise domestic animals won National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding in the latest round announced at the end of last year.

The project, being undertaken by a team from the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, seeks to develop a reagent that will do away with intrusive sterilisation procedures for pets and replace them with a simple injection.

Principal researcher Professor John Aitken says the research will be undertaken in conjunction with Rutherford veterinary pharmaceutical company Jurox.

"People have tried unsuccessfully before to develop novel ways to sterilise domestic animals as there is a huge market for such a product," he said.

"There are new and powerful techniques being used in biotechnology to identify unique characteristics in the sample of cells. We plan to use these techniques to generate a pharmaceutical that will target and eliminate female germ cells, thereby inducing a state of sterility."

The three-year project was one of 13 University research proposals that won grants under the Strategic Partnerships with Industry for Research and Training (SPIRT), with funding totalling $1.15 million over the next two years. If successful, the research will also have implications in the control of pest species, with sterilisation providing a humane way of exterminating foxes, rats and other pests in Australia.

Professor Aitken was also successful in winning NHMRC funding for a similar project, this one targeting human fertility.

"Developing an understanding of the molecular mechanisms that regulate human sperm function is central to the clinical management of male infertility, attempts to develop novel forms of male contraception and strategies for introducing transgenes into the male germ line," he said.

Deective sperm function is the largest single defined cause of human infertility. Despite the prevalence of the condition, scientists have no idea how most cases of male infertility arise or which aspect of sperm biochemistry is defective.

"In this study we will focus on one of the most important attributes of sperm function - the capacity of these cells to recognise the egg," John said. "Once the biochemical basis of this fundamental recognition process is understood, it should pave the way for the development of clinical applications that target this signalling system."

The research, being conducted in collaboration with the Western Australian Institute of Medical Research in Perth, has implications for a range of disciplines including reproductive topology, occupational medicine, family planning, infertility and biotechnology.

Laughter could save lives

The sound of laughter filled the Newcastle Town Hall in January, with a conference on how to alleviate stress through a good giggle. The Stress Management Using Laughter conference explored laughter as a device to relieve stress and improve health.

Dr Jane Yip, President of the Laughter Club International (LCI) Newcastle Branch and research scientist in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, says that laughter is essential to well being and good health.

"Laughter really is an excellent stress release system which works not only psychologically, but throughout the body by releasing natural endorphins," she said.

Literature suggests that a hearty laugh can provide a massage for internal organs, improve your stamina, make you look younger, relieve pain and help high blood pressure and heart disease.

"Laughing is a skill that has been lost by many people," Jane said. "At the conference we were able to teach people how to laugh again using a technique of generating laughter without jokes."

Keynote speakers included Peter Salerno, a professional magician and public speaker who has assisted companies around the world de-stress their employees with laughter techniques and workshops.

Workshop topics included yogic laughter, the health benefits of laughter, developing a sense of humour, and laughter therapy in the workplace. The conference was presented by the LCI Newcastle branch.

Dr Jane Yip is currently researching laughter as a stress management tool in conjunction with the University's Psychology Department.
Business school initiates survey of training needs

A survey conducted by the University's School of Business at the Ourimbah Campus of the Central Coast Campuses, has identified the training needs of small business owners in the Wyong Shire.

The survey, which was distributed to more than 1,000 small businesses, was aimed at determining specific issues and problems, and identifying relevant training needs.

Responses from 301 small business owners turned up some interesting issues, some entirely specific to Wyong Shire and others relating to small business in general.

Funded by a New South Wales Department of Urban Affairs and Planning grant, made available through Wyong Shire Council, the survey was conducted with three objectives in mind:

- to determine the specific issues and problems faced by Wyong Shire small businesses, which may impede their growth and prosperity;
- to determine which of those issues and problems can be addressed with targeted, innovative training courses and to identify those courses; and
- to determine how best to deliver those training courses.

It focused on 12 key issues deemed to be particularly important to address in the short term through training courses made available through each of the three educational partners that comprise the Central Coast Campuses.

The survey findings revealed:

- the need for training to establish new business as a means of boosting employment levels as well as training for existing businesses;
- the fact that women were under-represented in small business;
- the fact that younger people were under-represented in small business;
- the need to focus on the services sector;
- the problem of effective time management;
- the ability to see market opportunities beyond the Central Coast;
- an unwillingness to employ staff;
- the importance of quality;
- the role of non-price competition;
- an interest in the Internet as a small business tool;
- the problem of interpreting financial reports; and
- the lack of written business plans and budgets.

Principal researcher and lecturer in the School of Business, David Cumineen, said targeted, innovative fee-paying training courses were identified to address these issues. The courses were aimed at improving small business profitability and growth with the ultimate objective to boost local employment in the Shire, and thereby reduce social stress.

David said that rather unexpectedly, the research revealed a need to focus on new business creation in the Shire, especially amongst women and younger people, as an important avenue for creating new jobs. He said it was hoped that the Central Coast Campuses could make a material contribution to the Shire's small business community in particular, and to its employment prospects in general.

"Small business plays a fundamental role in the economic and social fabric of our nation. This is particularly so in the Wyong Shire where almost all business are small," said David.

While Wyong Shire enjoys a high regional residential growth rate, it is hindered by relatively low levels of household income, low tertiary education rates, and relatively high levels of unemployment, especially amongst younger people. The particular issues and problems these demographics pose for Wyong Shire in general, and its small business community in particular, can be quite different from those faced by more prosperous regions of Australia.

“The aim of this research was to identify the particular issues and problems faced by Wyong Shire small business and address them with targeted, innovative educational courses, to be made available on a fee-paying basis,” David said. “It was hoped that by tackling these issues and problems with such courses, Wyong Shire small business could become more successful, thereby helping to boost local incomes and employ more people.”

The survey questionnaire was compiled from issues and problems raised by three focus groups which included representatives from local business organisations as well as small business owners themselves. As a result of the survey findings a comprehensive list of targeted courses and subject offerings available from the University, the Hunter Institute of Technology (TAFE) and the Community College has been compiled.
Breast cancer research funded

A University study aimed at understanding the behaviour of molecules that may be responsible for the spread of breast cancer through the body has received a grant in the latest round of National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding.

Dr Richard Bates, a research fellow in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences' School of Biomedical Sciences, says breast cancer is one of the most aggressive tumours of women.

"Despite great advances in detection and treatment of breast cancer, around 30 percent of women who present with the disease eventually relapse or die," he said. "Genetic studies have identified the genes that predispose women to breast cancer and there is hope that those identified through a family history of the disease will benefit from advances in gene therapy. These cases, however, only represent 10 percent of women diagnosed with the disease and the prognosis for the remainder is uncertain."

