Into the future - Information Services Centre proposed for the Hunter
Facilitating internationalisation - Tracy McCabe
International students socialise on campus
Manila Recognition Ceremony first ever
Vice-Chancellor's Column

AVCC releases 'vision' for universities in 2020

"The University will play a major role, particularly in the Hunter and Central Coast communities, in providing for wider access to higher education, as long as the necessary resources are made available to us..."
Walk for reconciliation

The University demonstrated its commitment to the reconciliation process with a Reconciliation Week Walk at Callaghan at the end of May.

Aboriginal elders Ken McBride and Rex Morgan welcomed the walkers to Awabakal land in front of Birabahn, the new Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies.

“It’s wonderful to stand here today and see we can work together through reconciliation,” Rex said. “Working together in the community will establish us in one mind, one spirit, one body. It’s a really good to feel the atmosphere today, to see where the building is situated and to speak on behalf of the Indigenous people and the spirits of this land.”

Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes said the number of staff and students attending the Walk was recognition of the importance of the reconciliation process at the University. He pointed to Birabahn’s completion as a testament to the commitment of the University to Indigenous higher education.

“Reconciliation is about forging new partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities — about building partnerships in trust,” he said. “The University is strategically committed to reconciliation and to furthering the Indigenous community in higher education and research. It will act as a major leader in Indigenous education in this country.”

Aboriginal student Luke Pearson pointed to the theme of this year’s Reconciliation Week — Walking the Talk — when he addressed the crowd at the Birabahn ceremony.

“This is the 35th anniversary of citizenship rights for Indigenous Australians, which makes this year’s theme even more relevant.”

Luke said that issues such as the stolen generation and black deaths in custody weren’t restricted to the past and that Indigenous people were still suffering and dying.

“We don’t need to just acknowledge the past, we need to acknowledge the present. We need to recognize that while reconciliation is a relatively new term, it is a very old concept that our people have been fighting for for over 200 years.”

Luke, who is enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching double degree, said that the struggle to achieve the reconciliation vision — a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all — is by beginning in the here and now.

“By trying to understand the reality of the person who sits on the other side of the fence to you, by going in with an open mind and being prepared to be wrong.”

Hundreds of staff and students attended the walk, which was part of a calendar of activities celebrating Reconciliation, with the Reconciliation Ball held on June 1 and the Birabahn Cultural Festival planned to take place in October.

“It’s wonderful to stand here today and see we can work together through Reconciliation. Working together in the community will establish us in one mind, one spirit, one body.”

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High-speed laser scanner comes to Newcastle

The surveying group within the School of Engineering now has access to a sophisticated terrestrial laser scanner. The $250,000 scanner, which is able to plot thousands of three-dimensional coordinates of objects within its range in seconds, has been acquired by a consortium of five universities. Each of the institutions and the Australian Research Council contributed to the cost of the scanner, which will be used for research.

Newcastle's surveying group will have access to the laser scanner for about two months each year and is interested in testing the features of the new technology by calibrating it and ensuring that the results it produces are correct.

Surveying lecturer Harvey Mitchell says the terrestrial laser scanner is a 'spectacular' piece of technology, able to record up to 6000 points per second over distances varying from a few metres to over half a kilometre.

"The scanner uses a laser to measure distances up to 700 metres to accuracies of a few centimetres, with software on a laptop computer creating graphical views of the scanned scene within minutes," he said. "It allows scanning around a horizontal arc of a complete circle and its portability makes it easy to ship between universities."

Terrestrial laser scanners are particularly useful for recording the shapes of objects that have no significant point features, such as coal stockpiles, for which the volumes can be provided by the software associated with the scanner. It has a wide range of possible applications from plotting the points in a landscape for mining, architectural or construction plans to modelling film sets. The scanner came to Newcastle for the first time in May, where it was used to keep students abreast of the latest technology as well as for research.

Researchers win General Motors contract

The University's School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science has won funding for a research project with American car manufacturing giant General Motors (GM) aimed at making engines cleaner, more fuel efficient and smoother.

The $US120,000 project, to be conducted over two years, involves researchers looking at algorithms and developments that will enhance the 'smarts' in engine controls. These are responsible for controlling things like ignition timing, fuel injection, throttle position, exhaust gas recirculation and in more advanced engines valve timing, etc.

Researchers include Professor Graham Goodwin, Professor Rick Middleton, Jose de Dona, PhD candidate James Welsh, and an additional graduate student who will begin work on the project in July.

James, who visited the GM Technical Centre in Detroit in the US with Professor Middleton last month, said there is three goals for the project - to reduce emissions, improve fuel economy and increase driveability.

"There has been a large amount of research effort in advance control during the last few decades which industry has generally been reluctant to utilise. With this contract, we will breach this theory/practise gap as current research work will actually be implemented in a vehicle," James said. "The technology we are developing for this project will produce tools we hope will be applicable not only to existing engines but also to fuel cell technology."

The research contract defines the objective of the project as to develop a framework for the automated real-time design, development and testing of nonlinear multivariable control algorithms for automotive powertrain systems. It continues that 'it is expected that the control system will have a capability to learn and adapt to changes in vehicle dynamics and its environment.'
Research to fight blindness

Research into an implantable nerve stimulator that could bring vision to people with certain forms of blindness will be carried out at the University.

The Australian Research Council funded research began in 1997 as the PhD project of Gregg Suaning, who is now a senior lecturer in the School of Engineering.

"Prevalent conditions that cause blindness, including retinitis pigmentosa and age-related macular degeneration, cause the photoreceptive cells of the retina to become dysfunctional," Gregg explained. "As these cells initiate a cascade of events that leads to vision, their dysfunction causes blindness. It is now known that this cascade of events can be triggered by electrical stimulation."

