Above: Newcastle players attack the basket of the University of South Australia on their way to a gold medal.

Above: Cameron Jones, in red and blue, from the victorious University men's soccer team chases down a ball.
Towards 2006 Forum

"The outcomes of the Forum, together with those of the Staff Climate Survey and the Review of the Restructure of the University, will inform the establishment of specific targets for the Strategic Plan"

The strategic plan for the university to 2006 and key areas of performance in teaching, research and service, were the major topics for discussion at the forum of senior members of University staff, members of the University Council, student leaders and staff union representatives held on October 9 and 10.

The Towards 2006 Forum commenced with a presentation and discussion of external and internal environmental factors that are likely to impact upon the university during the next three years. Information about the university and the Australian higher education sector, and our record in key areas of teaching, research and service, were also discussed.

This was followed by presentations from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on Excellence in Education; the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) on Excellence in Research; and the Vice-President (University Services) on Organisational Performance; which highlighted areas of major achievement for the university, as well as those requiring action and follow up in each case, for consideration and discussion by working groups and in plenary sessions.

A vision of where the university should be in three years time was a major discussion point during the meeting and several statements emerged from the forum:

- enhance disposable income through growth and increasing non-government revenue;
- identify, highlight and support the major strengths of the university;
- align the strategic plan with the budget and other areas of resource allocation;
- improve research performance, and increase research grant income and the number of research grant applications;
- increase the number and rate of research higher degree completions;
- establish and meet realistic targets in key areas of performance, which are identified within plans for the faculties and divisions of the university;
- decouple the budget allocation process from student load and align budgets with meeting targets across a range of activities, including teaching, research and participation in cross-disciplinary programs and courses;
- enhance partnerships within the region, as well as nationally and internationally;
- enhance the internationalisation of the university, in terms of student experience, the number of overseas students and the sites for delivery;
- enhance training and mentoring opportunities for the professional development of teaching;
- reduce the number of coursework undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and address areas of duplication and inefficiency; and
- successfully complete the ‘Managing for Performance’ program across the university.

The outcomes of the Forum, together with those of the Staff Climate Survey and the Review of the University Restructure, will inform the establishment of specific targets for the University’s Strategic Plan, as well as individual faculty and division targets for achievement by 2006. Next year, the Forum will be held earlier (July) to enable the preparation of the Strategic Plan and its associated strategies and targets, in time to finalise the budget for 2005 and its linkage with the Strategic Plan by the December Council meeting.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President
New facility to aid prediction of premature birth

Researchers at the Hunter Medical Research Institute’s Mothers and Babies Research Centre are able to further their work in predicting and preventing premature birth thanks to a contribution of $10,000 worth of equipment from Invitrogen, an internationally recognised biomedical research supplier.

The equipment will assist researchers to develop protein profiles to identify markers for early labour and other complications of pregnancy. The protein work is part of a study that follows on from the Newcastle-based team’s 1995 world-first discovery of the “placental clock” involving a hormone called CRH that may determine when a baby will be born.

Mothers and Babies Director Professor Roger Smith said proteomics – the study of proteins and their functions – is becoming increasingly important in the understanding of how the body works. He said the contribution from Invitrogen provided his team with the most up-to-date technology available for analysing proteins.

“The new equipment allows us to use techniques that are safer, more reliable and more time efficient. Techniques that previously took up to an hour, will now take the researchers minutes. We can also study proteins at a more detailed level than we could before.”

The new facility includes gel equipment (including 2D gel equipment), blot apparatus, a protein fractionator and power supplies.

University develops pharmacy program

The University is developing an innovative approach to pharmacy training with the introduction of a new postgraduate program, the Master of Pharmacy.

Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Health John Marley said the program takes up the challenge issued by health care sector calls that indicate a clear need for more pharmacists in Australia, particularly in rural and regional areas.

“In recognising that pharmacists are often at the front line, dealing with advances and innovations in health care, the new program has been designed as a fresh approach to training our ‘experts in medicines’,” he said.

The University has appointed a Professor of Pharmacy, Shane Scott, who brings to the program his extensive experience in clinical and academic areas of pharmacy in Australia and the USA.

Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences Mike Calford, says the current NSW Pharmacy Act of 1964 requires pharmacists to complete a four-year undergraduate program.

“The University has been working with the NSW Department of Health and the Pharmacy Board of NSW for the Act to accommodate a postgraduate program as a basis for registration,” he said. “The Minister of Health Morris Iemma has given his full written support to the Master of Pharmacy program, with a planned revision of the Pharmacy Act allowing the Pharmacy Board to accept the new postgraduate program as a basis for registration.”