The research team, headed by Professor Gordon Burns, will concentrate on a recently identified protein molecule known as FAT, which one study showed was present in eight out of 11 breast cancers examined but is not found in normal breast tissue. It is hoped that further understanding of the biological functioning of markers for cell migration in breast cancer will allow them to be targeted in new treatments aimed at preventing the spread of the disease.

"This is a whole new area of study," Richard said. "When we understand the biology of these molecules and how they interact with cells, the ultimate goal is to develop novel therapies. If we are able to treat the primary tumour with chemotherapy and drugs, as well as blocking the ability of the cancer cells to spread, it will be an enormous advance in treatment of the disease."

The Newcastle research team is collaborating with another group working under Dr Andrew Boyd at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. The project is funded for three years.

Genetic link in inherited bowel cancer

Researchers at the University and John Hunter Hospital have discovered that a family history of bowel cancer may indicate that other types of cancers were also likely to be inherited.

Professor Rodney Scott, Head of the Discipline of Medical Genetics, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Director of Molecular and Cytogenetics, Hunter Area Pathology Service, headed the research team which identified the link between inherited bowel and breast cancer.

"The inherited predisposition to develop early age of onset bowel cancer is termed hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (or HNPCC), and initially it was thought that this was only associated with bowel cancer and cancer of the womb. There was debate as to which other cancers were also associated with this inherited predisposition," explained Rodney. "People with an inherited predisposition to bowel cancer have an 80-90 percent risk of developing the disease by the age of 70, compared with five percent of people without a family history. Initially, breast cancer wasn't thought to be associated with this inherited predisposition but our research indicated that breast cancer was linked to this cancer predisposition but only in a specific subset of families," he said.

"We now know that if the families are divided into groups based on their genetic profile the risk of breast cancer is very different."

The research means that it is now known which group of people in the HNPCC category should be targeted for breast cancer screening. People with a family history of the disease can be made aware of their increased risk and opt to undergo genetic testing and regular cancer screening tests to monitor their health status, with better health outcomes.

The two-year study, the largest of its kind in Australia, involved analysing data from 95 families and over 3500 individuals at the State Centre for Colorectal Cancer Genetic Testing, based at the Hunter Area Pathology Service within John Hunter Hospital. Members of this study from Newcastle are part of the Newcastle Bowel Cancer Research Collaborative.


Dr Richard Bates
A Newcastle researcher has won an Australian Research Council grant to continue his study of Papua New Guinean cargo cults that have allowed their followers to build their own religion, government, companies, and law and order.

Dr Andrew Lattas, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, says there is virtually no crime in the areas of New Britain where the cults are practised, counter to the general trend towards lawlessness in the former Australian protectorate.

"The cult members have taken Christian stories, particularly the notion of punishment in Christianity, to build a sense of themselves as morally inadequate and to internalise a sense of inferiority that they feel," he explained. "They make themselves the sinful ones and then do moral work to change themselves—they are building a church outside the established Catholic Church."

The cultists, some of whose ancestors were cannibals at the beginning of the 20th century, believe that Christ is a black man crucified by white men, who will return to them, bringing wealth and knowledge, when they have earned it.

"By creating moral communities, cult followers like those in the Pomio area have been able to resist the influences of corrupt government and Malaysian logging companies that have all but decimated parts of New Britain," Andrew said. "The cult followers have sought to reinvent their participation in modernity."

Andrew, who has been studying the cargo cult movements in Pomio, Bali and Kalai since 1986, says it is often said to be the Australians who crucified Christ with the Americans seen to be good white men. He believes that Australia, as the governing power of the Melanesian nation, is associated with the coercive aspects of white power. Many of those practising in the cults were jailed and persecuted by the colonial powers. Americans, on the other hand, brought vast amounts of 'cargo' to PNG during World War II.

"The people saw that black American soldiers wore the same uniforms as their white counterparts, whereas prior to the war Australian colonial authorities forced Papua New Guineans to wear lap-laps—they weren't even allowed to wear a shirt. Americans are seen as bringers of gifts and largesse."

Andrew says the cargo cults incorporate traditional myths, especially the worship of the dead, with modern Christianity so as to work out political and racial conflicts. While the self-regulating aspects of the cults is a benefit to the communities, which are poor and based on subsistence cultivation, there is a down side. Their belief that their dead ancestors will bring them riches on their own ground has prevented cult members from travelling away to towns and plantations for work and made them resistant to changes such as education that might benefit them.

Andrew, who became interested in PNG after completing his PhD at the University of Adelaide, released a book on the cults—Cultures of Secrecy—in 1998. His three-year grant, totalling $98,000, will allow him to carry out more fieldwork and publish the results.
Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke was guest of honour at a presentation dinner in Newcastle for the 4th Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School, held last month at the University.

The Summer School is an initiative of Engineering Aid, an organisation that provides engineers to assist disadvantaged communities. Mr Hawke is Patron of Engineering Aid. He joined Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway at the dinner to present certificates to participating students.

Twenty students from Years 9-12 across Australia attended the school, which encouraged ATSI students to consider tertiary studies in engineering. The week-long program included visits to places such as John Hunter Hospital, Coal and Allied, and Public Works.

Professor Adrian Page, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, said the school created a stimulating environment for ATSI students interested in engineering as a career option.

"The students learned about the contribution of engineers to the community, courses and careers available in engineering, and student life," he said. "They worked in laboratories, used computers, constructed models and met with engineers."

The founder of Engineering Aid, Jeff Dobell, says engineering needs to follow the lead of medicine in training Indigenous students who can then return to work in Aboriginal communities.

"There is a desperate need for Indigenous engineers," said Jeff. "If we look at the ratio of engineers to the population, we should have 2,500 Indigenous engineers in Australia. But we have just five. Obviously something needs to be done."

Mr Hawke, speaking at the Presentation Dinner held at the University Club on January 12, said that his government's initiative in establishing the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reflected his optimistic view of the Australian people's desire for reconciliation.

"The recent marches in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth in support of reconciliation justify my earlier optimism and pride in the sense of fairness among Australians," he said. "My optimism is further justified by this unique program, the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School."

Senator Ridgeway applauded the University for the Summer School initiative, saying he too shares the optimism of the Right Honourable Bob Hawke, in his views of the sense of fairness of Australian people.

"However more effort is required if we are to deal with the legacies of our past. Involving Aboriginal people in these kinds of professions will play a key part in implementing improvements and changes at the grassroots level."

All costs for the Summer School - including student travel and accommodation - were met by sponsors and donors, including the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation, Coal and Allied, ATSIC, DETYA, the NSW Department of Public Works and Services, and Macquarie Bank.

