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April 2001
I attended a Universities and Regional Development Forum at Parliament House Canberra on your behalf on March 28. The Forum was a joint initiative of the Commonwealth Departments of Transport and Regional Services and DETYA, intended to encourage discussion on a framework for engagement between universities and regional communities and to identify engagement strategies.

Speakers included the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr John Anderson, the DETYA Minister, Dr David Kemp, Professor John Goddard, Director of the Centre for Urban Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle-on-Tyne in the UK, and others reporting on a number of 'case studies' on regional universities, or capital city universities with regional campuses.

The Deputy PM discussed the importance of partnerships and the negotiation of solutions between universities and regional communities, and suggested that plans imposed upon regions by Canberra would not be welcomed. He strongly supported universities linking teaching and research objectives to regional development, as well as a view that knowledge and skills are as important as physical infrastructure. A plan to establish a 'think tank' to meet once or twice a year was announced, for the purpose of providing advice to the Federal Government on regional development policy.

Dr Kemp recognised that Area Consultative Committees have a key role in identifying regional needs and objectives. He also identified a number of regional roles for universities, including forming local partnerships for regional development and addressing regional needs; assisting and promoting R&D in the region; promoting staff/student exchanges and work experiences; establishing 'spin-off' companies; and providing a global gateway for local companies and agencies. He emphasised the 'learning regions' concept, with universities being responsive to local labour market needs, improving rates of curvy of graduates into local companies and enterprises, providing work experience opportunities with local employers, and enhancing pathways for education and training. The Government role was seen as removing obstacles and providing funding for higher education teaching and basic/applied research. The Minister also launched the 'Atlas of Higher Education', which will assist in understanding the dynamics of student movement to postcode level.

A case study of the Whyalla campus of the University of South Australia was presented. This small campus serves as a conduit to the rest of the University (which is a major distance education provider), acts in partnership with the University of Adelaide for a Regional Health Centre, and conducts collaborative teaching and research programs for the local community.

The role of a capital city university (Edith Cowan) in the delivery of teaching programs to remote communities in Western Australia was discussed. This again involved the supplementation of distance education provision through collaborative (TAFE/ Curtin University) Centres of Further and Higher Education (COFHEs). Improved retention rates were reported through the use of such centres.

The advantages of linking major city campuses (Geelong and Melbourne) with a small regional campus (Warunmbool) were highlighted in a case study of Deakin University. The final study on the University of Wollongong illustrated the significance for a regional community of major collaborations by the University with BHP and Nortel.

Group discussions focused on two major areas:

Creating a Framework for Engagement: including discussions on the nature of regional engagement, respective goals and objectives, impediments to regional engagement and partnership building, what aren't we doing and why, what social and other infrastructure is needed to encourage engagement, and what each can contribute; and

Working Towards Engagement: identified practical examples of successful regional engagements between universities and communities; and suggested what regional communities could offer universities and vice versa; how engagement strategies could be implemented; and what each of the players needs to do.

The Chair of the Hunter Area Consultative Committee (Mr Arch Humphreys) and I had plenty to say about our experiences in Newcastle, the Central Coast and the Hunter. It was apparent that we are employing many successful strategies, and have formed a multiplicity of mutually beneficial partnerships. In broad terms, we have taken advantage of the location of this university in Australia's most populous region, outside of the capital cities, but we have a long way to go in many areas. I would ask each of you to consider and bring forward any proposals for improved regional engagement in our primary areas of influence north and west of the Hawksbury in regional NSW.

It was useful to participate in this workshop and I hope I have conveyed the importance of establishing successful partnerships with regional communities, businesses and other organisations. The outcomes of the workshop will be prepared and distributed via the relevant web site, and I will be advise you when this is available.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the University's new student information system, NUSTAR, is expected to be in use before the end of semester 1.

NUSTAR is a complex system and the implementation project is massive. Consider that over 100,000 student records going back 30 years as well as around 20,000 'live' student records, will be transferred to NUSTAR. The Project Team is now testing the system in preparation for a scheduled go-live date in May.

NUSTAR will be an important component of the University for many years. The magnitude and complexity of the system mean there will be difficulties experienced in the initial stages. I ask that staff be patient and contribute positively to the resolution of issues. The introduction of NUSTAR is an exciting development for the University with the prospect of increased online information for staff and students and improved management information. I look forward to the system being available.

Roger S Holmes
The world comes to Newcastle

While individual scholars and students from around the world regularly visit the University to research, teach and study, March was a particularly busy month for overseas visitors to Newcastle.

An International Student Exchange Fair, held in the Shortland Union on March 21, attracted representatives of 35 international universities as well as a great deal of interest from students.

The University is associated with over 90 universities and colleges around the world, which offer students an opportunity to exchange for a semester or two, while continuing their studies. Students and representatives from participating overseas universities attending the fair gave details on how to make an application for the exchange program, how to apply for a scholarship and what to expect from overseas study.

Last year 55 students from the University went on the exchange program to universities in the United States, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Wales, Canada, England and Ireland. Information on the exchange program is available on the web at www.newcastle.edu.au/studentexchange.

A delegation from the Danish Ministry of Education visited Newcastle on March 20 and 21, to discuss existing and future exchange programs. The Danish government's educational policy aims to motivate students to study abroad and the Ministry delegates came to Australia to examine existing relationships and determine the potential for new ones.

"The University has had links with Danish institutions for a number of years, but we have recently focused on an agreement with Roskilde Business College, embracing opportunities for the colleges of Aabenraa, Kolding and Esbjerg," said Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) Professor Jenny Graham. "The agreement is multi-faceted, covering staff and student exchange in upper secondary, Vocational Education and Training (VET), diploma/degree articulation and short summer/winter programs."

More than 100 Danish students will undertake a specialised exchange program based on Unipath in the second semester of each year for the next five years. A customised semester long VET program will be offered each year at the Central Coast Campus and Roskilde students will also participate in specialised study in the Faculties of Engineering, and Economics and Commerce.

Representatives from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, Norway visited Newcastle in March. The University currently has 50 Norwegian medical students undertaking their studies here as part of a medical training agreement that has been in place for the past four years.

NTNU hopes to broaden their involvement with the University and their delegation was seeking strong research relationships, cooperation and possible staff/student visits and exchanges.

A group from Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore also visited the University in March. Temasek, which offers 20 full-time diploma programs across its five schools, is currently reviewing its academic structure and practices and a delegation came to Newcastle to learn from our experiences. As well as looking at the University's credit-based modular academic structures and the IT systems that support them, the group also visited the Faculties of Architecture, Building and Design, Engineering, and Economics and Commerce during their two day stay (March 14-15).

April edition

Editorial enquiries and contributions should be directed to the Editor, Uninews, Marketing and Media Services, phone: 0495 1859 or 0412 128 727, email: prklb@alinga.newcastle.edu.au.

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Cover photo by John Freund: Emma Blair from the University Legal Centre celebrates with her mother Cheryl after receiving the Vice-Chancellor's Award for General Staff Excellence. Emma was one of four individuals to receive an award. Full story p5.
The reason for dyslexia

A team of University researchers has discovered a link between reading difficulties and biochemical changes in the body. The multidisciplinary team, led by Associate Professor Tim Roberts and Dr Greg Robinson, believes that the underlying cause of dyslexia may be linked to a biochemical anomaly. The researchers have been looking at Scotopic Sensitivity, or Irleq Syndrome (SSIS), a condition where the retina in the eye is extremely sensitive to certain frequencies of the light spectrum. They also believe the same biochemical changes may be responsible for chronic fatigue syndrome and autism.