Students wishing to train as pharmacists will now have the option of completing a four year undergraduate pharmacy degree or completing another relevant degree, followed by a Master of Pharmacy degree. As with the undergraduate pharmacy degree, the Master of Pharmacy graduates must then complete a period of supervised training and the Pharmacy Board of NSW examination, before being registered as pharmacists.

“Given the current demand for pharmacists, the program will offer the advantage of delivering mature, highly trained graduates in a relatively short period of time,” Mike said.

The Master of Pharmacy program is planned to begin in first trimester 2004.
Regional Engagement

University engages the region

The University has acknowledged the importance of engaging effectively with the communities it serves with the creation of the position of Director of Regional Engagement. John Dugas has been appointed to the position and will work to develop stronger ties between the University and the regions it serves.

John has moved from his Assistant Dean's position and his role as a lecturer in management, international human resources, organisational behaviour, teamwork and leadership in the Faculty of Business and Law. He has research interests in managerial competence, workplace skills and regional development and has consulted widely to private and public sector organisations.

"We see the community as a vital part of the university," he said. "Almost 70 percent of eligible school leavers in our region come to the university to study. We have a total staff and student body numbering close to 25,000 and therefore a big impact on the community in terms of employment and infrastructure, so it is important that we are an integrated part of it."

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Brian English says there is an increasing trend for university services and expertise to be used in business development.

"While the university is already involved in many industry partnerships, the position of Director of Regional Engagement will give it a greater focus and a defined place to foster the growth of mutually beneficial partnerships," Brian said.

John says the Hunter region is evolving rapidly, both in a business and community sense, in new and exciting ways.

"For example, the region's market is the world," he said. "The university has the expertise, skills and strategic links that regional partners are able to draw upon as they evolve. It is the major higher education provider from the Hawkesbury to the Queensland border, with long established campuses at Callaghan and the Central Coast, and is developing higher education facilities in the Port Macquarie area. As such, it is a major player, not only in teaching and learning but also in business partnerships, research developments and associations with local council and government agencies."

John says it is incumbent on the University to provide a direct path to its facilities and services that will improve community relationships and help industry grow.

"The stronger they are, the stronger the University will be," he said.

John's position reflects a growing trend in Australian universities. A recent position paper prepared for the Business/Higher Education Round Table says that industries and businesses are more dependent on human resources in a knowledge-based economy, and will increasingly need to rely on universities. It says that universities and businesses will need to cultivate mutually beneficial and lasting relationships with one another.

John says that the Newcastle and Central Coast hinterlands have wide ranging business and industry types that will gain tremendous benefit from engaging more closely with the university. He provided an example of what the university can offer in a presentation to the Hunter wine industry in October. Skills including accurate weather forecasting, graphic design and marketing expertise, and scientific research to solve the million dollar problem of tainted wine caused by cork deficiencies were among those discussed.

"From scientific research to social programs, spin-off companies to student placements, the university has a great deal to offer and to gain from collaboration with local industries and communities," John said. "Universities exist to work with communities, not in isolation, and we want universities that are vibrant, relevant, and sought after partners in appropriate community and economic development."

After a 31-year association, first as a student and then as a lecturer, John has a good understanding of the University and the diverse programs it offers. He also has a lengthy history of engaging with business and industry. Past positions included Convener of the Annual Hunter Microcomputing Exhibition for nearly a decade. He currently chairs the National Assessment Review Group of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has been part of the University's Graduate School of Business team responsible for developing and delivering training contracts to numerous business and government organisations.

"I've been involved in regional engagement in other ways too, visiting North Coast schools and TAFE colleges, as a board member for WEA and for such community based training projects as Skillshare," he said.

With physical assets worth more than a billion dollars, and the enormous value of its human intellectual capital, John believes the university owes it to the communities that fought hard to establish it in the Hunter and Central Coast regions to play an increasingly active role in their future development.

"I'd like to hear from forward-thinking creative people, outside or inside the university, who've got novel, achievable ideas for building connections and beneficial collaborative ventures," he said.

John can be contacted on 49216609 or 49216241.
Professor appointed to HEDC Board

The University will contribute significantly to the Hunter’s regional development thanks to the recent appointment of Professor Scott Holmes to the Board of the Hunter Economic Development Corporation (HEDC).

Scott, who is Dean of the University’s Graduate School, was one of eleven community members appointed to the Board by the NSW Minister for the Hunter Michael Costa in August.

The University has a major role to play in supporting the work of the HEDC, Scott said.

“The HEDC is the prime regional body for promotion, analysis and review of employment opportunities for the Hunter,” he said. “The members of the Board are driven by a desire to create real and long-term employment for our children, which is why the links with the University and TAFE are so important.

“Education goes hand in hand with career development and employment generation. My position on the Board will ensure that the University is effective in responding to regional development initiatives.”