The School is Engineering Aid's principal program on behalf of Indigenous young Australians. Engineering Aid Scholarships are also offered to selected students entering Year 12 who attend the Summer School, and those who go on to study engineering. Wollotuka, the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre and the University's Faculty of Engineering are proud to be associated with Engineering Aid in this unique program.
Taking social work to the world

Head of the University's Department of Social Work in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Professor Mel Gray, is no stranger to intervening in social conflict. Before coming to the University in September 1999, she was Chair and Head of Department of Social Work at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa, where she encountered some extreme examples of social turmoil. Her involvement began during the 1970s when as a student, she helped raise funds for a community centre in Austerville, a disadvantaged community to the south of Durban. She later became Chair of the committee that administered this centre, which was forced to close at one stage when students became caught in crossfire between two opposing factions in the fight to end apartheid in the troubled republic.

Mel facilitated the development of a community project in Bhambayi, alongside the site where Mahatma Ghandi set up a printing press during his visit to South Africa, and taught for many years on a community development training program. The program was later incorporated into the university curriculum as a diploma course. She was at Natal for more than 20 years, including five as HOD and Professor of Social Work.

"It is my social development learnings that have given me the idea that we can develop social work education in parts of Asia," Mel said. "I think my international links are part of the reason why the University chose me for the job and it has been really positive and very enriching to share my contacts with my colleagues."

Mel has served on the Board of the International Association of Social Work.

A Newcastle engineering researcher is working to develop a new theory of the way that contaminants transport through consolidating soil that could improve the design of landfills and reduce their impact on the surrounding environment.

Associate Professor David Smith has won an Australian Research Council grant to develop a new geoenvironmental model aimed at enhancing our understanding of the behaviour of existing landfills and improving design methods for new ones.

"If you construct a landfill, it is known that it will release contaminants into the environment," David said. "But what amount and over what length of time are not known. If we can successfully model the contaminating lifespan of landfills, it will allow us to make authoritative statements about their environmental impact."

The three-year research project involves complex mathematical modelling that will bring together soil consolidation equations and contaminant transport equations — a difficult problem that has not been solved before.

David, a geotechnical engineer from the University's Department of Civil, Surveying and Environmental Engineering, did his undergraduate degree and his PhD at the University of Sydney before coming to Newcastle in 1991. He published a paper on his theory in the International Journal for Numerical and Analytical Methods in Geomechanics last year.

"Our work to date has shown that contaminants transport through landfills more quickly than current theory predicts," he said. "The theory also suggests that old landfills built on existing wetlands could be having less impact on the environment than previously thought."

David's research also raises the possibility of novel landfill designs e.g. a passive hydraulic trap method, using convective transport due to consolidation of soils to oppose contaminant transport, thereby reducing environmental impact.

This year will be busy for David, who is on the organising committee for the 2nd Australian and New Zealand Conference on Environmental Geomechanics, to be held at Newcastle Town Hall from November 28 to 30. International experts who will speak at the conference include Professor Kerry Rowe from Queen's University in Canada, and Professor Craig Benson from the University of Wisconsin in the United States. The conference is aimed at improving the technical expertise of environmental professionals.

David will work with PhD students Glen Peters and Tim Lewis on the contaminant research project, which will also experimentally verify the new theory.
Schools of Social Work (IASSW) since 1996 and has developed a wide international network. She believes that Newcastle, with its experimental approach to social work education and with its staff ready to expand their research capacity, is poised on the brink of some exciting developments.

"When I came to Newcastle, I discovered a unique model of social work education that a talented and innovative team of people have developed over a period of 10 years," she said. "We have a model that is transportable and can be put to good use in contexts where social work education programs are just beginning — and there are plenty of these contexts in Asia."

Mel says that recent visits by social work staff to Vietnam have highlighted the opportunities available there. She is also interested in pursuing exchanges for staff and students suggested by international colleagues in Scandinavia, Hong Kong and North America. Undergraduate students have also benefited from Mel's international contacts since she began an email discussion list at the beginning of last year that has put students in touch with prominent social work researchers from around the world.

Her status as an Honorary Research Professor with the University of Natal has seen Mel pursue her involvement in the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP), a multi-disciplinary intervention research project aimed at developing a model for crime prevention in schools. The project is a model that can be used for other issues affecting youth such as AIDS and drug abuse, giving it relevance to programs targeting children and young people in Australian schools.

"The model incorporates a range of interventions at various levels — individual learners, teachers, school management, parents, and policy makers. I was invited to give a presentation to the NSW Attorney-General's Department on this project."

Mel also delivered a seminar on a Moral Education project being run as part of CRISP to the University's Department of Philosophy. She hopes to continue interdisciplinary work and is currently looking at the possibilities for collaborating with staff from psychology and psychiatry on an intervention strategy for repeat young offenders.

One role that Mel relishes as Head of Department is that of mentoring staff. She benefited from the influence of her own mentor, Howard Goldstein, who was Professor Emeritus at Case-Western Reserve University and Editor of Families in Society journal.

"He enlarged my mind and my circle of influence, introducing me to many people over the 10 years of our friendship."

Professor Goldstein died last year but was able to include Newcastle's experience-based model as a case example in his last book, Experiential Learning: A foundation for social work education and practice.

"I have been really lucky to walk into the social work department at Newcastle at a time when it is ready to take advantage of opportunities internationally," Mel said. "I am enjoying helping my colleagues to grow and broaden their experience. By concentrating on raising our research profile and developing our experiential social work courses, we are doing things that will not only be good for the department but will fit in with the University's strategic aims."

**Linking viruses to asthma**

Newcastle researchers have won a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant to study how viruses cause asthma attacks.

Chief Investigator in the study, Dr Peter Gibson, who is a Conjoint Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, says that viruses cause the attacks in more than 80 percent of adults and children presenting to hospital with asthma.

"Asthma is a major health problem in Australia and recent studies have shown that increasing numbers of all ages are developing the condition," he said. "Viruses can cause severe attacks of asthma even when asthma appears controlled on medication."

Peter says it is unknown what viruses are causing hospitalisation with asthma in Australia.

"We know what the viruses are in the Northern Hemisphere, but we are not sure what they are here," he said. "It has important treatment implications to know whether it is a common cold virus or bronchiolitis (RCSV) virus that is causing the problem."

It is also not known what mechanism viruses trigger in the body that can cause controlled asthma to suddenly become unstable.

"Most asthma is due to allergies bewildering the immune system into producing eosinophils, which cause inflammation in the airways." Peter said. "Normal asthma preventers are good at getting rid of eosinophils but we think that viruses trigger a different mechanism."

The study will investigate how certain viruses have on the lungs of people with asthma by measuring cells and chemicals that are present in sputum.