Gregg's research so far has developed a sophisticated 100-channel nerve stimulator capable of implantation within the eye, an electrode array for interfacing with the surviving retinal neurons, and a radio-telemetry link for communicating with and powering the implant. The 100 channels aim to provide the perception of light and dark, text characters, and rudimentary vision.

"The neurostimulator has proven to be effective in evoking visual responses in animal studies," Gregg said. "The next step is to trial the device with humans in order to obtain data on the appropriate stimulation parameters and to find out how people perceive 'vision'."

Industrial designers aim to hit the right note

When does a trumpet not look like a trumpet? When it is a newly developed digital trumpet, apparently.

Four final year students in the University's industrial design course, however, are doing their bit to make the revolutionary instrument look and feel like the real thing.

Renowned Australian trumpeter James Morrison has asked the students to help improve the appearance of the digital trumpet he is developing in association with the inventor, Newcastle engineering graduate Steve Marshall. Steve, an amateur musician, formulated the idea for the horn as part of his final year project. He approached Morrison, who was keen to support the horn's development.

The musician, who plays a number of instruments but is acclaimed for his virtuosity with the trumpet, told Australian Music magazine that he was keen to experiment with the 'wonderful world of sounds' that digital music offers but had not yet found an instrument that was right. He said digital instruments he had tried were more like typing than playing.

"What we're really looking for is something that a trumpeter can pick up and whilst, of course, it's not a trumpet, it will have certain controls and things that are necessary for a trumpet to have. It will respond and feel like a trumpet, but then be able to access all these other sounds, and one of the biggest things it can access is an eight octave range."

When Industrial Design lecturer Graham Paver heard about the virtual horn, he gave Morrison a call.

Lincoln Black and Stephen Byrge work on the trumpet design. Final year student Chris Stojelewski and Masters student Sam Trewartha are also working on projects relating to the digital horn design

"I told him what we do here in industrial design, which is to translate a working prototype into a product that is ready to manufacture," Graham said. "The students' job will be to give the digital horn a trumpet feel, like an electric guitar, for instance, which isn't like an acoustic guitar but everyone can tell they're related."

Industrial designers help to create the shape of many of the objects that surround us, from the dashboard on our cars to furniture and even pens. The Newcastle course, which has been offered for around a decade, encourages students to be 3-D focussed and to build models of their designs in the workshop.

Graham and the four students working on the project met with Steve Marshall to find out how the digital horn works.

"It's a great opportunity for final year students to work on a real project and be stimulated with a lot more ideas than with a theoretical project," he said. "To be associated with James Morrison in such an exciting development will be an added bonus for them when they are embarking on their future careers."
Engineering merger an effective marriage

"I hope the two groups will eventually be united to create an environment that is more conducive to effective collaboration."

Bob graduated with a Electrical Engineering degree from the University in 1979 – the same year as the first cohort of Computer Engineering degree students. Newcastle's computer engineering course was the first of its type in Australia when it began in 1975.

"I've always been interested in electrical engineering and computers, even as a kid," Bob said. "The Bachelor of Computer Engineering was fairly innovative for its time. There has been rapid change in technology in that area, which is the reason we introduced the Telecommunications specialization."

Bob is from Newcastle. His father Eric was an Associate Professor in Mechanical Engineering at the University. Bob completed an electrical engineering traineeship with BHP before beginning work as a research assistant at the University in 1982. He began teaching the following year and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1990. Apart from two year-long sabbaticals – in Glasgow and Aalborg, Denmark – Bob has remained in Newcastle, completing his Masters and PhD in electrical engineering here.

While he teaches in the computing area, Bob researches in power electronics – the engineering of high-powered electronic devices to control electric machines. The devices are used in a range of different applications including variable speed AC drives, photovoltaic grid interface systems, electrical vehicle technology, microwave ovens, wind turbine technology and fluorescent light starters amongst others. Since his first research grant in 1984, Bob has attracted almost a million dollars in research funding to the University and is currently working on two large Australian Research Council funded projects.

Bob is no stranger to leadership having been Head of the former Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering. He has also been Assistant Director of the Centre for Industrial Control Science and Assistant Dean for Information Technology, as well as a member of Academic Senate. He finds the management structure of the new Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment to be quite effective and says that the School is also functioning smoothly.

"The School executive meets each fortnight," he said. "We've also instigated regular School information meetings to bring all the staff together for an informal exchange of information. We were looking for a way that staff could come together that wasn't too onerous and that allowed them to find out what's going on and give their feedback and ideas on issues concerning the School."
Open to new opportunities

The University's restructure has opened Fine Art up to new opportunities, Head of the School Professor Anne Graham says.

"Fine Art had already been restructured before the latest Review, so not too much changed within the School in the University restructure. What the new structure has provided is the opportunity for us to discover new people we can relate to in the University."

Anne, who has acted in the position of Deputy Executive Dean of the new Faculty of Education and Arts in first semester, says the new structure is more open, allowing academic staff to become aware of what their colleagues are doing. For instance, Anne learned that anthropologist Professor Geoffrey Samuel is an expert on Tantric art and arranged for him to give a lecture to art students on the subject.

The new arrangements have led to a development of other relationships as well.

"Art has always had a very strong relationship with Education because a lot of our students do double degrees to become art teachers and we also do programs for primary education," Anne said.

"Under the new structure, that relationship has developed further and we've just begun a collaborative research program with Education."

"The great thing about the School of Fine Art is that it is very democratic, we share the burden of administration."

Anne, and acting Head of the School of Fine Art Miranda Lawry, are working with Professor Sid Bourke and Dr Alysson Holbrook on a study of PhD examination in the creative arts. The project studies what examiners look for in a PhD thesis in an attempt to identify thesis benchmarks and qualities.