"People with CFS experience depression, low blood volume, low blood pressure, pain, brain 'fogginess', disturbances in the gut, as well as reading difficulties," said Tim.

Dr Greg Robinson from the Special Education Centre at the University explained that people with SSIS have problems reading and writing due to blurring or movement of print, and problems with sustaining focus.

"We've found that some CFS patients also experience this," he said. "So we've used the approach that all disease has a molecular basis to study 61 adult CFS patients in Newcastle. We split them into two groups – those with SSIS symptoms and those without – and analysed the metabolism of each individual. We found that the two groups have different metabolic profiles, which means that CFS consists of a number of different diseases."

Tim Roberts says in testing people with other conditions, such as dyslexia, autism and attention deficit disorder, the team consistently finds a distinct metabolic profile which correlates with a particular set of symptoms.

"We believe there are similar metabolic disturbances in many non-genetic mental and organic diseases. With this knowledge, we can work out the best clinical treatment options to normalise the metabolism and isolate underlying causes," he concluded.

University welcomes East Timorese students

Seven East Timorese students commenced their studies at the University in February. Two of the students, 18-year-old Sara Maria Pereira and 25-year-old Guida Pascoal Correia, are here thanks to extensive fundraising by the Newcastle community. They travelled from East Timor with Sister Carmel Hanson, from the Sisters of St Joseph.

The students are taking up scholarships at the University in a joint venture with the Sisters of St Joseph and the community group, Christians For Peace.

The University has waived all fees, while the Sisters are providing accommodation at their House of Hospitality in Adamstown, along with $5000 for each student. Christians For Peace has been working to secure the money needed to cover the students' airfares, student visas and medical checks.

The students will enter the Unipath program, a preparatory program for international students. Guida will then study a Bachelor of Social Science (Leisure and Tourism), while Sara will study secondary school teaching, an area of major need in East Timor since the withdrawal of Indonesian teachers in secondary schools after the vote for independence.

The other five East Timorese students are attending the University under the AusAid scheme, which covers airfares to and from East Timor, settling and living allowances, tuition fees and overseas student health cover. They will study Medicine, Food Technology, Chemical Engineering and one will complete postgraduate studies in a Master of Applied Management (Health).
Outstanding staff efforts rewarded

The outstanding contributions of four individuals and two teams were recognised at a presentation ceremony for the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for General Staff Excellence held in the Great Hall last month.

Emma Blair, an Administrative Officer in the University Legal Centre, won an award for her work facilitating communication and clinical placements. Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Anne Finlay, said the location of the Faculty on two sites - Callaghan Campus and University House – has presented operational challenges.

"Emma established 'Law Link', an electronic mail bulletin to facilitate communication between the two locations," Anne said.

Emma's audit of telephone usage had resulted in a 46 percent saving in the Legal Centre's monthly telephone usage and she had taken a leading role in the establishment of the University of Newcastle Legal Centre Volunteer Scheme. She also assisted in the establishment of a volunteer solicitor scheme.

Angela Di Santo, Secretary in the Department of Accounting and Finance, was rewarded for her assistance in organising seminar programs and an annual Merit Award Dinner for her Department.

"Angela demonstrates great patience, perseverance, professionalism and enthusiasm in the performance of her duties," Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Commerce, Professor Steve Easton, said at the award ceremony on March 16.

Shelagh Lummis, Secretary in the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies, has initiated many new systems and procedures that have streamlined and improved the efficiency of her office. Head of Department, Dr Peter Brown, said Shelagh demonstrated "outstanding client service".

John Pearson, Senior Technical Officer in the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, was the fourth individual to receive an award. Professor Geoffrey Lawrence, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science and Mathematics, said as well as being involved in his main areas of responsibility (finance and purchasing), John was also active in many other activities, including Higher School Certificate Reviews and Science Summer Schools.

Professor Lawrence also introduced the first of two teams to receive awards, the Women's Health Australia (WHA) office team. The WHA project involves 40,000 women throughout Australia who are contacted on a regular basis and the office team has faced the challenge of sending and receiving tens of thousands of telephone calls each year.

Lyn Adamson, Jean Ball, Joy Goldsworthy, Jenny Powers and Emma Threlfo have developed a database for referral and information contacts. Their outstanding skills in tracking participants are demonstrated by retention rates of over 90 percent.

"The Women's Health Australia Project is the largest research grant ever received by this University and the largest longitudinal survey ever conducted in Australia," Geoffrey said. "After an independent review was undertaken in 1998, the Project was re-funded for five years with an additional $4.5 million. This was largely on the basis of the outstanding work of the office team."

A group from Mail Services - Charles Bell, Matthew George, David Montana, Andrew Patterson, Michael Rye and Michael Wilks - won the second team award. The Callaghan Campus is Australia Post's largest customer in the Newcastle area, with the University Mail Services receiving 1,000,000 articles last year, which were distributed to some 138 delivery points.

Mr Brian Penfold, Executive Director of the Finance and Property Division, said the mail room team had learnt a range of new skills to introduce charging of mail costs to University cost centres.

"The high volume of mail processing and the tight timeframes required by Australia Post has presented the Mailroom staff with a multitude of health and safety hazards," Brian said.

"The use of canvas satchels was an initiative of the Mailroom staff to accommodate the charge back process. The satchels have had a positive impact upon the manual handing aspects in the Mailroom. This in turn has raised awareness of manual handling techniques."

David Cater, Manager for the University's Year 2000 Project, was highly commended by the Vice-Chancellor. David ensured that University staff understood and appreciated the Y2K issues and cooperated in the application of solutions.

Margaret Jollow, a Senior Administrative Officer in the Secretariat, was also highly commended for her assistance in compiling and producing a major tender document for the Australian Development Scholarship Scheme AusAID. The University was successful in winning the tender, which is potentially worth up to $14 million over five years.
Daring others to dream

Indigenous Employment Coordinator for the University, Lori Parish, knows the value of a helping hand. If it weren't for the support given to her by a vocational guidance officer with the Commonwealth Employment Service, Lori may never have completed her education and pursued her career.

Lori, a Bundjalung woman who is the eldest of three children of an Aboriginal father and white mother, dropped out of school in Year 8. With no encouragement from her family to proceed and a gruelling 27 kilometre journey to Macleay District High School in Kempsey that included a three kilometre walk to a ferry, it is no surprise that Lori finished school early. What is surprising is her decision to return to study after having four children.

"I had a burning desire to achieve," Lori said. "My childhood was difficult and I was working through those issues, as well as the hard knocks of being a fair-skinned Indigenous person, who has to go an extra way to be accepted. One of the things behind my decision to go back to school was a passion to break the stereotypical images of Indigenous people."

Margaret Anderson-Plit from the CES not only supported Lori through her secondary education at TAFE, she convinced her to sit the public service examination. Lori was successful in gaining employment with the Department of Social Security and began work as the only Indigenous employee in an office of 68 in 1988. She worked for the DSS for 12 years in a number of different roles, the last being as an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. She resigned in 1998 to implement the first "Women's Business" at the John Hunter Hospital.

"There were a lot of challenges in trying to negotiate an effective and culturally appropriate service for Aboriginal women and children," she said. "I was able to establish a needs analysis for Indigenous people at the hospital. As a consequence, a number of other Indigenous staff positions have been advertised and filled."