"Every year there are more than 300 admissions to John Hunter Hospital per 100,000 head of population in the Hunter. Many more people would visit their GP with asthma symptoms that were not severe enough to require hospitalisation. It is hoped the information gathered through the study will help researchers to design better treatment for those patients whose asthma has been triggered by a virus."

"Peter, who is a Senior Staff Specialist at the John Hunter's Respiratory Medicine unit, will collaborate with researchers from other disciplines, including paediatrics, virology, and immunology and infectious diseases, in the three-year study."

"This study is unique in the world, but particularly in Australia, because we are planning to look at children as well as adults," he said. "Newcastle has close collaboration between the two areas."

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Guidelines for planning events

The following checklist is designed to be a guide to planning your event, seminar or conference. It is not a complete step-by-step guide, as each event will require a different set of considerations. Ideally, you should work at least three months in advance, longer for major conferences involving overseas speakers and guests. Marketing and Media Services can assist you with your preparations.

- Define your target market
- Who are you trying to reach?
- What are your objectives?
- What image do you wish to project?
- Determine your expected attendance.
- Set a budget and create an accounting system. Consider a registration fee.
- Create a schedule for tasks so that everyone involved works to the same deadlines. Be sure to include every task in your schedule and set up reminders.
- Design a logo (if needed) and consider a promotional campaign.
- Create a draft program.
- Check the availability of key speakers you would like to attend. Book transport if necessary and confirm their requirements.
- Confirm a date and set a venue. Confirm that it meets all of your needs (guest accommodation, parking, presentation facilities – such as microphones, lecterns, projectors, data projectors). Consider if you need an "event theme" to decorate and stage any part of the event (i.e. a presentation dinner or ball).
- Confirm speakers and organise any entertainment.
- Use publicity effectively by carefully considering your promotional and printing needs.
- Advertising/media releases/media kits/direct mail campaign/promotional flyers and information leaflets/invitations/tickets/place cards/name badges/programs/certificates and awards/promotional clothing, satchels, conference kits, gifts.
- Meet with your publicity providers to ensure adequate time for these tasks to be completed and for the material to be disseminated. Consider including on your written documentation, requirements such as special dietary needs and access for disabled or visually impaired people.
- Book a photographer (if required). Also consider other personnel, such as security staff, a media liaison/public relations person to handle media at the event if you are pursuing media coverage, and an MC.
- If organising a conference, you will need someone to staff an area to act as a message centre and general information desk. Consider a fax machine, phone, modem, photocopier, and a mobile phone.
- If your conference has an exhibition attached, you will need to organise moving in and out times, and ensure there are sufficient power and modern connections for electronic exhibits.
- Allocate sufficient staff to ensure the event runs smoothly.
- Establish clear lines of authority during the event so that all staff are aware of the reporting lines and the delegation of authority.
- Design an evaluation program
  - Did you meet your objectives?
  - Did you run to budget?
  - Could your event be improved? How?

Were you happy with the venue?
Were there any complaints?
Deal with them promptly.
- Is there any follow-up you need to do?

Letters of thanks to sponsors
A mail out to delegates and speakers highlighting your next event – spark their interest in future events while they still recall your hospitality and professionalism.

Marketing and Media Services can assist with marketing and promotional campaigns, design and production of printed materials, advertising, market research, media liaison and public relations, editorial services, direct mail, copywriting and more.

Contacts:
Dr Fran Flavel, Director, ext 6444 email: milavell@alinga
Mr Michael Coughlan, Deputy Director, ext 6458 email: promedia@alinga
Ms Dianne Taylor, Advertising Coordinator, ext 8641 email: print@alinga
Ms Jacky Kitcher, Promotional Materials Manager, ext 5394 email: jackyk@alinga

Information Days for prospective students

The University opened its doors to prospective undergraduate students for two days in January, to help those wishing to discuss their course options now that HSC and UAI results have been released.

Representatives from all faculties offered advice on courses, changes of preference and details of subjects, while members of the Prospective Students Unit were also on hand to answer enquiries.

The Student Advisory Centre at the Central Coast Campus, Ourimbah, also opened for two days to answer questions about undergraduate courses.

Callaghan’s Information Days were held on January 3 and 4 and the Central Coast Campus Student Advisory Centre was open on January 4 and 5.

Christopher Hunt and his mother Narelle seek advice about architecture courses at the HSC Information Day at Callaghan.
Nursing program wins national award

A staff training program developed by residential aged care provider Baptist Community Services in conjunction with the Faculty of Nursing, has won a national Federal Government award for excellence in staff training.

The Excellence in Staff Development in Residential Aged Care Award was presented to Baptist Community Services by the Federal Minister for Aged Care, Bronwyn Bishop, at the inaugural Minister's Awards for Excellence in Aged Care.

"This Award reinforces our belief that we had developed, in conjunction with Baptist Community Services, a staff training program that was responsive to the further education needs of staff and provided them with educational strategies suitable for their work environment," explained Professor Margaret McMillan, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing.

The Faculty's Research Unit, in an industry partnership with Baptist Community Services (BCS) developed the integrated training and development program for BCS staff, which operates in residential aged care facilities across NSW and the ACT, the latest at Warabrook.

Mrs June Heinrich, BCS Chief Executive Officer, commended the partnership with the University.

"The partnership was instrumental in winning this award. We are in a unique relationship with the University which assists BCS present a seamless development program to all levels of our staff."

The program of continuing professional education for nursing and non-nursing staff developed by the Research Unit is being considered as a possible industry benchmark standard by the Minister's Awards panel. The Research Unit is headed by Professor Irene Stein.

Convocation Annual Award Dinner

The 2000 Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence has been awarded to Dr Chris Rawlings and the 2000 Newton-John Award for Innovation has been awarded to Mrs Helene O'Neill.

The awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Dinner to be held on Friday 30th March 2001 at 7.00pm in the Brennan Room.

For tickets please contact: Reah Kay, ext 6459 or email convocation@newcastle.edu.au

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Centralised Research Centre

The former BHP refractories facility at the corner of Gavey and Frith Streets, Mayfield (commonly known as Newbold) is now owned by the University. This acquisition is to provide a centralised facility for synergistic research and to foster networking opportunities. It is close to the University's Callaghan Campus and the proposed CSIRO research centre in Newcastle.

The existing administration building is approximately 1066m² and has had services upgraded to accommodate Dr Allyson Holbrook, Director of the Centre for Study of Research and Training Impact (SORTI) and her team. The existing laboratory block of 248m² requires extensive refurbishment prior to occupation.

Expressions of interest are invited from research groups. If you require additional information please contact the University's Space Management Officer Ms Sandra Jones on 6665.