The researchers have chosen Fine Art for their study because the discipline has only begun to put forward PhD candidates relatively recently and is still developing expectations on PhD quality and process. At the same time, Fine Art is seeking to establish a niche within the University research culture.

Anne is a perfect illustration of this and will take study leave next semester to complete her own PhD in her specialisation of public/community art.

"Newcastle features in my PhD work," Anne says. "Although I'm keen to complete my thesis, I'll be sorry to be away next semester because it's such an interesting time at the University."

Public art has been a long term pursuit for Anne, who came to Newcastle from the University of Western Sydney in 1999. She has staged numerous exhibitions and installations in communities in Australia and overseas and is currently involved in a collaborative project with Dr Deborah Stevenson from the School of Social Sciences and Professor Robert Constable from the Conservatorium to establish a postgraduate coursework program in cultural planning.

"Deborah, Robert and I (and Ross Woodrow from Fine Art) are all on various city planning committees looking at Newcastle's cultural development, so it's very appropriate for us to be responding directly to that by developing this program."

Anne says the profile of the School is changing as it moves more towards photo-media and digital imaging as its central focus. She says that the digital technologies form part of the language of today's art students, who come to University with skills in this area.

"While the use of digital technology is becoming widespread, we are absolutely committed to maintaining other disciplines within the School, while encouraging staff to embrace the new technology in their area. We want it to be a tool for all the disciplines without it taking over any of them."

As far as the workload involved in her position as Head of School, Anne says she hasn't so far felt the burden, with Miranda Lawry acting in her place this year. Anne teaches a lot of postgraduate students, who are attracted to her because of the nature of her research, so she sees teaching and research as inseparable activities. In the same way, she sees her involvement in the development of Newcastle's cultural identity and of a culture for the School of Fine Art as essential activities.

"Those things are all just a part of what I do. But you can't do it all yourself, you have to operate as a unit."

Anne believes that the restructure of the administrative functions of the University will make processes more efficient and take some of the pressure off academic staff.

"The great thing about the School of Fine Art is that it is very democratic, we share the burden of administration. The staff have a lot of different skills, which they contribute to the School and I'm hoping that sort of cooperation is universal across the new Faculty. I think that will happen in what is a more democratic and open structure."
Facilitating internationalisation

Director of International Development Services (IDS) Tracy McCabe will seek to significantly expand the University's international student numbers but doesn't see revenue raising as her only brief.

Tracy, who comes to Newcastle from the University of South Australia, says her first priority will be to facilitate discussion within the University about recruitment strategies.

"I don't see it as my position to dictate where the University should be concentrating its efforts internationally," she said. "The Federal Government has created a fiscal environment in which universities are forced to look at the bottom line and it is appropriate to set corporate objectives for overseas student recruitment, either as percentages of the student population or as a revenue figure."

It will be up to the University's Faculties, however, to create the menu by determining which of their programs are suitable for international students. They will need to make decisions about what kind of revenue they expect, their philosophy on internationalisation and how they want their international student cohorts to look — not in a physical sense but in terms of the areas in which they are represented and the breadth of the international mix.

Tracy is well prepared to facilitate this process of discussion and decision making. The University of South Australia is Australia's largest provider of offshore programs and has more than 2,500 international students at its Adelaide campus. As Manager of its international student recruitment processes, Tracy has overseen a phenomenal 20 to 40 percent growth in the number of international students each year. She was attracted to Newcastle by the challenge of doing for us what she did for them.

"I'm really impressed with the IDS staff and with the Faculty staff who are involved with international students," Tracy said. "They all believe that the University has something really important to contribute to international students. I don't get the feeling that people have been putting the place down or making promises in the marketplace that we can't keep."

Tracy also believes that the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the executive charged with responsibility for internationalisation have no illusions about the University's position.

"There is still a lot of potential for Newcastle to position itself in terms of international student recruitment. The University has a lot to sell and there is an incredible amount of engagement in the whole process of internationalisation."

Tracy grew up on the campus of the University of Technology in Lae, Papua New Guinea, where her father taught mechanical engineering. Describing herself as a global gypsy, she recalls a carefree childhood in the midst of a multi-cultural teaching staff and their families from all over the world.

"We had no television, which was really good for reading and the imagination. There were around 40 kids at my primary school including Indigenous students. It was an amazing place to be a child."

Tracy went to boarding school in Brisbane before enrolling in a communications degree at the University of South Australia. She began work in the public relations unit of that university before transferring to their international programs office in 1986. She then served her apprenticeship as an international marketer in the unregulated environment that prevailed before the introduction of the Education Services to Overseas Students Act of 1991.

"It was then that universities began to see international student recruitment as big business and to talk about branding, positioning, products and clients."

Tracy understands the reluctance of academic staff to accept the marketing of education. She sympathises with the Thai philosophy that education is an inalienable right and something that is too precious to sell. However, she advocates the benefits of internationalisation beyond revenue. The cross-pollination of ideas enabled by the exchange of international scholars, for instance, or the huge resource — financial and cultural — that international students offer to the communities in which they live, or the mind-expanding benefits to the whole Australian population of exposure to a variety of cultures.

Tracy describes herself as an excellent traveller — spare in her packing and totally unflappable. Despite this, she plans to keep her feet firmly planted in Newcastle for the majority of the time. She believes that academics are the best ambassadors for their courses, supported by her own staff in IDS, who understand international markets. Tracy will oversee relationships with the University's offshore representatives, who will act as middle-men in the recruitment process.

"I don't intend to tear around the world actually recruiting students," she said. "I have a feeling that we can put resources into markets that are easily accessible to us such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand, to get some runs on the board quickly."
Visual arts HSC study day

The Fine Arts Studies Centre at the Ourimbah Campus received rave reviews from HSC students recently when they visited for a Visual Arts HSC Study Day.