Lori joined the University in August last year, when the government funded Indigenous Employment Strategy that had been in place came to an end and the University took on the responsibility of continuing with its own strategy. She sees one of her biggest challenges in shifting entrenched attitudes and has designed a Cultural Awakening Program that has so far been completed by more than 100 non-academic staff members.

Again, Lori's own experiences have helped her to understand the difficulties faced by Indigenous people seeking employment. She is currently enrolled in the University's Master of Business Administration (MBA) in order to gain a credible qualification.

"Many Indigenous people have worked in lots of areas and are well known and respected in the Aboriginal community, where they are valued for their experience and not for their qualifications," she said. "Although I've been back in the full-time workforce for 13 years, I still get beaten about the head for not having a qualification on paper. There are a lot of barriers for Indigenous people in gaining qualifications, with the biggest being cost."

Lori sees her studies as another way to advance what can be achieved by Indigenous people and to provide a positive role model to others. She has also established strong links with the local Aboriginal community and is trying to build acceptance of the University as a good place to work for local Indigenous people.

Opening the lines of communication between the University and the Aboriginal community has led to some positive outcomes. For instance, an approach to the local Community Employment Development Program (CEDP) Centre has led to a collaboration between the University and TAFE to provide training to Horticulture Certificate trainees. The trainees do part of their work experience on the Callaghan campus and are provided with a Native Bush Regeneration course, developed and offered by Min Wooland of Physical Planning and Estates, as an add-on to their program.

Lori has also offered individual support to Indigenous employees by helping them with their CVs, encouraging them to pursue opportunities, acting as a referee and even transporting them to interviews.

"Sometimes it's just important to have another Indigenous person to talk to," she said. "That sort of personal support and social structure is important to us in our culture."

While she has achieved a great deal since returning to her studies, Lori feels she has a long way to go. The 41-year-old says that her own mentor taught her there was nothing she couldn't achieve if she wanted it badly enough, a sentiment that stuck with her and which she has passed on to her own children and to the Indigenous people she has helped over the years.

"You need to dare to dream and then make your dream a reality," Lori says. "I keep on reaching for the next step and by giving to others through my job, I get a great sense of overall satisfaction."
Searching for an Indigenous research methodology

A researcher from the Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre at the University has won an Australian Research Council grant to determine if a unique Indigenous research methodology exists.

Chief Investigator, Associate Professor Nedda Blair from Umulliko, says that many Aboriginal communities have reached the point of rejecting research outright with a key problem being inappropriate research paradigms.

"There's a real debate going on internationally about the need for an Indigenous research methodology," Nedda said, "one that reflects decolonisation and self-determination as fundamental principles. In Australia, Indigenous researchers lead the assault on the concept of research."

Nedda, backed by Faculty of Education mentors Professor Sid Bourke and Dr Alyson Holbrook, will collaborate with the Indigenous Research Centre at Curtin University on the three-stage project. Beginning with an examination of theses written by Indigenous people and critiques of the research methods, the project will then carry out a pilot study in two Aboriginal communities in NSW and Western Australia where research has been conducted.

"We will select communities where a lot of research has been done and arrange some yarn times to hear their positive and negative experiences of research," Nedda said. "It's really important that we interact with the communities over time so the concept of an appropriate methodological framework grows organically and is owned by communities and researchers."

The final stage in the project, which is funded for three years through an ARC Indigenous Researchers Development Grant, is to carry out a large study of Indigenous communities throughout Australia to explore how they react to a suggested research model.

Nedda, whose people come from Waka Waka country in South Western Queensland, was raised in Melbourne and has worked in higher education in Victoria and NSW, as well as in the Commonwealth public service. As well as working on the National Aboriginal Education policy while employed by the then Department of Employment and Education, she also spent eight years with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

During her working life, Nedda has often experienced the reluctance of Aboriginal communities to involve themselves in research projects.

"Many proposals receive completely negative responses from communities, who are sick to death of taking part in research," she said.

As a resident of Terrigal, Nedda is a member of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC), whose territory ranges from the Hawkesbury River to Lake Macquarie. It was through the DLALC that Nedda experienced the excitement of involving a community in research that is meaningful to them. She began a project, funded by an Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies grant, to look at Darkinjung history. One result of her involvement has been the establishment of the Umulliko/Darkinjung Research Working Group, which meets every six weeks.

"The DLALC response to research has completely shifted because of this project," she said. "It's been incredible to see how excited people are becoming now that the story is starting to emerge about the Darkinjung culture, land and the history of what happened to the people. So many things have come up through meeting people that have helped us in the research and the community have come to value the research as something that is useful to us."

Nedda believes that while the pace of research that involves communities may be slower, their participation is critically important to successful outcomes.

"It is great to be a part of that process of new thinking and to do research that makes a difference to our communities."

The progress of women's health

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, now known as Women's Health Australia (WHa), has released a book reporting on the first five years of the proposed 40-year study.

Launched by Vice-Chancellor of Flinders University Professor Anne Edwards at the 4th Australian Women's Health Conference held in Adelaide in February, Women's Health Australia: What do we know? What do we need to know? is a compilation of ten principal investigators. It addresses a range of health issues from women's experiences with GPs to reproduction and gynaecology, smoking, dieting, body image, fatigue, leisure, family responsibilities, workplace stress and widowhood.

Edited by Professor Christina Lee, Director of the Research Centre for Gender and Health at the University, the book outlines the overall project design and introduces the three cohorts of women taking part in the study. The study, the largest of its type ever undertaken in Australia, is strongly multidisciplinary and takes a broad, biopsychosocial perspective of women's health as embedded in a social and family context.

Published by Australian Academic Press, the book can be purchased through the Research Centre for Gender and Health on (4921) 8609 or online at www.fec.newcastle.edu.au/wha.
The Ourimbah Campus of the Central Coast Campuses held its largest Graduation Ceremony yet on March 30.

The ceremony, held in the Campus's Main Quadrangle saw almost 1,000 graduates conferred with their awards. With almost 400 in attendance to personally receive their qualifications, and their families and guests, the ceremony brought more than 2,000 visitors to the Campus.

Those graduating were from the three partners of the Central Coast Campuses: the Ourimbah Campus of Newcastle, the Hunter Institute of Technology (TAFE) and the Central Coast Community College.

Director of the Central Coast Campuses, Dr Barry McKnight, said that a variety of awards from certificates and diplomas through to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees were conferred, including four (PhD).

"Graduation is a very important event as it is the official recognition of academic performance and achievement," Barry said. "It is also a time of celebration for the graduates, their academic mentors, and their families and friends."

The outdoor ceremony included a traditional Aboriginal performance as well as a musical performance by Gosford High School. Twenty six international flags representing the countries of birth of the graduates flew, an Ourimbah Campus tradition for graduation.

An honorary Master of Science degree was presented to Cindy Lukin at the ceremony. Cindy is known for her entrepreneurial success as the creator and operator of Lukin and May, makers of gourmet biscuits. Starting in catering, Cindy found her biscuits, which she served with coffee, began to attract a lot of attention and it was then she realised she was 'on a winner'.

The company is now baking more than 40 million biscuits per annum and supplies clients such as Qantas, Ansett, David Jones, Myer, Target, Stadium Australia, the Sydney Opera House, Starbucks Japan as well as 45 chains of four and five star hotels worldwide.

It's an example of how a good idea, with the right business acumen, can be turned into a highly successful business. Cindy attributes the success of the business to the 'WOW' factor. In her language 'WOW' means We Offer Ways and epitomises the way she thinks.