Smart look uniform

The University's new Uniform Committee has selected Neat N' Trim as the University's uniform suppliers for 2001.

Staff will be able to view the range of styles and colours available at a fashion parade that will include men's and women's wear. Stay tuned for dates and venues.

Large order dates will be organised twice a year. However, orders without the payroll deduction option can be made directly through Neat N' Trim located at 95 Hunter Street, Newcastle.

Energy monitoring

University Energy Manager David Alexander says there are now 30 electricity meters monitoring half hourly consumption of buildings on Callaghan Campus.

"Previously only total campus energy usage was monitored by the supply authority and accounts sent monthly," David said. "Now real time energy consumption can be monitored and corrective action taken to reduce waste."

The monitoring system provides data storage for later review and indicates high consumption out of normal working hours to indicate problems with systems or if equipment is operating when it should not be. The program includes an energy footprint for individual buildings to provide Divisional Heads with critical information on energy consumption and associated cost. Managers will be better equipped to minimise energy wastage for a sustainable future.

Teaching development grant

Associate Professor Geoffrey Evans is Project Director for a recently acquired teaching grant from the University for "Integrated Learning Opportunity for Sustainability".

This project will pilot an interdisciplinary approach to the delivery of educational programs in the area of sustainability, through the coordinated use of campus-based case studies. In particular, the project will establish a formal framework within the University, provide an open-forum/discussion website and provide a unique learning experience. It should stimulate interdisciplinary activities and provide graduates with skills that will be increasingly in demand.

Currently, initial work is underway to develop a website for this project and study the University's existing worn farm to identify sustainability teaching modules.

Drama students gain industry support

New avenues in performance and drama will be available to drama students with the signing of an industry agreement between the Australian National Playwrights Centre and the University.

The industry partnership will offer Department of Drama students the chance to attend masterclasses in dramaturgy (script analysis and development), workshops on the craft of acting and scriptwriting with practical industry guidance.

Professor Victor Emeljanov, Head of the Department of Drama said the partnership with the Australian National Playwrights Centre will allow students to benefit from contact with skilled playwrights.

"We have a lot of talented writers in this region and this will enable them to have a direct contact with the industry," he said. "As well, the partnership will allow the department to have an ongoing relationship with the National Playwrights' Conference held annually in Canberra. It will undoubtedly augment our national profile in the discipline," Victor said.

The industry partnership was signed on January 15. The Australian National Playwrights Centre was represented by May-Brit Akerholt (Artistic Director), Timothy Daly (Playwright), plus two other representatives.

Research grant success

Twenty-four proposals by University researchers were successful in winning $3.14 million worth of prestigious and highly competitive ARC Large Grants over the period 2001 to 2003.

Twelve were awarded to the Faculty of Engineering, with Science and Mathematics winning six and Arts and Social Science one. The University's success rate of 26 percent for Large Grants was above the national average. It also succeeded in attracting a prestigious ABC Senior Research Fellowship and three grants in the Research Infrastructure and Equipment and Facilities (RIEF) Scheme totalling $944,500. In addition, the University will benefit from successful RIEF funding for collaborative proposals with other universities to the value of $1.14 million.
The poetics of death

A collection of essays and recollections of the enigmatic Chinese poet Gu Cheng, whose literary achievements are often overshadowed by the murder/suicide of he and his wife in New Zealand in 1993, has been compiled by a lecturer from the University's Department of Modern Languages.


Gu Cheng, born the son of poet and writer Gu Gong in Beijing in 1956, is known as one of the most important Chinese poets of the twentieth century. One of the menglong (misty) poets, his charisma and oratory attracted enthusiastic audiences all over China in the early 1990s. His role as a figurehead of the democracy movement in China attracted the attention of Western scholars and he became popular in Germany and Europe.

Li Xia says in an introduction to the book that Gu Cheng's untimely death, and that of other Chinese poets in the 1990s, should be viewed in the context of a general cultural malaise and growing disillusionment with the prospect of a new aesthetic consciousness in Chinese society. The book consists of three sections and an extensive appendix.

"Each part of the study focuses on a particular aspect in a comprehensive portrait of the poet as a paradigm of a generation of writers at the crossroads of Chinese history and culture, past and future," she says.

Li Xia took 18 months to compile the book, which includes contributions from the poet's father Gu Gong, eminent scholars from Germany, Sweden and mainland China, and friends and acquaintances of Gu Cheng and his wife Xie Ye.

Li Xia says the fragmentation of the recollections in her book reflects the "feverishness and anxiety" of Gu Cheng's life and his failure to find peace in the "natural beauty and isolation" of New Zealand's Waiheke Island, where he axed Xie Ye to death before taking his own life.

*The Poetics of Death* is part of the prestigious scholarly series of Chinese Studies published by Edwin Mellen Press.

Boozers and bouncers study

Researchers from the University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology will interview local men in a research study that seeks to understand the link between public intoxication and violence.

Project leader and Senior Lecturer Dr Stephen Tomsen says that violence and episodes of anti-social behaviour remain significant crime, health and social problems despite laws and policies designed to eradicate them.

"This violence and disorder has deleterious effects on public health, adds to the public and private costs of crime and security, and undermines the safe enjoyment of leisure by non-violent citizens," he said.

With young men figuring prominently as offenders in drinking-related incidents, the research will be based on a qualitative study of the links between masculinity, violence and disorder in the Newcastle/Hunter region.

"Data will be drawn from interviews conducted with 25-30 young men, either alone or in group situations," Stephen said. "The interviewees will comprise a non-random sample of young men who drink regularly in local venues, and a smaller number of male security officers and venue staff employed in a 'bouncer' role."

Participants in the study will be asked questions concerning aspects of male identity, drinking histories and styles, and the experience of drinking and intoxication (especially in groups). They will also be questioned about perceptions of threat in public drinking contexts, the contrast between violent and non-violent scenarios, and their own interpretation of the causes and patterns of aggressive and violent encounters.

"While there is substantial local research on the health consequences of substance abuse, there is a remarkable paucity of criminological research on violence and disorder in Newcastle generally," Stephen said. "As a result, there has been no specific focus on these matters as linked with drinking, despite ongoing political, police and media insistence on the widespread nature of this problem."

The analysis of interview material will be complemented by the inclusion of statistics derived from Newcastle/Hunter police records of assaults and disorder related to public drinking. The impact of drinker education campaigns and the effects of server-intervention strategies and staff anti-violence training will be explored.

The study, entitled *Boozers and Bouncers: Masculinity and Public Drinking Violence in Newcastle and the Hunter,* is funded by the Drug Programs Bureau of NSW Health and the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney-General's Department. It is expected to take 12 months to complete. Stephen will discuss the study when he delivers an address on gender and crime at the Australian Institute of Criminology's 4th National Outlook Symposium on Crime in Australia, to be held in Canberra in June.
For sale
Lounge suite – three piece floral lounge – good condition $250 ono, phone #971 1061.
For sale by tender 11/00
The following items are available for sale by tender.