The students, who came from all high schools on the Central Coast as well as Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and northern Sydney suburbs, had an activity-packed day that proved to be outstandingly successful. Organised by the Central Coast Visual Arts Head Teachers Network, the day comprised a series of lectures by invited guests, workshops and a visit to the Campus's Fine Art Studies Centre.

Central Coast Creative Arts Consultant and primary organiser of the day, Janine Debenham, said there was a huge demand for places and that the 238 students who attended gained a lot from the experience.

"I was amazed at the level of demand for the day and the high level of interest in the program," Janine said. "It was organised as an initiative to give the HSC students another point of view on their studies, to further develop links with Visual Arts teachers in high schools and also to showcase the Ourimbah art facilities to the students and their teachers. Some parts of the HSC curriculum are not easily delivered at school and it's a great opportunity to do that and also expose the students to a tertiary level art facility at the same time."

Presenters for the Study Day included Craig Judd, a critic and art writer and also the Project and Education Officer for Biennale 2002; Carolina Totteman, art coordinator from Mosman High School; and practising visual artist and installation sculptural artist, Alison Clouston. The presentations gave the students alternative points of view on aspects of their HSC art curriculum.

"Through programs such as this, we are able to reveal aspects of the syllabus and put an extra layer on the students' perspective of art," Janine said. "This was made possible by being made very welcome at the Ourimbah Campus, particularly by Visual Arts lecturing staff. It was a very positive experience, not only for the students, but for the art teachers as well. We hope to pursue the positive link with the Ourimbah Campus and develop further collaborative activities."

Fall-Proofing

The Faculty of Health is running a research study for older people at risk of falls and is looking for volunteers to take part.

Fall injury in the elderly is a major health problem. About a third of older people suffer falls each year and three percent sustain a serious injury. People over 70 have three times the risk of nursing home placement after one fall and six times the risk after two. Falls are also the most common cause of preventable death in older people.

Researcher Lynnette Mackenzie from the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in the Faculty of Health says her research program called Fall-Proofing is designed to improve the confidence of people over the age of 70 and overcome the risk factors involved in falls.

"When an older person has a fall they often suffer a major loss of confidence and that leads to restricted social and physical activity, which can compound the problem," she said. "Fear of falling is as great a fear to some older people as the fear of robbery or financial problems."

The Fall-Proofing program involves a two-hour session per week for eight weeks for groups of 10.

"The program includes exercise, accessing the community safely, home safety and maintaining general health," said Lynette. "We have found we can improve people's mobility, which leads to a lift in confidence, while also reducing the risk factors involved in falls both at home and in the community."

To take part, participants will need to have a home visit by the researcher for approximately one hour, attend the Fall-Proofing program at a local venue, keep a calendar to record any falls and fill out a short mailed survey half way through and at the end of the 12 month study.

Potential participants can find out about the project by calling the Discipline of Occupational Therapy on 4921-6398.
Sharing Aussie culture with international students

International students are being offered more than a good education at the University thanks to International Student Support Services. The University’s growing international student population can take advantage of a comprehensive Social Events Calendar during their stay, with a program of events ranging from a bushwalk in the Blue Mountains to a daring swing on the high trapeze at Byron Bay.

Robert Heathcote from International Student Support says an important part of the experience of students visiting the University from other countries is cultural. “The students come to Newcastle with some expectations and pre-conceived ideas and we like to challenge those ideas by giving them some real experiences of Australian life,” he said.

The Support Services staff escort the students on an outing to the beach, for example, where they are educated about swimming safely in the surf. Students can also sail on Lake Macquarie, sea kayak on the NSW north coast, take surfing lessons or climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge. For a change of pace, they could cruise Sydney Harbour, cuddle a koala at Oakvale Farm, or spot a dolphin at Port Stephens. They are also introduced to Australia’s sporting culture with outings to the rugby league, Aussie Rules and soccer matches.

“"The University subsidises the social events so they are inexpensive for the students, and they are able to include their families if they are here with them,” Robert said. “We handed out the Social Events Calendar at Orientation this year and we’ve had a massive response from the students.”

The most popular excursions included bushwalking in the Blue Mountains, which had more than 350 students from nearly 30 different countries take part, and the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, with 228 students from 27 nations enjoying the glitter and glamour of Sydney’s famous festival.

“It’s an enjoyment thing for the students and because they feel secure on the organised excursions, they will try things that they might not normally do unless we took them,” Robert said.

The International Support Services team are busy putting together another fabulous social calendar for next Semester’s lucky students — and they sometimes let Australian students tag along!
University honours distinguished alumni

The University recognised the achievements of two of its graduates by presenting them with the Alumni Medal in Sydney in May.

John Berryman has been Chief Executive of the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children in Sydney since 1985, and holds a Master of Special Education (Sensory Disability) from the University.

During his time as Chief Executive, John has overseen the development of Renwick College, a centre for professional training and research.

The College, operated by the Institute in affiliation with the University since 1992, has become a distinguished centre for professional training and research in the field of education for children with hearing or vision impairments, including children with additional disabilities.

Professor Mohamed Khadra is the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Design and Science) at the University of Canberra. He holds a Bachelor of Medicine from the University and has worked in Australia and the United Kingdom both in practice and as an academic.

Professor Khadra also holds memberships with eight associations and societies across the world in the fields of medicine and science, and has been awarded numerous fellowships and awards for his research, primarily in the field of urology.

The University of Newcastle Alumni Medal (Sydney) was established to recognise the outstanding contribution of members of Convocation who, through their commitment, dedication and service to either the University, the community or their chosen profession, bring honour and distinction to the University. The Medals were presented at a cocktail party held at Parliament House in Sydney.