Richard and Michael Babakulal, 21-year-old twin brothers, kept up a lifelong tradition of doing things together when they both received their Bachelor of Business degree — and amazingly the pair did exactly the same subjects to achieve their degrees.

Richard is now employed in marketing with Southcorp Clean Air Systems while Michael is a Sales Representative for Raymond Forklifts. Both report that they are enjoying being in the workforce after their university years.

Looking for a career change and making the effort to achieve it has certainly paid off for Philip Witton, who graduated with a combined degree, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching at the ceremony.

Philip, 45, from the Glenningle Valley, spent 20 years as Customer Services Manager and Service Quality Manager for Telstra and started on his academic path by first tackling the Open Foundation Certificate and then completing his degree as a full-time student.

Working at night to support himself and his 15-year-old son, Philip not only got through his degree, but also achieved an honours average winning two Dean's Merit Awards for academic merit along the way. Now teaching history and geography at St Peters High School at Tuggerah, Philip is realising the fruits of his labours and is very happy in his new career.

"I wanted a change of lifestyle and I simply made the decision to make the change," said Philip. "I really enjoyed studying at the Ourimbah campus and encountered nothing less than dedication and commitment from my lecturers. Everything was very personal. If I needed something explained, it could be clarified on the spot. That certainly contributes to getting good results," he said.

Mr David Peers, Chair of the Central Coast Aboriginal Land Council, welcomed the graduands and their guests. David told the audience how the land on which the campus is located is a traditional Aboriginal place of learning. He said that the Aboriginal community is pleased to see that the learning continues, but is now happening across a wider platform of interests involving aspects of cultural diversity, personal and professional development, technology advancements, career opportunities and social exchange.

"It is important for us to recognise that the word ourimbah loosely translated, means 'place of learning'," David said.
University welcomes accounting scholars

The 2001 chapter of a unique scholarship program which provides practical work placement, study and financial assistance, was launched at the University last month.

The Department of Accounting and Finance in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce, welcomed seven commencing undergraduate students who have each won a $64,000 scholarship to study the Bachelor of Commerce or Bachelor of Finance degree.

The students will complete their degrees over four years by studying for 1-1/2 days per week, and obtaining work experience with a commercial organisation for 3-1/2 days a week. They will receive their scholarships over the four years.

Associate Professor Jim Psaros, Head of the Department of Accounting and Finance, says there has been amazing growth in the scheme and it now extends to a variety of industries including accounting, financial planning, manufacturing and the Port Corporation.

"This year we have five Newcastle firms with us for the first time," he said. "They are Transform Composites, Deutsche Bank; Thomas, Simpson, Masters; Newcastle Port Corporation; and Cucher and Neale. They join continuing sponsors McCosker Partners, Forsythes and Lawler Partners."

Mark Hamilton, a Director at McCosker Partners, says the scheme has already proven beneficial.

"We went into this because we thought it was a chance to secure a top class student, and provide them with a real perspective of what it's like to work in accountancy," he said. "The theory proved to be correct, as our scholar last year was outstanding, and we're pleased to be taking another in 2001."

The scholars and company representatives attended a launch for the 2001 scheme in the Great Hall on March 2.

The human dimensions of development

The 1997 Asian financial crisis was a 'blessing in disguise' as it forced the Thai government to give more consideration to the human dimensions of development, a visiting professor said at a symposium held in Newcastle late last year.

Professor Anura Pongsapich echoed other speakers at the Social Transformation in the Asia-Pacific symposium, who argued that the inevitable push towards globalisation needs to be moderated by making development goals more human centred.

The symposium, held at Noah's on the Beach in December, was organised by the University's Centre for Asia-Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS), an ARC funded Key Centre in collaboration with the University of Wollongong. It preceded the full CAPSTRANS conference, held in Wollongong from December 4-6, and attracted experts on social transformation issues from Thailand, Fiji, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia.

As well as examining the political dramas in Fiji and the Asian crisis, the symposium addressed what globalisation means to local communities, how they can benefit without losing their distinctive values, and Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific region.
Welcome to Within Our Reach

As a staff member, you are probably aware that the University has made a significant investment in online education through the development of 48 courses for delivery through WebLearn. GraduateSchool.com Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the University that manages the process, has recorded more than 20,000 hits since the launch of its website www.gradschool.com.au last year.

As a result of our launch, and based on a very limited promotional campaign, over 120 students from across Australia and overseas have enrolled for Trimester 1 which began on January 29. We intend to launch our programs overseas in the middle of the year, with particular focus on Asia where we have already attracted a number of enrolments.

At present we offer a range of postgraduate programs online, with built in options for entry and exit at the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma level. A major development for the University, which sets it apart from its competitors, is the suite of Master of Applied Management programs that combine management skills and knowledge with professionally focused programs. The MAMs respond to increasing demands from both employers and employees for targeted postgraduate education based on the needs of specific industries and professional groups.

It is essential that we grow beyond our immediate footprint and reach out across Australia and internationally. GraduateSchool.com provides a clear focus for the promotion, marketing and recruitment of online students. It seeks to ensure that the education and development needs of our students are achieved at the high standards established and expected by our University. The adoption of a standard communication platform - BlackBoard - and the provision of core learning materials to all students, ensures that we have an effective online delivery model.

This is an exciting initiative for our University and your support and feedback is valued.

Profiles will be a regular feature of Within Our Reach, where we will introduce our students as well as staff and instructors. In this issue we are profiling Deidre Gulliver, GraduateSchool.com's Client Services Officer.

Scott Holmes
Executive Director, GraduateSchool.com Pty Ltd

Profile Deidre

Deidre is well known to our online students as the voice of GraduateSchool.com.

"As a distance education student myself, I am fully aware of the special needs of off-campus students," Deidre said. "I gained valuable experience in helping students with a range of issues whilst I worked in the Prospective Students Office. I have come into contact with students from a diverse range of educational and cultural backgrounds and I think that my learning and working experiences have shaped my approach to Client Services generally."

Deidre provides advice on course content and delivery, helps students decide which programs are suited to their qualifications and work experience, and assists them in making an application. She is the conduit through which applications are passed to faculties for assessment, providing a valuable safety net for students. After enrolment, Deidre continues to be the general point of contact for student queries about course materials, packages, fees, BlackBoard, variations in programs, etc.
Trimester 1 Update
Andrew Licata
Australian Operations Manager

My role is to develop and implement strategies and processes to attract and retain online students. To implement our branding strategies, advertising and promotional materials must portray a consistent and effective impression of GraduateSchool.com. We coordinate closely with the University's Marketing and Media Services unit in these activities.

GraduateSchool.com also focuses on activities to ensure that existing relationships with students and their employers are maintained, with a view to establishing an ongoing student base. Of equal importance is the communication of our marketing objectives within the University, which requires constant interaction with faculties, departments, student administration and revenue.

I would like to introduce the staff of GraduateSchool.com. Deidre Gulliver is our Client Services Officer, Elise Roulstone our Financial Manager, and Matthew George the Administrative Officer responsible for maintaining student records and for the distribution of educational materials.

Our Students
The popularity of the online mode of delivery has been encouraging with a total of 126 students commencing courses in Trimester 1. These students are predominantly enrolled in the Business Administration, Information Technology, Environmental Management and MAM Aviation programs.

Our student population is aged between 21 and 61, with an average age of 34.4. Their distribution is quite diverse with 60.3 percent located in Newcastle, Sydney and country NSW; 13.4 percent located overseas (7.1 percent international students and 8 percent Australians living overseas) and the remaining 26.3 percent spread throughout other areas in Australia.