Item 1: 'CMII' document safe, approx 1170 high x 710 wide x 460 deep.

Item 2: 'CHUBB' data security safe, approx 1820 high x 750 wide.

Sales are being offered in 'as is - where is' condition and the University reserves the right to reject any or all tenders. Items can be inspected weekdays from 8.00am to 4.00pm at Paul Harrison Transport Depot, 6 Nelson Road, Cardiff.

For sale by tender 12/00
The following items are available for sale by tender.

Item 1: Photocopier: Konica Model 3135 - Good working condition Serial Number 25KNO1373, Asset No. 1187316-00

Item 2: Audio Player/Recorder - Revox, 877 Mk II - reel-to-reel 1/4 inch

Item 3: Camera - film - Locam 11-16mm hi-speed - Model 51 - 500fps

Item 4: Edit controller system - Sony BV 910 - controller/disk drive

Item 5: Microwave - Panasonic - 800W

Item 6: Power conditioner - 240V - Sola 200 series - 10A output

Item 7: Slide projector - Bell & Howell 830 - camatite

Item 8: Slide projector - Bell & Howell 850 - camatite

Item 9: Slide projector - Kodak 2050AV

Item 10: Carousel - Kodak

Item 11: Carousel - Kodak

Item 12: Carousel - Kodak

Item 13: Carousel - Kodak

Item 14: Carousel - Kodak

Item 15: Timecode generator/analyser - ADX

Item 16: Video - equipment rack - full-size

Item 17: Video - equipment rack - full-size

Item 18: Video - Sony edit desk console

Item 19: Vision mixer/effects generator - Sony DSR800 - CPU & desk

For further information please contact Lorraine Alley ext 5202

The goods are sold in 'as is' condition and the University reserves the right to reject any or all tenders. Tenders close on Friday, 23rd February, 2001 at 11.30am and should be forwarded to: The Tender Box, Supply Section, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan 2308. Please mark tender number (eg: “TENDER 12/00”) clearly on the sealed envelope.

For rent
Newcastle – boutique accommodation for overseas visitors. Top class, spacious, fully furnished apartments at half the cost of a hotel room. Situated in the heart of the city, Egmont House on Church Street boasts either harbour or garden views with all the facilities you’d expect from top class accommodation: BD/STD direct dial telephone; walk to CBD, tourist and entertainment venues; full kitchen facilities including cutlery, linen, etc; internal laundry, and direct bus route to the University. For further information contact Garry on 4928 2955 or mobile 0412 006 006.

Merewether – unfurnished townhouse ($300 per week). Only a short stroll to the beach, this neat near new three bedroom townhouse has separate lounge and dining, sunroom, ensuite/w/in main bedroom and linen. Internal access via spacious garage, 3 wc's, storage, d/w and floor boards on lower level. Balconies at front and rear with well groomed enclosed courtyards and paved area.

Optional lawn maintenance included and can be left furnished.

Bright, airy, spacious and modern. Call Sam Martin at the Forum on ext 7009

Lake Macquarie – waterfront, private setting, breathtaking views. Three bedroom brick, spacious living area, double garage; garden maintained by owner. Short walk to bus, five minutes to Toronto by car. Rent negotiable for short or long term stay. Phone John ext 6603 or email: john.schiller@newcastle.edu.au.

House-sitter
Lecturer based in Alice Springs requiring injection of coastal air on study leave period – available for house minding/renting August 15th 2001 to Jan 15th 2002. Would prefer house in quiet area, fully fenced yard for two well behaved dogs, fully or partly furnished, gardens/pool will be well cared for. Kerry Taylor, email: kerry.taylor@nsw.gov.au.

Farewell
A farewell lunch for David Dodtwill, in honour of his 38 years service to the University will be held on 16 Feb at 12.30pm in the Brennan Room, Shortland Union. Cost $28. Bookings must be made to John Wright, Dept of Philosophy on 3185 or jwright@mailnewcastle.edu.au.

Congratulations to contract cleaning staff
Berkeley Challenge, the University’s cleaning contractor, has recently won a prestigious industry award at this year’s Australian Building Service Industry’s Golden Service Awards. The awards recognize excellence in quality and service provided by contractors in a range of industry categories, one of which is education establishments. The University’s internal feedback mechanism, in particular the Physical Environment Surveys, have always indicated a high degree of satisfaction as expressed by students and staff for the standard of cleaning across the campus.

The independent and external award to Berkeley Challenge is further evidence of the great job that the company, Meryl Brent (the on-site Supervisor) and all of the cleaning staff do for the University.

The University congratulates Meryl and her staff on winning an industry 2000 Golden Services Award.

Travel related reimbursement
University staff are advised that the Payments Section is unable to process requests for travel related reimbursement where supporting documentation (receipt or invoice) is not provided. Generally these are small amounts - often under $50.

The policy for dealing with these claims will be as follows.

Where no receipt or invoice is provided with Claim for Travel Expenses as substantiation of travel related expenditure the traveller is to provide a detailed justification addressing the following points:

1) Purpose of expenditure (to simply state “breakfast” is insufficient – traveller should include reasons why breakfast was not taken at the hotel for example).

2) Where expenditure was incurred (ie: name and brief address of establishment).

3) Why it was not possible to obtain a receipt. (To state “not offered” is insufficient – traveller should ask - lost or misplaced is also unacceptable).

Travellers submitting unsupported claims are to be contacted by phone by a member of Payments staff and advised of the above requirements. Their claim can be partially paid for those expenses for which supporting documentation is provided – the balance to be withheld pending receipt of above information which should be accompanied by a Travel Claim to enable immediate processing.

For further information contact Brian Swetnam, Assistant Manager - Payments, ext 5146

Vice-Chancellor’s Awards for General Staff Excellence
Staff are invited to attend the presentation ceremony for the Vice-Chancellor’s Awards for General Staff Excellence to be held in the Great Hall at 12.30pm on March 8.
Health, Safety and Development

Sharing common problems

There are 38 universities, including Newcastle, in the membership of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC). These institutions are concerned with a total of nearly 700,000 enrolled students and 80,000 staff, all working in similar environments and facing similar challenges. It comes as no surprise then that they have realised the benefits of sharing information, particularly when resources are stretched. Whilst a number of university associations have been created with this goal in mind, the Australasian Universities Safety Association (AUSA) exists to promote exchange of information on health and safety between safety professionals working in universities and allied industries, and to encourage uniform approaches to common safety problems. In addition to AUSA, other groups representing staff and students also consider health and safety issues that are common to the tertiary education sector (for example, http://www.cpsu.org.au/ohs/index.html and http://www.nteu.org.au/OHS/ohs.html).