Kelver Hartley winner combines skills in thesis

One of the winners of the Kelver Hartley Scholarships for 2002 took his language teachers by surprise when he handed in his French Honours thesis last month.

Jeremy Noonan, a graduate in Law who was completing his Honours degree in French, combined his two interests to hand in a paper on a new statute in French law recognising same sex couples.

"The French law allows same sex couples to be recognised by law," Jeremy explained. "They are currently looking at similar legislation in NSW, examining the institution of marriage and whether same sex couples have equality with heterosexual couples."

Jeremy leaves next month for a year's study at the University of La Rochelle in France, where he will undertake postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Law. It will be the first time the 23-year-old has been to France and he plans to visit Lyon and Paris while he is there.

"I hope to specialise in international law and work for the United Nations or perhaps in the commercial sphere," he said. At this stage he is keeping his options open and hasn't ruled out doing a PhD thesis on another aspect of French law.

Gabrielle Bookallil, the second recipient of a Kelver Hartley Scholarship for 2002, will also leave for France in August. She will undertake a six-month program in French language, literature and society at tertiary institutions in Vichy and Besançon, as well as two periods of cultural study in Paris. She will complete her French Honours dissertation during her stay in France.

"I started studying in 1995 because I wanted to do something with my life over and above being a wife, a mother, and a support for my husband in his business," she said.

Two doctoral students in French, Patricia Williams and Jane Hartley, are carrying out part of their research in France during 2002 thanks to Grants-in-Aid from the Hartley Bequest Program.

Director of the Program, Emeritus Professor Ken Dutton, said he was pleased that this year's Hartley Award recipients were studying at an advanced level, reflecting the growth in French postgraduate and Honours enrolments.

"Though it is good to be able to support senior undergraduate students as we have in the past, it was Professor Hartley's wish that the Scholarships be used primarily to enable postgraduate and Honours students to gain first-hand experience of study in France," he said.
Newcastle takes a RAPID lead in skills assessment

The School of Architecture and Built Environment has won a University Teaching Development Grant to implement a web-based self-assessment system to help undergraduates develop their professional skills and competencies during their studies.

The system, called RAPID, was developed in the Department of Civil and Building Engineering at Loughborough University in England, in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Building. It enables students to evaluate their progress in acquiring the range of skills and competencies required by their professional body or organisation.

Deputy Head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment Willy Sher was project director of the RAPID program at Loughborough before moving to Newcastle and will build on the UK version to ensure its relevance to the University.

"The drive for this sort of program is coming from employers and professional bodies, who have an increasing awareness of the importance of certain core professional skills such as communication, presentation, teamwork and so on," he said. "They take the technical knowledge of tertiary students as a given but the other skills required to qualify for corporate membership of professional bodies are often not acquired for many years after graduation. If our graduates can complete their studies having developed and documented these skills, they will be highly regarded by potential employers."

The University recognises the importance of attaining professional skills and has identified 13 core skills that it will ensure every graduate receives during their studies at Newcastle. In a recent survey of employers, 10 of the 13 skills were regarded as essential for university graduates to have. The RAPID project will support the implementation of the University’s Core Skills initiative.

Willy says that the RAPID system is a personal and professional development tool that enables users to record their achievements in developing skills appropriate to their professional development needs. Work is currently underway in the UK to extend RAPID to degree programs accredited by other professional bodies within the construction field, including the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, British Institution of Architectural Technologists, and the Royal Institution of Town and Regional Planners.

The Newcastle project will adapt and implement RAPID in the disciplines of Building, Education, Nursing and Software Engineering but Willy hopes it will eventually be adopted across the University. A project team (Tony Williams, Ron Sharkey, Carol Richards and Fran Rosamond) is working to ensure credibility within each discipline. The competencies required by the Australian Institute of Building will form an integral part of the building version of RAPID.

"People are starting to get interested in this sort of program in Australia but there’s no evidence of anyone else actually doing anything about it yet," Willy said. "By funding us to implement RAPID, which is a good model, the University will take a lead and our graduates will emerge ahead of the pack."

TUNRA develops Hunter investment potential

The University of Newcastle Research Associates (TUNRA) demonstrated its role in developing local innovations into investments for the Hunter region, at an event held in Newcastle in May.

TUNRA supported the ASX: Investing in Innovation exhibition, held at Newcastle City Hall on May 24. CEO Dr Soozy Smith says TUNRA is one of the major players in realising the potential of innovation in the Hunter region.

"TUNRA links the University to industry, the community, and markets across Australia and overseas by managing research and development, commercial negotiations, patenting strategies and intellectual property," she said. "The University is home to literally hundreds of new innovations developed through research at the highest level. TUNRA develops these innovations, resulting in significant investments in Newcastle and the Hunter. These support the local economy and further research and development."

Dr Smith cited CICS Automation as an example of TUNRA’s work.

"CICS Automation was developed in 1994 to commercialise advanced industrial control products developed at the University’s Centre for Industrial Control Science.

"The company’s main product was UNAC, which enables the rapid design and safe implementation of advanced industrial control systems. CICS changed its name to UNAC Automation Pty Ltd and then merged with Hunter Control, and is now a division of that company. Clients to have used the technology developed by CICS Automation include BHP and CSR."

In addition, TUNRA supported the development of the Jameson Cell technology, in which flotation is used for the effective removal of fine particles. The technology was developed by the University’s Professor Graeme Jameson.
Hong Kong graduates urged to stay in touch

Another advocate for the benefits of alumni networks, Poon Kam-kwong, was presented with an Honorary Doctorate by the University at the June graduation ceremony.