Future Directions
The relationship that we build with our students begins when they make an initial enquiry and develops every time there is an interaction between a prospective student and a member of our staff. Any breakdown that occurs in the implementation of our operations can undermine this relationship. This could occur through incorrect data entry onto the student system, or during invoicing or enrolment procedures at the faculty level. We give constant attention to ensuring that these processes are working and are always seeking feedback as to how we can improve our activities, both from within the University and from our students.

Marketing encompasses the whole organisation's approach to its core business, which in the University's case is education. We look forward to working with student administration, and the faculties to achieve student service objectives.

GraduateSchool.com is now in its second phase of promotion. An advertising campaign commenced on March 14 targeting Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle. The campaign includes print media and radio advertisements, and information sessions, which began in Canberra on March 28. A direct mail campaign has begun and we are also targeting the top 500 companies in Australia with a view to establishing a number of formal business-to-business alliances.

Finally, a re-enrolment form has been developed to enable students to enrol in online courses electronically. In future, enrolments will only be accepted if they are made on this form and submitted electronically to GraduateSchool.com. This strategy is intended to assist in reducing enrolment error.

Training the Trainers
Beginning in Trimester 2, online instructors will take part in a half-day development program being coordinated by Michelle Watson of the Graduate School. This program will allow instructors to meet, exchange views and learn together.
Collaboration leads to unique educational approach

What has architecture got in common with biology? While there may seem to be a deep gulf between the creative profession of architecture and the scientific discipline of biology, the similarities between them have spawned a cross-cultural collaboration between the University's Department of Architecture and the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM), Canada and led to the development of a unique approach to science education.

The new course in biology recently established at Montreal is the result of a seven year collaborative effort between teams at the two universities. Leader of the UQAM team, Professor Yves Mauffette, who is currently on a six-month visit to the University, said that the 'bottom line' for each discipline is in establishing how students think and in best preparing graduates for the work they will do.

"Education is fundamentally the same, regardless of what you are teaching," he said. "In biology, the information we now have (and the methods available to access that information) is well beyond what was known 50 years ago, yet we hadn't changed our teaching methods. We need to provide students with the tools to be able to gain knowledge and continue learning beyond graduation - to shift from a content-based curriculum to context-based and process-based learning."

Yves was already looking for alternative education methods for UQAM when he attended a PBL conference at Newcastle in 1995. Following discussions with Associate Professors Rob Cowdroy and Penny Little, he returned to Montreal and began implementing change. The UQAM project had already been initiated by Professor Pierre Berheur before his death in 1996 and Yves was joined by collaborator Professor Laurent Poliquin.

Rob Cowdroy, whose main research is into unconscious thinking and the way in which people's thinking can be determined by the culture of their discipline, visited Montreal in 1997.

"This collaboration has developed a new approach to thinking about science education," Rob said. "It has led to a new pedagogical method that will allow other biology courses, as well as other sciences such as chemistry, physics and the bio-medicine areas, and the newer disciplines of biochemistry, such as molecular biology and toxico-ecology, to develop educational approaches to suit their specific needs."

In the course of developing the new approach, the collaborators realised that holistic construct-generating thinking processes are central to both architecture and scientific inquiry. This conceptual form of thinking, which manifests itself as solutions to architects and questions to scientists, is as central to science as it is to architecture.

The collaboration has led to the joint hosting of a major international PROBLARC conference on PBL in Montreal 18 months ago and is attracting interest around the world. In February last year, members of both collaborating teams were invited to Belgium to advise the University of Louvain-La Neuve and the Free University of Brussels on the possibilities of developing PBL applications. The capacity for dissemination of the approach is multiplied by the bilingual nature of the collaboration in French and English. Rob and Arthur Kingsland, also from the Department of Architecture, are working with Yves on a book that will draw on their experiences to help others to cope with change - one of the most difficult aspects of initiating PBL or any other new approach.

"Architecture graduates from Newcastle are living proof of the effectiveness of our PBL program, dominating our national architecture awards each year and excelling professionally," Rob said. "It is great to see that the spotlight is on this University and that we are being called on from all over the world as initiators and leaders of educational change."

Can't draw to save yourself?

Wildlife illustrators Herbert Heinrich and Anne Llewellyn are running a program to provide practical demonstrations of materials and techniques for traditional illustrations to people with an interest in drawing.

The 10 week courses give would-be artists an opportunity to develop and practice illustration skills in a relaxed atmosphere. Individual guidance at your own level is aimed at developing technical knowledge and expertise in drawing and artistic rendering and specialist materials are provided. The short course culminates in an exhibition, certificate presentation and social function.

The Illustration Techniques Workshops, run on Wednesday evenings, are open to everyone and the cost ($300 for 10 weeks) includes materials. Enquiries should be directed to Herbert Heinrich on (4921) 6250 or email heinrich@email.newcastle.edu.au.
Master artists branch out

Two Master of Fine Art graduates have explored mediums that are a long way from their roots in a joint exhibition at the School of Fine Art Gallery last month.

Paul McCormick, whose Contact exhibition uses clays gathered from around NSW in huge pots and spectacular paintings that explore the natural landscape, grew up in the Sydney suburb of Northmead. Fellow Masters student Mark Naylor, however, who grew up on a hobby farm at Wybong, 25 kms from Muswellbrook, has chosen the ultra-contemporary sharp and shiny combination of fibreglass resin and oils to create his luminescent Ripple exhibition.

Master-potter Paul, who worked as a roof plumber when he left school, became interested in art when he lived on an alternative lifestyle property on the Central Coast in the early 90s. Beginning with mud bricks, he moved on to pottery and has spent the past 10 years refining his craft. "I'm very interested in geology - in the exploration of a site through its clay - and I've used the clays to represent various landscapes," he said. "It's a simple concept and an ancient way of working, very low tech."

Paul trained as a painter during his undergraduate art degree at Newcastle but has worked throwing pots both in his own business on the Central Coast and for others. One of his ceramic works was presented to 2000 Australian of the Year Sir Gustav Nossal when he delivered the Newcastle Lecture in the Great Hall last year. He also won the Open Thrown section of the long-established National Pottery Competition, judged by leading ceramics authority Janet Mansfield, last year.

Paul, who won a University research scholarship to undertake his Master's degree, is currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education's TAS program (Technological and Applied Studies in Industrial Arts). He hopes to become a teacher and pursue his art in remote parts of Australia.

Mark Naylor has had a passion for art since high school and came to the University in 1995 after completing an Associate Diploma at TAFE. He began using resins at University, alkyd mediums initially and later fibreglass resin because of its hardness. It was during a year of overseas travel between his Graduate Diploma in Fine Art and the start of his Masters studies that Mark saw images of the devastation of Pompeii that triggered a creative idea.

"The images of bodies encapsulated in ash began my interest in submerging works in resin - layering oil paints within layers of resin," he said. "My thesis is all about what constitutes painting and how far you can push what a painting is."

Mark can use up to 15 litres of resin in a single work and averages eight to 10 layers of the slow drying material on each work. By creating three-dimensional transparent blocks for Ripple, he attempted to challenge the viewer, as well as himself. "I love to see works that ask questions of me and I want to create works that do that for others."