The HEDC is an organisation appointed by the State Government and led by a Board of 12 regional and business leaders. It aims to promote economic development in the Hunter by advising government on the region’s economic development issues, facilitating the creation of sustainable jobs, attracting investment, and demonstrating leadership and partnership to regional stakeholders.

As part of its strategy, the HEDC aims to encourage the development of knowledge-based and service industries to ensure the Hunter can compete in a global market.

Mr Costa said the Board represents the whole region and has a wide range of industry expertise to help drive the Hunter’s economy.

“The HEDC is a vital link between the Hunter region and the State Government,” he said. “One of my key roles as Minister for the Hunter is to encourage job growth and economic development. State and local governments need to work with business and key community members to help that process.”

The Lord Mayor of Newcastle John Tate was also appointed to Chair the HEDC Board in August.

Building bridges to business

Accountant Tim Callcott has been appointed as the first conjoint lecturer in accounting and finance to the University’s Newcastle Business School.

A director of Newcastle accounting firm Lawler Partners, Tim is a specialist in the area of registered clubs and has been appointed to the Faculty of Business and Law. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University and is an associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Head of the Accounting and Finance Discipline Group Scott Holmes said the appointment was the first of a number of conjoint appointments from the local business community planned by the Faculty.

“By appointing local business managers and professional as conjoint lecturers, we are gaining an applied perspective to our programs, as well as skilled counselling and career development advice for our students,” Scott said. “They will also be able to provide applied input into research and hopefully become advocates for the University in the local business community.”

Tim said he is pleased to be a part of forging closer links between the business community and the University through his appointment.

“I hope I can help to bridge the gap that business often sees between the world of theory and the world of practice,” he said. “There is a lot of research and knowledge at the University that the business community doesn’t know about or understand. By being more closely aligned with the University, I believe Lawlers will benefit from a lot of opportunities to collaborate and to tap into the expertise of University researchers and staff.”

Tim worked part-time for Lawler Partners while completing his studies at the University. On graduating in 1992, he worked in Sydney and London for accounting giant Price Waterhouse. He rejoined Lawlers in 1999 as part of their audit practice and now heads up a team that provides accounting, auditing and consulting services to registered clubs.

Lawler Partners has strong connections to the University, with more than half of the 10 partners in the firm having completed their degrees here, including founding member Terry Lawler. Of the 120 staff of the company, around 80 are either enrolled at the University or are graduates. Lawlers also sponsors cadetships for students.
Honorary degrees

The University conferred four honorary degrees at the October 2 graduation ceremonies. Following are edited excerpts from their citations.

Archbishop Philip Wilson

Archbishop Wilson determined at a very early age that he wanted to be a priest in the Catholic Church. In 1974 he completed a Bachelor of Theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney and was ordained a priest in the Maitland Diocese. After studying in New York he was appointed Director of Religious Education for the Maitland Diocese.

He was appointed Bishop's Secretary and played a crucial role in the highly controversial reorganisation of Catholic high schools in the Newcastle area, which established St Francis Xavier Hamilton as one of Australia's first senior high schools.

In the 1980s, the Diocese of Maitland, with Archbishop Wilson as Vicar General and a principal instigator, began a long process of restructuring its parishes and developing non clerical community leadership within the Church. With his background in Church law, Archbishop Wilson provided not only moral leadership but also legal advice of the highest calibre. The Diocese is now a leader in Australia, if not the world, in planning for the future of the Church.

In 1990, he undertook doctoral studies in canon law at Washington in the US. His study was interrupted by demands from Australia and he was unable to defend the thesis because of his 1996 appointment as Bishop of Wollongong. Despite this he is today a prominent canon lawyer and a member of the Canon Law Societies of Australia, NZ, America, Great Britain and Ireland, as well as the Society for Medieval Canon Law.

Archbishop Wilson has always been of the view that the law should be used to help people. This attitude has marked his role as a mediator when the sexual abuse controversy hit the Church. He became known as the "healing Bishop" in Wollongong through his grace, dignity and confidence in the handling of child-abuse scandals. Only last week he created legal history by offering an unconditional compensation package to victims of child sex abuse in the Archdiocese of Adelaide.

He is chair of the Committee for Professional Standards, which determines policy and procedures in all areas of professional practice within the Church.

Archbishop Wilson is a vocal advocate for child protection, extending to the care and protection of detainee children. Through his leadership a group of detainee children are currently under the care of Catholic welfare agency Centacare. He became Archbishop of Adelaide in 2001.

Patricia Davis-Hurst

Patricia Davis-Hurst is an Aboriginal cultural teacher, journalist, historian, author and publisher. She was born in a humpy on Sunrise Station, later known as the Purfleet Mission, near Taree. Patricia's mother, one of the stolen generation who became the first Aboriginal activist in the Taree area, was a great influence on her.