Poon Kam-kwong, known as Sammy Poone, has advised Ms Ho in her role as President of the Federation of Australian Alumni Associations and has undertaken to assist the Association to host the Australian Universities International Alumni Convention to be held in Hong Kong in 2004. He has worked to raise the profile of Australian alumni in Hong Kong and encouraged alumni to mentor new members and introduce them to their colleagues and business associates.

Mr Poone, who has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Far East College, has received a Badge of Honour and is a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his service to the Hong Kong community. The honours recognise his long record of community service, particularly his work with young people and the elderly.

The graduate speaker at the Graduation Ceremony, Ms Tracy Lee, who has a Bachelor of Science (Architecture) and Master of Marketing degrees from the University, described the difficulties of studying so far from home. She said that the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to success for the Hong Kong graduates were overcome with the help of University staff.

"I have to say the answer is the help from the excellent faculties and facilities of this University of care and thoughtfulness. The Language Centre, International Student Office and the friendly staff were very helpful and patient, solving all sorts of problems. But most highly, we have to thank ourselves. We had accomplished what seemed an impossible task."

Twenty nine graduates received their testamurs at the Hong Kong Ceremony, held at the Hotel Intercontinental on June 1.

Indonesian MP’s study English at Newcastle

The University’s Language Centre recently enrolled two members of the Indonesian Parliament in its English language program.

MPs Chairun Nisa and A Djahidin came to Newcastle to study during their parliamentary recess, undertaking an intensive English language course studying 25 hours per week for four weeks.

Chairun Nisa has a brother doing his PhD at the University and so heard about the English language course and its reputation before she came. Fellow parliamentarian A Djahidin says it has been a great opportunity for them to undertake the intensive language course.

"We wanted to be able to communicate in English with other parliamentarians around the world," he said. "English is now recognised as the universal language and often people of different nationalities will use English as a common language to communicate."
Philippine graduates recognised in ground-breaking ceremony

The University was the first Australian university to hold a recognition ceremony for its graduates in the Philippines when it staged a ceremony in Manila in May.

The newly accredited Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce delivered the occasional address at the Recognition Ceremony at the Duist Hotel on May 30.

Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Health John Marley presented 17 awards to 25 students during the ceremony, which was also attended by the Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes, Presidents of the University of Philippines (Diliman and Manila), AusAID and TESDA representatives, and alumni.

The University has 49 alumni in the Philippines and many of them were recipients of AusAID scholarships. Most of the alumni now work with the Philippine government departments.

Graduate Roberto Barajan, who works with TESDA in Mindanao, said that the quality education he and his fellow Newcastle graduates have received motivates them to help the Philippines in its quest for a better future.

"In our various pursuits in different places, we strive to contribute towards stripping dire poverty from the face of each Filipino," he said. "We have committed ourselves to doing our part in making the disadvantage more prepared to partake of their due share in national progress."

Roberto, who received his Master of Educational Studies award at the ceremony, responded to the Occasional Address by Ambassador Pearce.

"We might be thousands of kilometers, eight hours and two time zones distant from her (University of Newcastle) tonight, but the spirit and pride she has instilled in all of us remains strong," Roberto said.

The ceremony was followed by a presentation by traditional Philippine dancers and a dinner.

Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director, English Language and Foundation Studies Centre said that during the four weeks the MPs only spoke English to the teacher and the other students who came from various countries including Malaysia, China, Turkey, Taiwan, Korea and Thailand.

"The Centre uses the communicative method of teaching, which involves the student being immersed completely in English with no use of their mother tongue," Seamus said. "We hope to develop this new association to have groups of Indonesian MPs study the intensive English course here and then go on as a delegation to meet State and Federal MPs in Australia."

The Language Centre's main role is to help international students become competent in English before they begin their studies at the University. The Centre also recently trained executives from Daewoo’s ship building division in Busan as well as executives from Vietnam Airlines from Hanoi.
Birabahn – a successful design collaboration

The commission for the design of Birabahn, the University's new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre, was awarded following a limited design competition facilitated by the University's Facilities Management section. The successful collaborative team of Professor Richard Lepastrier, Professor Peter Stutchbury and Ms Sue Harper was appointed after careful consideration of the proposals submitted.

The University has successfully used design competitions for many of its major buildings, and in most instances the constructed design has not departed greatly from the competition design. However, in the case of Birabahn, the architects substantially developed the design in response to extensive and ongoing consultation with the user groups. The initial proposal was for a more rectilinear structure, which was modified significantly by softly bending its profile, opening it up to the north and creating a symbolic reference to the local Goonie totem, the eaglehawk. This theme was subtly reinforced by other design elements, such as the decks to the southern elevation.

Developing the design required considerable commitment from the users and the architects. The high level of communication and understanding between the groups resulted in a building that has been received by the Indigenous community with praise and delight.

A rammed earth 'spirit wall' traverses the ground floor of the building, bringing a wonderful warmth and solidity to the areas it touches, and incorporating display elements for cultural artefacts and artworks, as well as incorporating the open fireplace at the heart of the building – the common room.

The user group expressed a desire for a very strong relationship between the interior of the building and the outdoors. This has resulted in virtually every office, and most teaching and research rooms, having direct access to the exterior, either by way of a glazed doorway or fully retractable sliding windows which allow unimpeded access to the outdoors. The siting of the building overlooking a grassed recreation area and importantly, adjacent to the University Nature Reserve, was selected to allow a strong independence and presence for the building. The surrounding landscaping, though still very new, complements the building and its important functions.

Birabahn represents the most advanced example of environmentally sustainable development to date on the Callaghan campus. It has no air conditioning or mechanical ventilation, and will require only a short period of supplementary heating in winter on overcast days. It utilises a double roof structure, with operable openings between the two roofs, which allow summer extraction of hot air from above the central corridor.