While he hopes to one day become an academic and plans to complete a PhD at some stage, 26 year old Mark, who recently married another Newcastle fine art graduate, Jodie, will try to break into the Sydney art scene this year. Ripple and Contact were on display at the School of Fine Art Gallery from February 19 to March 11.
Rewriting Russian history

Challenging the official version of Soviet history even after the death of Stalin in 1953 was a courageous undertaking for Russian historians in the 1960s and 70s, according to historian Dr Roger Markwick, who has released a recently released book, "Rewriting Russian History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography in the 1960s." This work presents the accounts of Soviet historians who were too "frightened to write a truthful account of the Soviet past."

Roger documentos how Soviet historians were controlled, censored, and punished for attempting to write a more accurate history. After Stalin's death in 1953, the work of Russian historians in the 1960s and 70s was often dismissed, moved to marginal positions, public reprimands and prohibition on publication. Despite this, the work of Russian historians in the 1960s challenged the official account of Soviet history and paved the way for the public future about the Stalin era unleashed by Gorbachev's perestroika, Roger says in his book.

Based on unique interviews, archival sources and private papers, and compiled over the past decade, the book explores the tenacious struggle of an important group of Moscow historians to write a truthful account of the Soviet past. On the basis of a censored, unpublished history critical of Stalin's policy of forced, agricultural collectivisation, where farms were confiscated from wealthy peasants and amalgamated under collective or State control, Roger documents how Soviet historians were controlled by the party elite.

Roger, who came to the University's history department as an associate lecturer in modern European history in January, began the fieldwork for his book in 1992 while doing his PhD at the University of Sydney. He has returned to Russia twice since being awarded his PhD in 1995 to obtain additional material for the book. This is his second book on Russia. His first, a co-authored study of contemporary Russia's "stillborn democracy," was published last year.

Roger's interest in Russian history began in the 1970s when he did a course on modern revolutions as an undergraduate arts student at the Australian National University. He subsequently studied Russian while writing his Master of Arts at the University of Melbourne. He first visited the Soviet Union in 1985, the year Gorbachev came to power. "I was always interested in the history of the 1917 revolution that went off the rails under Stalin and these questions were finally being addressed in an unprecedented way under perestroika," he said. "These questions were quite underdeveloped by Western scholars." Roger Markwick, 1956-1974 was launched on February 28 at the Shortland Union.

Fat boys likely to die earlier

Obesity in children has doubled in ten years, setting a time bomb for their future and it's because of their lifestyle.

Dr Clare Collins, lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics at the University and Dietetics at the John Hunter Children's Hospital says, "If you take a look at your old school photos there may have been one or two overweight children in your class, but today there are five or six."

"Children watch television and use computers instead of playing, and it's a recipe for disaster," she says. "We are seeing kids as young as 14 develop type 2 diabetes that usually doesn't develop until 40 to 50 and it's largely preventable by diet and exercise.

Overseas monitoring of people from childhood through to late middle age has found boys who are overweight, are twice as likely to die, or have cancer, or suffer a stroke before they reach 55, regardless of their adult weight. A study on obese adolescent girls found they were more likely to have lower education levels, lower incomes and to be living below the poverty line.

Clare Collins says the University is running a pilot program, in conjunction with the John Hunter Children's Hospital and Community Health Services, involving families with overweight children. The plan is for the parents to take the lead, helping the child to be more physically active, eat healthily and manage stress. "More than 30 percent of parents with overweight children don't realise their child is overweight," says Clare.

The results of the pilot program are expected to be collated by May, but the research group are hoping to obtain funding for a full-scale program, aimed at preventing obesity from developing in children.
Reconciliation and the law

Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim called on staff and students of the Faculty of Law to establish links with local Indigenous organisations to help keep reconciliation on track when he delivered the 2001 Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture in Newcastle last month.

In his address, “Making a Difference: Reconciling our Differences”, Professor Nettheim, an academic and prominent advocate of Indigenous legal issues, said that there had been some “landmark developments” in the law concerning the relationship between Indigenous and other Australians in the past 30 years. Some individuals had made a difference to these developments, he said.

“The Indigenous names include Vincent Lingiari, Charlie Perkins, John Koowurta and Eddie Mabo,” he said. “The 000-Indigenous lawyers range from law students such as Jim Spigelman, Geoffrey Robertson and Peter Tobin, to practitioners such as Bryan Keon-Cohen, Greg McIntyre, Ron Castan QC and Barbara Hocking. The lawyers working at the time in law schools include Hal Wootten and Neil Rees*. The judges include, notably, Sir Ninian Stephen.”

Professor Nettheim began his legal career as an articled clerk in Sydney in 1952, before becoming the University of Sydney Fulbright Scholar in 1956 and winning a scholarship to study at the Fletcher School in the United States. After completing his Masters, he became a public affairs radio producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation before returning to Sydney in 1960, where he subsequently began his academic career at the University of Sydney. He was one of the Foundation Professors at the Faculty of Law at the University of NSW and remained there until his retirement in 1996.

During his time at UNSW, he consistently engaged in teaching, research and public advocacy on the relationship between the Australian legal system and Indigenous Australians. He was an initial council member for the first Aboriginal Legal Service in Australia and in 1981 established the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW. Professor Nettheim was joint founder of the Indigenous Legal Issues Interest Group of the Australasian Law Teachers Association and is a member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the NSW State Reconciliation Committee.

While the law was able to give recognition to some of the aspirations of Indigenous Australians, political will was needed to achieve reconciliation, he said in his address.

“If politicians are to move, they themselves need to be moved by those to whom they are ultimately responsible: the electors,” Professor Nettheim concluded. “Here lies the importance of ‘the people’s movement’ for Reconciliation.”

The 2001 Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture, an annual event staged to mark the establishment of the Faculty of Law in 1993, was held in the Conservatorium Concert Hall on March 23.

*Professor Neil Rees was foundation Dean of the University’s Faculty of Law

For rent

Hamilton - three bedroom fully renovated and furnished house available for 6 months from July. Includes reverse cycle/split system air conditioner, open fire, fully equipped kitchen with dishwasher. Close to Beaumont Street. Easy walk to everything. $300 per week. Contact Kevin on 4921 8989 (work) or 4962 2320 (home).

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FORUM MEMBERS MAY BRING A FRIEND TO AN AQUA-FITNESS CLASS FOR FREE!
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The Life Sciences Building is the new structure adjoining the Auchmuty Library, which links the Medical Science and Biological Science buildings. Teaching and research activities in the building focus on biotechnology, with staff from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Faculty of Science and Mathematics working side by side. This integrated approach reflects the University's desire to move away from the 'silo' model to facilitate cross-disciplinary teaching and research. It also offers a more flexible and responsive approach to space utilisation, and allows the University to make the most economic and productive use of its space.

The most prominent aspect of the building's design is its northern end, which cantilevers out above the service road to the Auchmuty Library. This elevation of the structure allows essential service access to the Library, and has also allowed a major electrical sub station to remain in its current location - thereby avoiding the substantial costs associated with moving this key utility. The building is an innovative piece of structural engineering utilising precast concrete. Because of the sensitivity of research equipment in the building, the structural design had to virtually eliminate potential for vibration in the laboratories, as well as being designed to withstand earthquake loads.