The University has been actively involved in the NSW branch of AUSA over the last twelve months, hosting a meeting last November. The previous year has seen discussion about a range of topics, including:
- contractor and student safety;
- electrical appliance and pressure vessel safety;
- medical surveillance;
- hazardous substances;
- safety management systems and
- upcoming legislation, such as the OH&S Regulation 2001.

For a given issue, it is often the case that one or two members of the group have been more successful in dealing with it than the rest. For example, at the November meeting Dr Stephanie Brookman, from the University Health Service, spoke about our pre-employment medical procedures. The ensuing discussion indicated that we have much to contribute on this issue. By comparing our approaches for each topic, we can make improvements to the way we deal with all of the health and safety issues universities face.

The second draft of OH&S Regulation 2001 is available at http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au. This regulation, once final amendments have been made, will accompany the proclamation of the OH&S Act 2000 during this year. The regulation reinforces a risk management approach in dealing with all workplace hazards, places a stronger emphasis on workplace consultation, and introduces the national model legislation for using plant and equipment into NSW.

Another important topic for discussion at the NSW branch meetings has been the organisation of the biennial universities' AVCC OH&S Conference. This conference — with the theme OH&S integration in research and higher education, will be held over 4-6 July 2001 at the University of Sydney. It provides those with an interest in health and safety in the tertiary education sector with an opportunity to learn more about dealing with issues that arise in university activities. The University is a member of the conference organising group and is responsible for establishing a program that considers topics such as due diligence, OH&S in research, emergency procedures and applied risk management. Further information about the conference program can be found at http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ohs/ausa/welcome.html or by contacting Health, Safety and Development.

Universities must respond to an external environment undergoing continuous and rapid change. Sharing our health and safety experiences helps us anticipate and respond to the challenges of this operating environment.

National Library of Australia
1901 – 2001

The National Library in Canberra will celebrate its 100th anniversary this year with a series of exhibitions including Cook & Omai: The Cult of the South Seas (February 14 – May 30, Belonging: A Century Celebrated (August 22 – November 18), and Treasures from the World's Great Libraries (from December 7). For further details of planned events visit the website at www.nla.gov.au.

January 26 to March 25
Salvatore Zofrea
Appassionata One Hundred Woodcuts at Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Laman Street, Newcastle.
February 3 to April 1
John Brack Inside and Out National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition at Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Laman Street, Newcastle.

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Newcastle wins national mountain bike championships

A team of students from the University's Mountain biking Club won first place at the Australian University Extreme Sports Championships, held in Eildon in Victoria in December.

The seven riders competed in six categories over the four-day competition, battling with 40-degree heat as well as stiff competition to come out victors. More than 50 competitors from universities in NSW, Victoria, the ACT and South Australia took part in the mountain biking section of the games, held at the foot of the Snowy Mountains above Eildon.

Team Captain Grant Webber, who is studying towards his PhD in chemistry, said that Melbourne's RMIT had hosted the championships. "RMIT had collaborated with the local council to provide a track with more than 200 metres of jumps and obstacles," he said. "We stayed in the local camping ground and the nights were cold despite the 40 degree heat during the day."

Grant, who has only been competing on mountain bikes for a year, said the win was a team effort with Newcastle fielding one of the largest teams of the competition. The two women team members, Helen Green and Belinda Walsh, played a big part in the win, scoring some outstanding individual performances in the female competition. Leif Arnebark and Grant did well in the Criterion and Downhill events.

"We're a relatively young and small club of the Sports Union and we were stoked to be able to win the trophy," Grant said.

The Faculty of Science and Mathematics has recorded a 20 percent increase in first preference applications to study at the University. Dean, Professor David Finlay, attributes the increase in demand to a strong range of degree courses on offer and innovative teaching methods.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering has won a philanthropic grant of over $100,000 worth of communications measurement and analysis equipment from US equipment manufacturer Agilent. The equipment will be used in student laboratory activities in the Telecommunications Engineering degree program.

Master of Business Administration graduate Kevin Fernandez, who is Information Services Manager at Newcastle City Council, was recently named Young Manager of the Year in the Excellence Awards of the Institute of Municipal Management NSW. Kevin says his MBA studies through the Graduate School of Business have been extremely beneficial to his career.

Two students from the School of Fine Art won awards for their work at the end of last year. Luke Carter had a work selected in the national Canson Student Print Prize and Isabella Pluta won the Photomedia 4D section of the National Tertiary Art Prize for last year. Both students were in the third year of their Bachelor of Fine Art courses.

Top to bottom:
- Friendly competitors: (from left) Belinda and Helen shared the top cross country placings with two Victorian cyclists.
- The winning team celebrate: (from left) Grant Webber, Helen Green, Leif Arnebark, Belinda Walsh, Andrew Dussel, Matt Le Comans.
- Victory - the team gather after surviving the gruelling downhill course: (from left) Helen, Grant, Belinda, Andrew, Matt and Brad.
This is the second NUSTAR News - an occasional newsletter to bring you up to date with the latest information on the University’s new student information system, NUSTAR - Newcastle University Student Administration Records.

**2001 - A Long Adventurous Journey!**

NUSTAR will come on-line during the 2001 academic year, which will make for an interesting odyssey for us all. Not only will we be dealing with a new, complex student system, we will also be confronted by transition issues as we move from one system to another. We hope the ride won’t be too bumpy!

There will be lots of issues to contend with - changes in terminology; system navigation; changes in fee structures; the move towards more on-line delivery of service; the processing of Semester 1 examination results in NUSTAR, the impact of the introduction of trimesters and many others. On top of all that, it is not intended to run both NUSS and NUSTAR in parallel so that means there will be a quick changeover between the systems and a steep learning curve for everyone.

So in a nutshell, your help and patience will be needed throughout the coming year to ensure that the journey isn’t unnecessarily long or adventurous!

* A typical NUSTAR panel
1. Menu
2. Tool Bar
3. Panel Tabs
4. Effective Dated Records
5. Drop Down Lists
6. Slide bars for multiple records
Data Conversion and Interfaces: a Major Undertaking

NUSTAR is a complex system and there are significant tasks to be undertaken in the months leading up to go live.

There are over 100,000 student records on NUSS, which are to be brought across to NUSTAR. When you consider that these records go back 30 years and contain many inconsistencies, it will be a significant challenge to successfully convert all of the data.