The openings and roof system, as well as the placement of the thermal mass and insulation in the building were modelled from the commencement of the planning process by environmental consultants, as was the design for natural lighting within the building. Information gleaned from modelling allowed modification and fine-tuning of the design to maximise environmental performance. Even on summer days without a prevailing breeze, the design induces its own 'buoyancy' to produce air movement through the building and out via the double roof system. In winter, sun is allowed to penetrate deep into the building warming the thermal mass of its concrete floors and its rammed earth wall and roof openings are indirectly closed off, trapping warm air inside.

The building's structure, which is fully expressed within, is one of its strongest design elements. The row of circular reinforced concrete columns lining both floors of the building is topped by a remarkably light steel structure supporting the roof. These columns and the structure above, reminiscent of tall trees, bear almost all the load of the roof structure, with connections to the north and south being primarily for bracing. Incorporated in the north and south are light shelves which provide reflected light deep into the building and provide an intimate contrast to the higher ceilings elsewhere in the rooms. Materials and structure are honestly and simply expressed with minimal 'decoration'.

The design brief called for a building that is culturally appropriate, symbolic, welcoming, and ecologically and economically sustainable – and of course functional. Birabahn is symbolic on many levels – some obvious and some less so – and the apparent pride and affection of the Centre's users suggests that the building represents something far deeper to them than merely an attractive and functional work environment.
Birabahn raises Indigenous profile

The following comments on the new building are from staff and students of Birabahn:

"Birabahn exposes the Aboriginal presence at the University more than the Wollotuka building—maybe because of its location, out in the open, and the size of the building. I have been at the University for more than three years. As an Aboriginal student, I hear mainstream students talking about Birabahn—others are eager to visit the building and some have approached me to take them. I hope that more mainstream students will visit it to socialise with us Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I’m sure that would strengthen reconciliation at the student relationship level."

John Doolah, Student in Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies

"It provides me with greater pride and professionalism knowing I work out of such a deadly building. We are a landmark now, especially being so visual to the wider community. Being a person who enjoys nature... the surrounding grounds of Birabahn are simply astonishing and provide the perfect opportunity to step back from the hustle and bustle of University. Well done to all involved in the landscaping—top job!"

David Newham, Project Officer, Wollotuka Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre

"The new building is an exciting place for me and fellow Indigenous students. It has a lovely, fresh new look with a distinctly cultural feel that helps reinforce our cultural background. It has abundant new facilities including lecture, tutorial and computer rooms, to assist with our education. We love that we have been given the opportunity to use such a building and I hope it will encourage many others to improve their education."

Erin Cole, Student in Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching

"It has considerably improved computer facilities and has doubled our available resources. Birabahn has created a sense of the Indigenous presence on campus. It is friendly, open, comforting and welcoming. It’s a good place to get together and is raw, natural and earthy."

John Heath, Student Support Coordinator, Wollotuka Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre

Family funding announced

The Home-Start Program of the Family Action Centre has received $85,000 pa for three years to fund its Families First Volunteer Home Visiting Service for Newcastle and North and East Lake Macquarie.

The Families First program assists parents of young children to provide a positive environment in which to raise children.

Judi Geggie, the Director of the Family Action Centre says the funding for Families First reflects the NSW Government’s strong commitment to support families and strengthen communities.

"Strong families make strong communities and this grant will allow the important work by the volunteers to continue in these local government areas," she said.

The Home-Start Program also celebrated the graduation of the latest group of volunteers to successfully complete their training course and recognised five volunteers who have given their service to Home Start for up to 10 years and nine who have over 12 months service to the program.

The Graduation Ceremony and funding announcement took place at Merewether Surf Club last month.

Inaugural NUSport 2002 Blues Dinner

Recognising University of Newcastle Sporting Achievements. Special guest speaker, three course dinner, music, dancing and entertainment!

For more information or to make a booking please contact Joeleene on 4921 6967 or joeleene.salvestro@newcastle.edu.au

30 August 2002

Brennan Room, Shortland Union
Awards and Honours

Professor Terry Lovat, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Education and Arts has been appointed to a NSW ministerial advisory committee established to develop a 10-year strategic plan for public education (schools and TAFE) and to provide a strong voice for public education in the community and with the Federal Government.

Civil Engineering at the University has scored highly in the latest Course Experience Questionnaire results. The course was voted first nationally in 2000 and second in 2001, scoring the highest overall student satisfaction approval rating. The discipline was second to Griffith University in the annual survey of student satisfaction last year out of a total of 19 universities.

Miss Sudha R. Shenoy, Lecturer in Economic History in the School of Policy, has been invited to deliver the Hayek Memorial Lecture at the 9th 'Austrian' Scholars' Conference, to be held in March next year at the Mises Institute in the US.

F.A.Hayek, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1974, was a leader of the 'Austrian' School in economics and a distinguished political, legal and social philosopher and historian. Author of The Road to Serfdom, his article on Economics and Knowledge is one of the most highly-regarded in the subject and has been widely cited.

The 'Austrian' School has been a distinctive school in economics since it was founded by Carl Menger in the 1870s. 'Austrians' have made distinguished contributions in capital theory, trade-cycle theory, monetary theory, the economics of socialism and the method of economics. The Mises Institute, named after Hayek's mentor Ludwig von Mises, is part of Auburn University in Alabama. It was founded in 1982 and is devoted to the development and spread of the ideas of the 'Austrian' School.

Dr Nathalie Nguyen, from the School of Language and Media, was invited to present a paper at the 16th World Congress of the CIEF (Conseil International d'Études Francophones) in Abidjan, West Africa, in May 2002. The invitation was issued by Professor Jack Yeager, Visiting Professor of French at Louisiana State University and Chair of two panels on Francophone Asia at the conference. Dr Nguyen, the only Australian participant at the conference, presented a paper on Vietnamese Francophone literature. The conference attracted over 200 participants and Francophone writers from Africa, Madagascar and Haiti. Anyone interested can consult the CIEF's website at http://www.ucs.louisiana.edu/ceief

PVC to edit rural health journal

Faculty of Health Pro Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Marley, has been appointed editor of the Australian Journal of Rural Health (AJRH).