The facility includes research laboratories, teaching laboratories, office space, tutorial rooms and postgraduate rooms as well as a state of the art 120 seat lecture theatre. The theatre's BMS (Building Management System) allows natural ventilation when weather is appropriate, and automatically closes vents and moves to full air conditioning when temperatures/humidity require. Natural lighting is also used in the theatre, which is "blacked out" automatically when the touch screen on the lectern is activated. Energy efficiency has been a key consideration in the design of the building's services, with hot and cold water for air conditioning purposes drawn from the new energy-efficient plant in the Auchmuty Library. Laboratories have been zoned to allow operation of ventilation and air conditioning after hours if required to maintain constant temperatures for research apparatus. Natural light, sun shading and natural ventilation of the building were modelled by environmental consultants to optimise comfort levels while avoiding where possible the ongoing expense and high energy consumption of air conditioning. This modelling also predicted how smoke would move through the building in the event of a fire, which permitted a performance based construction approval for the project. An additional benefit of natural ventilation is that natural air exhausting from the building reduces the opportunity for the concentration of volatile organic compounds (VOC) and other pollutants within buildings.

The Life Sciences Building is the seventh successive building on the campus that has included Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles in its design brief. Previous projects have included Design, Nursing, the Forum, Student Services Centre, EF Extension and Barahineban. Whilst the environmental modelling has proved very accurate in its predictions, each successive project has benefited from lessons learned on previous ones in terms of ESD issues.

Prior to the design of new buildings, extensive consultation is carried out with user groups regarding facilities required. For the Life Sciences Building, representatives of each Faculty worked extensively with the project consultants and PPE staff to ensure research and teaching needs were met and priorities adhered to.

With its strong focus as a research facility, it was very important for the design of laboratories to allow future flexibility as new research projects arise with new and sometimes unanticipated requirements. Careful attention was paid in particular to making possible future alterations to laboratory services as simple and economic as possible, and to that end an interstitial wall along the building's eastern length allows easy access to major building services. Although a few items on every project 'wish list' are inevitably foregone because of finite budgets, at the end of the day this facility has been recognised as being of world class.

Research facilities are also offered a more flexible and productive use of its space.

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Can't find a free car park?

It's no secret that every year up until Easter parking is at a premium on the Callaghan campus. However, a recent survey by the University's transport consultants Traffic Planners shows that more than 90 vacant parking spaces were available at peak times in carparks #11 and #13.

Carpark #11, is located a little further from the central areas of the campus than some other carparks, but has the added advantage that parking is free of charge! It is only a maximum of 10 minutes to walk from this car park to any destination on campus. Please be sure to park only in marked bays, and avoid parking in Disabled, Service and Reserved bays without a valid permit.

UniTunes resplendent

by Jenny Williams

After days of constant rain, the skies cleared for the annual Sparkle Helmore/Prime Television Corporate Triathlon on Sunday 11 March.

With sponsorship from the Pro Viced-Chancellor (External Relations) five university teams and several individuals competed against more than 130 corporate teams and 280 individuals at the fund raising event. Wearing the new distinctive purple “UniTunes” race singlets, our competitors were certainly noticeable on the day!

The triathletes tackled a flood ravaged 500 metre swim course at Horseshoe Beach, an 18 kilometre bike ride consisting of three loops from the foreshore to Newcastle Police Station, and a four kilometre run from Nobbys breakwall to Newcastle South skate park and return.

The teams, all called UniTunes, competed in five divisions. They were:

- Open Corporate and Government Female: Jenny Williams and Rebecca Beisler
- Corporate and Government Mixed (combined ages over 150 years): Gay McDonnell, Russell Jones, Bethany Hawker
- Corporate and Government Male (combined ages over 120 years): Patrick Murphy, Robert Milan, Steve Quinn
- Corporate and Government Female (combined ages over 120 years): Gunilla Burrowes, Helen Parker, Hilary Winchester
- Open Corporate and Government Mixed: Janie Fryer, Trish McGortigan, Michael Friel

All teams performed well, with the women’s team (over 120 years) winning their event. The mixed team in the over 150 years category also collected a trophy. At least two staff competed in their respective age categories, with Janet Astlett being awarded runner up in the over 40 years female category. The triathlon raised around $8,000 for Hunter Medical Research.

New legislation protects carers

From 1 March, discrimination in employment on the grounds of carers’ responsibilities became a form of unlawful discrimination under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act. The new legislation affects all NSW employers, including the University.

The Anti-Discrimination Board has published employer guidelines on the implications of the legislation, which works in a similar way to the law on disability discrimination. A job applicant or employee may be a carer to a variety of people including a child of a current or former husband, wife, de facto opposite or same sex partner; an adult for whom they are the legal guardian; or an immediate family member.

The following examples of discrimination are from a booklet of guidelines for employers produced by the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW.

Indirect carers’ responsibilities discrimination would occur in a workplace where all supervisors are expected to work full-time. This means that people who need to be at home part of the week to care for someone cannot be supervisors. This requirement to work full-time would be considered to be indirect discrimination if it is ‘not reasonable in all circumstances’. It is worth noting that by having such a rule you are probably missing out on lots of good potential supervisors who can only work part-time.

The law says that you must do your best to provide whatever special arrangements a job applicant or employee needs in order to manage their carer’s responsibilities. Some examples of extra or special arrangements you could provide an employee include allowing work from home some of the time or all of the time; changing start or finish times, roster arrangements or break times; allowing part-time work or job-sharing; being flexible about the amount and timing of unpaid or paid leave; giving notice about occasional changes to regular hours; and providing subsidised care facilities.

The legislation is expected to stimulate employers to facilitate access to flexible work practices, and to examine the discriminatory impact of restrictive workplace cultures – before getting a complaint. For further information contact the Equity and Diversity Unit on 4921 6547 or the Anti-Discrimination Board on 4926 4300.
University in frontline of management training

The 1995 Karpin Report, Enterprising Nation, identified an urgent need for Australian managers to improve their skills. After extensive consultation with industry, the Australian National Training Authority developed a set of management competencies and implemented them in the Frontline Management Initiative (FMI).

The University, through its Learning and Development Program, has been offering a Diploma level FMI qualification to its staff for the past two years and will offer it again this year. Program coordinator, Rochelle England, says FMI is a very portable qualification that is highly valued throughout Australia.

"There has been some misunderstanding about FMI, with many people believing that it only evidences experience that people already have," Rochelle said. "But it is actually a very applied program of new learning that builds on and enhances people’s capabilities in a workplace context."

A significant component of the FMI is a workplace project undertaken over the course of the 11-session program. Previous projects have included the development of a web-based policy and procedures manual for the Central Coast Campus, an orientation/research resource kit and workshop for the Faculty of Nursing, and an occupational health and safety audit of the Faculty of Engineering.

"Many of the work-based projects undertaken by staff have been cited by unit and section managers as significant contributions to the work of the unit and to the University," Rochelle said. "The participants all comment on how much they enjoy learning about different management styles, which often supports their own ideas of the ideal manager."

Cathy Stone, Senior Counsellor and Head of the Student Support Unit at the Central Coast Campuses, said doing the FMI course had helped her to feel more confident about her management style.

"Working on the project helped my personal and professional development in providing opportunities for networking with others around the Campus, and increased teamwork, communication and cooperation," Cathy said. "It also helped me to develop better time management skills."

There will be FMI intakes (limited to 12 people per course) in May and July. Managers will provide financial support as well as time release for participating staff and the fee is $650 per person. The May course will consist of nine sessions plus a workplace project. For information go to www.newcastle.edu.au/ed/fmi/ or contact Rochelle England on (4921) 6311.

NUSTAR set for launch

The 2001 NUSTAR odyssey is about to reach a crucial stage. The new student system for the University is due to go-live in May after 12 months of preparation and testing. That, however, will not be the end of the journey – merely the beginning!