Although Patricia attended the Mission School at Sunrise Station, the limited lessons barely covered basic literacy. It wasn't until her parents moved to Newcastle in 1944 that Patricia and her sister had the benefit of a more comprehensive education at Wawatiah High School. After two years her parents moved back to Sunrise Station but the benefits of those two years were to stay with Patricia forever.

She has always stressed the importance of education to effect social change and to improve living standards.

In 1975 Patricia was employed by the NSW Department of Health as an Aboriginal Health Worker at the Purfleet Baby Health Clinic. She was instrumental in founding the Gillawarra Aboriginal Medical Centre in 1980 and ran the Centre with the aid of Dr John Waughan, for the next three years, on call 24 hours a day seven days a week.

In 1983 Patricia moved to the Taree Community Health Centre. She established a mobile health service to better care for the local Aboriginal community. Over her 46 year working life, only 16 have been in paid employment. The large number of voluntary positions she has held include Director of Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service, President of Purfleet Ladies Auxiliary, and Board member of the Housing Commission of NSW. Patricia was the Founder and President of the Wonnai Aboriginal Corporation, a group set up to work with disadvantaged Aboriginal children, which has since become a leading Aboriginal voice in the media.

Patricia was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1993 for services to the Aboriginal community of the Manning Valley. She promoted the need for a preschool for children of the Purfleet area. Girmaung Preschool was opened in 2002 and Patricia serves as a committee member. She is the Chair of the Gillawarra Aboriginal Corporation and serves many regional advisory bodies.

In 1996 Patricia published her book 'Sunrise Station', a history of the local Taree Aboriginal community from the early 1900s - now an essential resource for many school and university students.

Patricia is President and Native Title claimant with the Saltwater Tribal Council and has strived for recognition of traditional rights including at the Saltwater Reserve near Wallabi Point.
Michael Elfick

Michael Elfick was in the first intake of surveying students at the University of NSW in 1957 but could not continue with his studies. He qualified as a Licensed Surveyor in 1961 and engaged in projects, notably at the Sydney Opera House. It was due to his innovative use of three-dimensional geometry that much of the complex construction of the Opera House was built on time and to such fine tolerances.

Michael joined the NSW Department of Lands in 1970, becoming Senior Surveyor. He obtained a postgraduate diploma in Surveying Science at the University of Sydney in 1969 and later completed a postgraduate diploma in Town and Country Planning. In 1977, he moved to Newcastle to take up a lecturing position in the Department of Civil Engineering and Surveying and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1981.

Michael developed the QASCO SD-4 analytical stereoplotter. This revolutionary device, weighing less than one tenth and costing less than a quarter of the equipment developed overseas, proved that it was possible in Australia to design advanced surveying and photogrammetric equipment. He invented the Adam Technology MPS-2 designed specifically for small format photogrammetry.

Michael's research efforts, with those of his University colleagues, were recognised by the Australian Research Grants Committee with continuous support for nine years. He has acted as a consultant to government and private organisations and his expertise helped Goninan successfully tender for the refurbishment of submarines and other Australian Navy vessels.

Michael received the Halloran Prize from the NSW Division of the Institution of Surveyors and was awarded the Planning Prize in 1979. The Institution of Surveyors awarded him its prestigious Medal in 1991. He became President of the Australian Urban and Regional Information Systems Association in 1979 and was an active member of the Australian Photogrammetric Society.

His recent work to develop a computer-based technique to obtain accurate coordinates from cadastral plans has resulted in a patent and serious interest from a major international software company.

Peter Kleeman

Peter Kleeman was educated at the University of Adelaide with an honours degree in civil engineering. He had a strong interest in structural research and moved to the Aeronautical Research Laboratories in Melbourne. He was dispatched to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough in England to carry out research into the buckling of spars and plates in aircraft wings, which led to studies in aircraft fatigue.

Peter was appointed to the University's Department of Civil Engineering in its infancy at Tighes Hill in 1960 and continued to work in the Faculty until his retirement in 1994. He is still contributing to the Discipline of Civil Engineering as an Honorary Associate.

In an illustrious 43-year career with the University, there have been many highlights. He supervised the University's first civil engineering PhD candidate in the 1960s and has since supervised many more. While his academic speciality is in structural engineering, his interests range across architecture, mechanical and aeronautical engineering and sailing theory. He is involved in risk analysis and is a member of both Standards Australia and the International Organisation for Standardisation loading code committees.

During Peter's teaching career there were developments in methods of structural analysis, changing sets of design codes and developments in computer methods. In this period of rapid change, the courses had to be revised regularly to keep them up to date. His expertise in structural engineering has seen him involved in such varied activities as planning buildings for the engineering faculty, testing for BHP, designing the repair of a Laman Street church after the Newcastle earthquake and being called as an expert witness at a coroner's inquiry into the collapse of a storage bin.