In the medium term, it is intended that NUSTAR will have the capacity to deal with many of the functions of a number of other systems currently in use at the University. However, there will still be a need to have an ongoing interface between NUSTAR and a number of systems and a short term interface for others. Required NUSTAR interfaces will include Finance 1, student ID card system, library information system, examinations timetable system, external mail house systems, Universities’ Admissions Centre, graduation database system and others. As you can imagine, this is a considerable undertaking.

Prototype Demonstrations and Training Program

Approximately 400 staff attended the NUSTAR prototype demonstrations held in October 2000, which provided staff with an opportunity to have an introductory look at the system first hand. The discussions that took place at the demonstrations coupled with follow-up written evaluations, enabled staff to identify where the implementation of NUSTAR might impact on their work. The issues raised are now being addressed by the Action Groups, established after the prototype demonstrations (see below).

Staff were not expected to remember all the detail demonstrated during the prototype sessions. The NUSTAR training program proper will begin in March 2001 and will be available to all staff who will use the system – this is potentially most staff at the University. The program will consist of a hands-on introductory session and specialised sessions for particular groups of staff, eg Faculty Office staff will be trained on the specific aspects of the system as they relate to their work. More details will be available shortly.

NUSTAR Academic Advisory Group

NUSTAR will impact upon the academic work of Faculties, Schools and Departments and therefore a NUSTAR Academic Advisory Group has been established to guide the Project Team in the academic aspects of the system. It is chaired by Professor Janet Aisbett, Deputy President of Academic Senate and includes a member from each Faculty, the Enabling Programs Unit and the Learning Development Program. The Group identifies academic impacts and opportunities arising from the NUSTAR implementation. It also formulates responses and seeks widespread input from academic staff on potential changes in policy and procedures that the implementation might necessitate.

Action Groups

A number of Action Groups have also been established following the prototype demonstrations. The purpose of the Groups is to:

- Provide a forum to identify impacts of NUSTAR on business policies and procedures and establish what changes will be necessary and the consequences.
- Provide a communication mechanism with key groups of stakeholders regarding the progress of the project.
- Provide a mechanism to contribute to the process of transferring ownership for the system from the project team to staff.

The Action Groups each have a functional area of NUSTAR as their primary focus, ie Admissions, Enrolments, Faculty Office, Examinations and Student Financials. They comprise representatives from diverse areas of the University and include academic representation and general Departmental/School staff.
Some of the Issues under Discussion

- Multi-term sequences will be introduced in 2001 to replace full year NUSS subjects. Each pair of multi-term sequences will have a Part A and B. Part A will be the equivalent of the first semester of the full year subject and Part B will be the second semester component. The NUSTAR Academic Advisory Group has been considering the management and grading of multi-term sequence courses. It has suggested that when it comes to grading, only the administrative codes NA (Not Applicable) and WW (Withdrawn Without Penalty) should apply to Part A. The final grade for the sequence would appear against Part B and the combined credit point value of Parts A and B would be added to the student's completed credit point total. The Group is also examining the relationship between NUSTAR and the Curriculum Tracking System in an effort to make the systems complementary and avoid duplication.

- The Faculty Office Action Group is reviewing the NUSTAR transcript of academic record. In assessing the appropriate information to appear on the NUSTAR external and internal transcripts, the current transcripts are being reviewed. The practice of other universities is also being examined.

- The Admissions Action Group is preparing a document which outlines the benefits and implications of entering prospective student information on NUSTAR. This is a feature of NUSTAR not offered by NUSS.

- The Enrolments Action Group is examining the process for internet-based enrolment and re-enrolment for 2002. Much of the current paper-based processes will disappear when NUSTAR comes online.

- The Student Financials Action Group is working on processes to introduce a term-based (rather than an annual) General Service Charge for 2002. Not having to pay the entire amount at the beginning of the year will be of benefit to students, but it has important implications particularly for the student associations.

The Academic Advisory Group and the Action Groups meet regularly and the meeting papers are posted on the NUSTAR web site for members and all interested staff to access. The NUSTAR web page can be found at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/nustar/ Click on 'Action Groups' to access the meeting papers.

We Need your Input!

NUSTAR has the potential to improve the information available for academic monitoring and administrative decision making. The process of result approval and associated reports are under consideration and the Academic Advisory Group would welcome input from staff in Faculties, Departments and Schools.

What information would you like to have for the examination result process and how would you like results analysed?

David Donnelly would welcome your requests. He'd also like to hear from you on any other NUSTAR issues you might like to raise or comments you might want to make. Email him at: david.donnelly@newcastle.edu.au
Frequently Asked Questions

What is NUSTAR?
★ NUSTAR is the name given by the University to its version of the PeopleSoft Student Administration product. The University commenced the first phase of the project in February 2000. Implementation is scheduled to occur for Semester 2, 2001. NUSTAR will replace the current student system, NUSS.

How will NUSTAR be made accessible? Will I need additional software loaded on to my computer?
★ For access to certain modules within NUSTAR, some software will need to be loaded onto your computer. Other modules will be accessible via the web. An implementation plan is being constructed and further details will be advised shortly.

What hardware do I require? Does my current computer have sufficient capacity?
★ Pentium 200 with 64MB RAM and 150MB disk space will be sufficient for most users. Most computers on campus are currently better than this configuration.

Can NUSTAR be accessed on a Macintosh computer?
★ For access to the web modules of NUSTAR there will be no problem. Access to the rest of the application depends on how it will be deployed, but it is anticipated that access from Macintosh computers will be possible for most users.

Will the firewall which exists for some staff who are not located at the Callaghan campus prevent access for staff situated there?
★ No, the firewall is not expected to cause any problems.

What will happen to the information on NUSS?
★ All relevant information will be transferred to NUSTAR. This includes the academic records of all students on NUSS.

How will examination results be processed for Semester 1, 2001?
★ It is proposed to process Semester 1 2001 examination results on NUSTAR. The 2001 Semester 1 enrolments will be transferred from NUSS. Subject codes (to be known as course codes in NUSTAR) will be converted with the addition of a zero, i.e., MATH111 in NUSS will become MATH110 in NUSTAR. It is proposed that all results will be entered centrally by the Publications, Examinations and Graduation Section of Student Administration. There will be no direct upload facility. This will mean that Departments and Schools will need to provide hard copy results on lists provided by NUSTAR. It is proposed to take this approach given that the go-live date for NUSTAR is quite close to the examination result approval process. The process will be different for Semester 2, 2001 and subsequent semesters. It is anticipated that an electronic upload will be available in the future.

Further Information
For further information about the project, please contact the NUSTAR Change Co-ordinator David Donnelly on x6969, david.donnelly@newcastle.edu.au or nustar@newcastle.edu.au or visit the NUSTAR web site at www.newcastle.edu.au/nustar