All of the academic records of the University – more than 100,000 historical and 20,000 live student records – will be transferred to NUSTAR from the University’s current student system, NUSS. It is not intended that the two systems be run in parallel, so there will be a quick changeover between the systems and a steep learning curve for everyone!

The system has been in preparation for over 12 months and is now at the testing phase. The testing is scheduled to be completed by the end of April. This follows the building of a prototype of the system, which was demonstrated to staff in October and November last year. A number of Action Groups, including one dealing with academic issues, was set up after the prototype demonstrations to deal with the transitional issues.

All staff who wish to have a NUSTAR account will need to attend an Introduction and Navigation Guide training session which will run for three hours.

These sessions are due to commence in May and will continue for several months. Attendance at this session will be enough for departmental academic and general staff to get started using the system. Check the NUSTAR web site for how to apply for an account and sign up for a training session.

It is planned to roll-out NUSTAR using a thin client technology product known as Citrix. The use of Citrix means that additional software does not have to be loaded on to every PC. Staff will simply need to download Citrix onto their computer by visiting a web site. The installation of Citrix will be included in the Introduction and Navigation training session.

NUSTAR will provide better access to online reporting of student information and it is hoped that academic program and course coordinators will take advantage of the information to better manage their programs and courses. Academic staff are therefore encouraged to apply for a NUSTAR account.

For further information about training, the roll-out and any other NUSTAR issues, please refer to the NUSTAR web site http://www.newcastle.edu.au/nustar or contact the NUSTAR Change Coordinator, David Donnelly, ext 6969.
Health, Safety and Development

Increasing computer usage, as well as workstations designed before the advent of new computer technology, have led to the problem that many workstations are often not ergonomically appropriate for their users and as a result can cause computer-related injuries.

Whilst there are some general design rules, these need not be applied rigidly. The basic idea is to get yourself comfortable. Three of the main things you may be able to change in your office that will help you achieve this goal are:

1. A decent chair

   A standard clerical-type office chair is the best, NOT the large, high-backed reclining types which some people think are guaranteed to be comfortable. A good chair for working in has the following features:
   - adjustable in height;
   - a separately adjustable backrest you can bring forwards into the small of the back, as well as altering its height until your shoulders are relaxed, not slumped, in the working position;
   - adjust the backrest into the small of your back;
   - ensure the seat pan is flat without the front edge of the seat pushing into the back of your legs;
   - a five-star base (for stability);
   - curved, "waterfall" front;
   - well padded - you shouldn't be able to feel the seat base under the padding when you're slumped heavily in the chair.

2. Learn how to adjust your chair

   - alter its height until your shoulders are relaxed, not slumped, in the working position;
   - adjust the backrest into the small of your back;
   - ensure the seat pan is flat or sloping upwards (NEVER downwards) at the front;
   - use a footrest if there is any pressure under your thighs;
   - learn the elements of correct posture, and practice them!

   There are a number of Web pages available on work station adjustment. For more information try www.ergonomics.com.au/howtosit.htm, and www.learninglink.bbk.ac.uk/courses/rt003/index.htm.

3. Take regular breaks

   Muscles need movement - from the tiny muscles which manage your eyes to the big ones which support your back. Get up and get things. Try working standing up sometimes. Get some fresh air. And keep yourself fit - daily exercise (even just a brisk walk) will repay you many times in the extra hours of productive work you'll be able to do as a result.

   Try these exercises - they help build strong, flexible muscles to support your back. They also help relieve tension that can occur when you sit in one position for a long time. Each exercise takes only a few minutes and can be done while you sit. Try a few and feel the difference! (Note: be sure your chair is stable before beginning these exercises and stop if you feel any discomfort. If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your doctor before starting a stretching or exercise program.)

   Face forward. Slowly turn your head toward your shoulder, if possible, so you look over it. Return to center. Repeat five times.

   Then do the same in the other direction.

   Sit with feet flat on floor. With your hands on chair (or desk) for support, slowly raise your thighs a few inches above your chair seat. Repeat five times.

   Clasp your hands behind your head and push your elbows back. Release the tension, then repeat five times.

   Exhaling, slowly lean forward, drop head toward knees and let hands drop at ankles. Hold five seconds. Inhaling, unwind, slowly bringing up the head. Exhaling, stretch arms toward ceiling. Repeat five times.


It may surprise you to know that sitting puts more strain on your back than standing or lifting. The stress of leaning over paperwork, slouching in an uncomfortable chair and spending long hours in one position leaves many office workers with aching, tired backs. But beating back stress is simple - and it's up to you.

Program to help redundant workers

The University is joining with the region's Anglican welfare agency, Samaritans, and the Hunter Urban Network of Consumer Health, to set up a new mentoring program for redundant workers.

The collaborative project is being made possible by $44,889 in funding through the Federal Government's Research and Development Program for Rural and Regional Australia, with the funding being matched dollar-for-dollar by the BHP Prime Ministerial Taskforce.

Professor Dimity Pond, from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, says the mentoring program will look at improving the mental and physical health of the redundant workers.

"These men get into negative cycles," she explained. "They feel down and depressed, and find there is not enough to do to fill their days now that they are no longer working. Their social support network which they had through their workplace is gone, and many men lose their sense of where they fit into the family home."

Eighty men will participate in the program - 40 ex-BHP workers and 40 others. All of the men must have been unemployed for between six and 18 months.

The men will be split into eight groups of 10, with each group assigned a male mentor, who will run social activities and teach new practical skills. The focus will be on reducing stress, improving mental and physical health, and quality of life. The program has been funded for one year.

March 28 – April 15

Ignition, an exhibition curated by Simone Paterson and Izabela Pluta at the Watt Space Galleries featuring emerging artists.

April 9 – October 1

The Sports Union will run a series of Guest Lectures on issues in sport. Rebecca Monk of Marketing and Media Services will deliver the April 9 lecture on Dealing with the Media. All lectures will be held on Monday at 6.30pm in HPE 2.3 (next to the Forum) and will go for an hour. For more information call the Sports Union on (4921) 6960.
**Graduate Success Celebrated**

Two Newcastle graduates were honoured at the 2001 Convocation Annual Awards Dinner last month, for their professional achievements in two very different fields.

**Dr Chris Rawlings**, who was presented with the Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence, was Chief Executive of one of Australia's largest coal mines, QCT Resources Ltd, until late last year. He received his formal qualifications at the University, completing a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Class 1) in Geology (1976) and a PhD in Structural Geology and Rock Mechanics (1983).

After beginning his career as a research scientist with the CSIRO, Chris became one of the few successful business people to make the transition from a highly technical career to that of a senior business executive.

The 2001 winner of the Newton-John Award for innovation and creativity is Hunter sports commentator Helene O'Neill, who graduated from the University in 1986 with a Diploma of Teaching, and in 1988 with a Bachelor of Education.

She is employed by the ARL Foundation/Newcastle Knights as Primary School Development Officer. Helene serves as a sports commentator for Newcastle radio stations ABC Newcastle, 2HD and 2NUR-FM and as a freelance writer contributes a lifestyle column for the Newcastle Herald. She also writes on netball for both the Newcastle Herald and the Sunday Telegraph.

In 2000 Helene received the inaugural Career Woman of the Year Award from the Newcastle Business and Professional Women's Club.

Also receiving recognition at the Convocation Dinner were seven students, selected for their outstanding performance and contributions during their final year of study in 2000. The Dinner was held on Friday 30th March in the Brennan Room of the University Union.

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