Since retiring in 1994, Peter has jointly authored a number of publications on structural mechanics. Peter was one of the founders of the Sports Union, was co-founder and now life member of the University Hockey Club and served on the Sports Union Board in a variety of roles, including President. He was involved in the planning of sporting facilities at the Callaghan campus including the construction of the Auchmuty Sports Centre, was President of the University Cricket Club and has been a member of a University team in the Newcastle District Tennis Association since 1979.
New head of Business School appointed

Professor Bob Catley's curriculum vitae reveals interests other than economics, business and politics – yacht racing and mountain biking! But even his leisure pursuits combine his economic and management expertise in executive roles in yacht clubs in Australia and New Zealand.

One suspects this will always be the case for Bob, recently appointed Head of the University's Central Coast School of Business at the Ourimbah campus, with his diverse background including roles in academia, university administration, government, community service, immigration and industry. He has been a Member of Parliament, company Director and University Union official and brings to his new post a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

Bob comes to Ourimbah after what he describes as 'one and a half wets' in Darwin as the Foundation Professor of Governance and Head of the School of Business at the Northern Territory University. Previous to that he was Professor of Political Studies and Chair of the Research Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Otago in New Zealand.

Career postings have included lecturing in politics and economics and Convenor of International Studies at the University of Adelaide, and academic postings and visiting scholarships to universities as far afield as Russia, Poland, UK, Israel, USA and the Philippines.

He has enjoyed another career as a consultant to Australian governments, the New Zealand government, private corporations, voluntary organisations and other commercial bodies in fields as diverse as economic development, commercialisation, information technology and educational development. He has been adviser to government ministers including Senator Wheelock, the late Dr Jim Cairns, Chris Hurford and Kim Beazley across portfolios as diverse as Social Security, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Community Services, Defence and Industry Technology, and Regional Development.

Trying his hand at active politics, he was the Member for Adelaide in the House of Representatives for a three-year period from 1990.

With his initial degree gained from the London School of Economics, Bob undertook his doctorate in international relations at the Australian National University. With 13 published books, 85 published articles/chapters and 83 conference papers, his work in the field is accessible for new scholars.

His current research areas include globalisation, economic development, international and comparative politics of the Asia Pacific region, business studies, US foreign policy and Australian and New Zealand politics.

His vision for the Central Coast School of Business includes fostering the publication and research output of current academic staff, expanding and deepening links with business and increasing postgraduate offerings.

"We have got a very good, youngish staff in the School and this augers well for our students," he said. "As well, the School has a good record for producing graduates of high calibre who are having a high rate of success in the business and corporate world.

"We are keen to attract more graduate students and to expand the in-house training component of the Master of Management Enterprise for corporations, a method that has proved to be very successful as in the case of MacDonalds."

Bob would like to introduce a Master of Professional Accounting, capitalising on the location of accounting firms on the campus and recognising that financial planning and management are the big growth areas in professional accounting.

"As a teaching school, fruitful links with business people are crucial," he said. "I aim to establish a new research unit, where students conduct research for businesses, with the work being assessed as part of their degree. This creates a win-win situation, one where both learn from the other. What a lot of people may not realise is that most of the academic staff in the School have been in business themselves."

This philosophy is already in action with the Pathways to Profit (Doing Business Across Borders) Conference being held on the campus in late November. The aim of this conference is to deepen the links with business and create a conduit for the sharing of information, research and development.

As for the move, Bob is delighted to be living on the Central Coast, where he says a very pleasant, relaxed lifestyle can be enjoyed.

"It is just far enough away from Sydney and yet still close enough to be relevant," he said. "Sydney is a major business hub and a striking example that Australians have adapted extremely well to globalisation. For this reason business studies are a stand-out growth area and the appropriate things to teach are management change, economics, public sector management, efficiency and productivity.

"I am looking forward to the challenges that this position presents."
Exceptional service honoured

The University presented two Exceptional Service Medals at the October graduation ceremonies at Callaghan, to Mrs Pat Flowers and Mr Philip Sketchley. The Council awards the Medal to recognise exceptional and sustained contributions by a staff member, former staff member or a member of the community towards some aspect of the University's activities. Following are edited excerpts from the citations read at the ceremonies.

Mr Philip Sketchley

Philip Sketchley is widely known and admired in the Newcastle music community as a teacher, performer, organiser and administrator. He has been associated with the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music since he was a student in the 1970s. He completed the Diploma of the State Conservatorium and the Diploma in Education at the Newcastle Teachers' College and subsequently taught high school music for many years. Philip was appointed head teacher of music at Newcastle High School until his selection as Concert Manager at the Conservatorium in 1993.