Professor Marley has extensive experience as a rural health practitioner and has served on several editorial boards. John Marley says he aims to build on the strong foundation laid by previous editors since the AJRH was founded 10 years ago.

"The challenge now is to build on that foundation, ensuring that the AJRH remains relevant and contemporary," John said.

The AJRH is primarily concerned with publishing reports and policy papers about health in rural and remote Australia but is an important resource across all health professions.

Newcastle University's Faculty of Health is unique in Australian universities in that all health professions are under the one faculty, including the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH). The UDRH covers 20% of the land area of NSW including Tamworth, Armidale and Taree, stretching north to Tenterfield. It provides placements to undergraduate students of the Faculty of Health and will recruit postgraduate students to research public health in rural areas. The UDRH encourages health professionals to move to, and stay in, country areas.

Appointment feather in Australia's cap

Associate Professor Frank Morgan from the University's communication and media arts program, will become the first Australian to head the world's premier media research organisation, the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) when he takes up the Presidency at the Association's 23rd biennial conference in Barcelona this month.

Professor Morgan has led the University's media studies since 1988 and has had a distinguished career as a writer, broadcaster, filmmaker and media administrator. He was deputy director of the Australia Film, Television and Radio School for six years and has worked in both the ABC and commercial broadcasting. He has had professional experience in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the USA. Professor Morgan is honoured by his appointment.

"It's a great feather in Australia's cap. One fifth of IAMCR's members work in research organisations and the media, the rest are academics. That surely gives us a good chance to address the challenges facing the media," he said. "If the public is to have greater confidence in the media, it needs a much better understanding of media processes and decision-making, and the media needs to take much greater account of the cultural identity of their audiences."

Dr Nathalie Nguyen with fellow panelists Professor Jack Yeager (Louisiana State University) and Ms Lily Chiu (University of Michigan)
NUSport hosts University Games

Newcastle University Sport (NUSport), the governing body for sport at the University, will host one of the major events in university sport this month.

Newcastle and the Hunter Region can expect to receive an injection of at least $1.5 million into the local economy when nearly 3,000 students arrive for the 2002 Alive Eastern University Games.

The Eastern University Games give students the opportunity to compete against athletes from other universities from across NSW and the ACT in 15 different sports - basketball, hockey, netball, rugby union, volleyball, squash, tennis, touch football, soccer, softball, baseball, golf, badminton, archery and ultimate frisbee. They also act as a qualifier for the Australian University Games, the pinnacle of University Sport in Australia. NUSport will host this event in 2003.

Fabric workshop tailor made

Third year fine art student Marie-Therese Wisniowski recently attended a workshop by internationally acclaimed US textile artist Jane Dunnewold in San Antonio, Texas.

Marie-Therese, who is majoring in textiles and printmaking, was one of 14 students, mostly from the USA, who were tutored individually and as a group by Jane and her assistants during the complex cloth workshop.

“Jane has a gift for conveying complex ideas with simple and comprehensive clarity,” Marie-Therese said. “She creates fabrics of great complexity and depth by layering surface-design processes like dyeing, discharge, stamping, screen-printing, and foiling, until the desired result is achieved.”

The five-day workshop involved hands-on experience interspersed with lectures, discussions and demonstrations. The students visited a number of galleries as part of the course.

Marie-Therese presented her cloth art installation Codes, which was shown at the Watt Space Galleries in August last year. Jane Dunnewold selected Codes to feature on her website in the Art Cloth Studio’s Guest Artist section (www.artclothstudios.com).

2002 Morpeth Lecture

Professor Phyllis Trible presents

A Mosaic for Miriam

Internationally known biblical scholar and Professor of Biblical Studies at the Divinity School of Wake Forest University, North Carolina, USA, Professor Trible is considered a leader in the text-based exploration of women and gender in scripture. Her books, The Rhetoric of Sexuality and Texts of Terror, have brought important new insights to gender issues in scripture.

Friday, July 26 The Conservatorium of Music
cnr Auckland and Gibson Streets, Newcastle

Doors open 5.30pm, free lecture begins at 6.00. RSVP by July 18 to Belinda Peden in Community Relations on 02 4921 7433, fax 02 4960 1766, email Belinda.Peden@newcastle.edu.au
A new Information Services Centre (ISC) is being planned for the Hunter by the University and a consortium of Hunter Region businesses.

The plan is to develop a centre that would be commercially owned and have a focus on Application Development and Maintenance (ADM) services, as well as being directly involved in teaching undergraduate IT students at the University.

The proposed ISC would be a world class supplier of commercial information services to both local and ‘export’ customers, help businesses maintain and develop their application portfolios and provide a centre of excellence for practical and innovative IT education.

"There is already a high level of IT sophistication and expertise in the region," said Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English, "and from the association with the Science and Information Technology Faculty at the University, it will become unique in the world, combining both business services and state of the art IT education."

The centre is expected to create up to 2000 jobs for the region and increase the profile of the Hunter as a place for high technology employment and IT excellence.

The feasibility study and business plan developed by DMR Consulting were supported at last month’s launch by the NSW Minister for Information Technology, the Hon. Kim Yeadon.

The study project was supported by funding from the Commonwealth Government under its Regional Assistance Program administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services, facilitated by the Hunter Area Consultative Committee. Further funding was provided by the NSW Department of State Regional Development through the Hunter Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), the NSW Department of Information Technology and Management, and CSC Australia.

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