A large part of Philip's work involves liaison with community groups. He works with a variety of musical associations, the Mater Hospice, the Victoria League, Newcastle City Council and with church and charity groups to organise musical performances using students of the Conservatorium. These concerts are extremely beneficial for the students who gain valuable experience in performing.

Philip organises around 150 major concerts every year as well as the annual Conservatorium Music Festival - a mix of student-based project work, including concerts from many of the Conservatorium's ensembles, plus events and performances from professional staff and distinguished visiting artists.

Philip is a very fine pianist. He learnt his craft under Joan Dawson from the Newcastle Conservatorium and Gordon Watson from the Sydney Conservatorium. These days he rarely performs as a soloist, rather, he uses his playing skills in accompaniment for musical groups and students and recently accompanied the Waratah Girls Choir on its concert tour of Finland.

Philip is a great ambassador for the Conservatorium and provides the University with a valuable link to the community. His passion for his work is infectious. The conductor of the Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra recently described him as 'the glue that holds together the Newcastle music scene'. Philip is a role model for students who, through their association with him, get to see how communities operate and how music and art fit into a community's culture. He was this year awarded the Centenary Medal for service to the community through music.

Mrs Pat Flowers

Pat Flowers was educated at Newcastle Girls' High School and after gaining her professional librarian qualifications joined the staff of the Newcastle Technical College Library in 1943.

In 1947 Pat was appointed Librarian-in-Charge and several years later, as science and engineering degrees from the NSU University of Technology and Arts degrees from the University of New England were offered through the Newcastle Technical College, she was instrumental in the formation of the University Library. With the establishment of the Newcastle University College, she was appointed Librarian to both the Newcastle Technical College and the Newcastle University College.

In 1970 the Principal of the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music invited Pat to establish a University-level Conservatorium Library. She was the only staff member of the Conservatorium Library and made it her mission to build up the collection. She retired from the Conservatorium Library in 1982.

Pat was one of five librarians who founded the NSW Central Coast Group of the Australian Library Association, the first such group outside a capital city. She has been a long serving member and tireless worker for the Friends of the University. For many years, she has been Convenor of the Book Fair. Held in every odd numbered year, the Book Fair has raised over $500,000 in funds to support the University. Pat has also been the organiser of the Rare Books Auction for the Friends of the University since 1984.

Pat was one of 12 founders of the Mayfield Residents Group. Her expertise in environmental matters has been recognised through the number of Newcastle City Council review committees on which she has served, including the Kooragang Island Development Control Plan, the Urban Strategy Plan, the Mayfield Social Strategy and the Newcastle Airshed Management Plan. She has also been a member of the University's Board of Environmental Studies.

Pat's contributions to the community have been recognised by awards from the Newcastle City Council, the NSW State Government and in 2003 she was awarded the Centenary Medal for service to the community.
Sydney narrowly defeats hometown heroes

The University of Sydney defeated the University of Newcastle by just 12 points to win their fifth successive Australian University Games Overall Champion’s trophy.

The competition between the universities was the closest it has been for a number of years with Sydney finishing on 254.5 points and Newcastle, who hosted this year’s Games, claiming second with 243 and the University of Melbourne taking third with 227 points.

The 2003 University Games were held in Newcastle from September 28 with five days of intense competition and the final result only decided in the last few matches of the event.

An estimated 5,000 students from 47 university campuses throughout Australia attended the Games, injecting around $4.5 million into the local economy. Since their inception in 1993, the Games have grown to be Australia’s largest annual multi-sport event and the highlight on the university sporting calendar.

The University was represented by its biggest ever squad, with 360 athletes made up of 30 teams competing in 20 different sports – athletics, AFL, badminton, baseball, basketball, cycling, diving, hockey, judo, kendo, netball, rugby union sevens, soccer, softball, squash, swimming, taekwondo, touch, ultimate frisbee, and volleyball.

Newcastle University Sport (NUSport) General Manager Samantha Martin, said the University’s athletes had succeeded beyond expectations.

“Our teams have a history of success in University sport, and at last year’s AUGs the University placed 6th out of 42 universities,” she said. “This year we had several athletes picked in Green and Gold merit teams, made up of athletes who give outstanding performances at the Games. Added to that, the support of the local community seemed to bring out the best in our sports men and women. They have represented the University with great heart and ability.”

The Games began with an opening ceremony on Sunday, September 28 and the last events were completed on October 3. Sydney was awarded the Overall Sporting Champion Trophy for being the best performing team across all sports. The Doug Ellis Trophy, which recognises the per capita champion, was awarded to the University of Ballarat for the second successive year, with Newcastle the runner-up.

The Australian Defence Force Academy was presented with the Spirit of the Games award. This trophy recognises the team that displays integrity, honesty and superior competitive spirit, embodying the ideals of university sport.

Australian University Sport President John White said this year’s event was a resounding success.

“Newcastle was a tremendous host,” he said. “It has been through the support and cooperation of the local community, our sponsors and the many hundreds of volunteers, that the 2003 Games have run so smoothly.”

Next year’s AUG will be held in Perth. Planning is already underway for the event, which is jointly hosted by the five Western Australian universities and the Western Australian Government.
University of Newcastle Results

Gold
Women’s Rugby
Men’s Soccer
Men’s Squash
Men’s Basketball
Men’s Discus (Benn Harradiene)
Taekwondo (Lachlan Gorrie)

Silver
Men’s Touch
Women’s Soccer
Women’s Squash
Taekwondo (Line Kvannli)
Taekwondo (Sham Dowsett)
Taekwondo (Heng Kiat Wong)
Taekwondo (Chris Elliott)
Men’s 50m Breaststroke (James Beasley)
Men’s 100m Breaststroke (James Beasley)

Bronze
Women’s Softball
Women’s Hockey
Men’s Hockey
Women’s Touch
Men’s Rugby
Women’s Netball
Women’s Badminton
Ultimate Frisbee
Diving – Team’s event
Men’s 4 x 100m relay (athletics)
Women’s 10,000m (Heather Sinclair)
Women’s 200m Individual Medley (Hayley Murphy)
Taekwondo (Janelle Hickey)
Taekwondo (Lea Grover)

Placings
Baseball  4th
Netball (Mixed)  4th
Volleyball (Women)  9th
Athletics (Men)  10th
Athletics (Women)  12th
Badminton (Men)  11th
Basketball (Women)  11th
Touch (Mixed)  11th
Volleyball (Men)  15th
AFL  15th
Writers’ successes celebrated

The University’s School of Language and Media celebrated a milestone in August with the launch of two published works by creative writing students.

Head of School Hugh Craig said the publication of the works, one novel and one book of poetry, was a momentous achievement that had grown from the energy and initiative of the staff who established the University’s creative writing program more than 10 years ago.

“Sometime late last century, the creative writing program began with a single second year course,” he said. “Now we have courses ranging from first year to PhD level. It is a moment to savour that these words are now joining Australian literature, and will belong to the ‘modern novel’ and the ‘modern poetry’.”

David Kelly wrote his first novel ‘Fantastic Street’ as part of his Master of Creative Arts studies at Newcastle. David, who comes from Brisbane where ‘Fantastic Street’ is set, said he failed high school English but came to the University when he was 30 to write a book.

“I was a constant wagger in high school and did an adult preparation course to get into my Bachelor of Arts,” David explains. “I had a story to tell and the creative writing course at the University gave me the self-confidence to stick to my guns and write it.”

David praised his first creative writing teacher at the University, author Zeny Giles, who he said made herself instantly available to him when he needed advice, as well as all the staff of the creative writing program. He said that author Helen Garner, who was a writing fellow at the University last year, recommended his manuscript to her publisher Picador after reading it. Helen describes ‘Fantastic Street’ as “a desperate, dreamily hilarious family story bright with pain and love”.

‘Fantastic Street’ follows the trials of Alex, who returns to the family home in which he grew up with a house full of siblings — fostered, step, adopted and blood — and a stepfather he hated, when his mother is dying of cancer.

“The book has a basis of truth and at first I had a bit of a guilt complex for writing about my family but I recognised about half-way through the process that it was fiction, not life. I was using my own emotional landscape but manipulating words to get an effect. There is also a lot of fantasy and wish fulfilment.”

David has won a postgraduate scholarship to complete his PhD at the University and plans to write another novel, as well as completing a critical component. He hopes one day to be able to teach creative writing to others.

Poet Brook Emery published his second book of poetry, ‘Misplaced Heart’, as a result of his PhD studies at the University. His association with the University began when he won the Newcastle Poetry Prize in 1999 and met Dr Chris Pollnitz and A/Professor Paul Kavanagh, the instigators of the creative writing program.

“They gave me the idea that I might be capable of doing something like this,” Brook said. “Studying at Newcastle has been a joy. Everybody – from the academic and administrative staff through to the ladies in the cafeteria – has been lovely.”

Brook was a high school teacher in Sydney and London for 25 years before returning to concentrate on his writing six or seven years ago. He praised Chris Pollnitz and Paul Kavanagh for their encouragement of creative writing students. He says that ‘Misplaced Heart’ is about mind and body, thinking and feeling, belief and doubt, and striving to的过程 that it was fiction, not life. I was using my own emotional landscape but manipulating words to get an effect. There is also a lot of fantasy and wish fulfilment.”

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“Much of my writing is about the sea,” he said. “I’ve been a surfer all my life and both my books are full of the sea and the surf.”

Chris Pollnitz said at the launch that Brook has a way of telling stories in poetry that is more impersonal than lyrical.

“I mean that in the Shakespearean way so that he says yes, the story has to do with me, and with him and with her and with you and with anyone who wants to put their hand up and have some common understanding,” he said. “Brook thinks in his poetry. It is shocking enough to smuggle feeling and narration into a poem but to use language in new ways and to think in poetry, that is practically heterodoxy.”

He described ‘Misplaced Heart’ as the best book of Australian poetry he has read in the 21st century.

“It makes me weep with joy and with admiration at his unsentimental, pinpoint pathos,” Chris said.
Bringing forth the stories

Successful writers must first be effective readers according to the new coordinator of the University's creative writing program Dr Kim Cheng Boey.

Kim Cheng has been busy restructuring the creative writing courses to incorporate set texts of short stories and poetry. "Vital to any writing school or program is a reading component," he said. "Becoming a good reader is a pre-requisite for someone who is trying to cultivate an instinct for a good book or poem. Students need to learn to listen to the voices behind the stories and tune in to them, to apprentice themselves to the writing craft."

Kim Cheng, a poet from Singapore, says that imitation is part of the writing process. He says that the ideal writing tutor is a spiritual counsellor, a guru, a good listener and that the apprentice himself is one in which a student learns to ask questions, which can be more important sometimes than the answers.

He says that the ideal writing tutor is a spiritual counsellor, a guru, a good listener and that the most difficult part of his initial few months at the University of Singapore, he travelled quite a bit, including a stint as a writing fellow in Iowa in the US. He has had three collections of poetry published in English. It was a mysterious chain of events that led Kim Cheng to Australia.

"My first encounter with Australia was reading Bruce Chatwin's 'Songlines', which influenced me a lot. When I heard about his death, I wrote an elegy that has become a spiritual milestone for me, my own songline, prefiguring the journeys to come. It was one of the few poems that came to me without a struggle. The landscape and the desert just floated into the waiting page."

Kim came to Sydney and began his PhD on contemporary Irish poetry at Macquarie University in 1996. He had fallen in love with Ireland and Irish writing when he visited the grave of Gerard Manly Hopkins in Dublin. Encouraged by the positive feedback he received on his thesis, Kim decided to apply for the University position. He will become an Australian citizen at a ceremony later this month.

"I have found it hard to straddle two countries," he said. "Also, my children are Australian and that's one big pull factor in crossing."

Kim said he has enjoyed his first few months in the School of Language and Media and had discovered a handful of potentially good writers in the undergraduate creative writing program. The School has just begun a Writer's Club where students and staff can come together to discuss their own work and the writers who have influenced them. There are also a couple of student projects in the wind, one involving performance of work at the Young Writers Festival in Newcastle and the other a possible anthology featuring the best of the students' work. Kim also hopes to continue to have established writers come to the University for fellowships.

"We have got to go back to arts and humanities, which have been neglected mainly because of the pressure for vocational learning, to remind us what it is like to be human and humane," he said. "Those of us in the arts need to put our energy into drawing people back – to learn our place in nature and become aware of who we are.

"A lot of people out there have lost the ability to ask questions about themselves. The arts can direct them back to this self-questioning."

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Anyone who stops learning is old

Following are excerpts from a speech given by Professor Warren Poyglle at the annual Parents and Students' Dinner at Edwords Hall last month.

"...despite all the differences in methods of instruction and pressures on universities, there are some qualities which we seek in graduates which have, I think, withstood the passage of time. I suggest that there are four which stand out.

Above all, we must encourage in our graduates a strong sense of ethics... We all look for ethical codes or codes of conduct by which we can make life's decisions. I do not mean some mealy-mouthed mission statement such as are periodically spat forth by large corporations, government departments and academic institutions alike. I mean something that does give some real guidance.

I like the code of British philosopher Lord Bertrand Russell, as a precedent. He tells us, amongst other things, that we should endeavour to overcome opposition by argument and not by authority, pointing out that victory upon authority is unreal and illusory. He also tells us the obvious - that we should not fear to be eccentric in opinion for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric. Do not think it worthwhile to proceed by concealing evidence for the evidence is sure to come to light says Russell. Above all, he teaches us that the evidence is sure to come to light says Russell. Above all, he teaches us that above all, we must be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.

If you're a team, realise that you are a parent figure. You are there to nourish and care for people so they can do their jobs. Do not be like Julius Caesar who scorned the base steps by which he ascended.

Finally, University graduates should keep learning. Even the arch capitalist Henry Ford said:

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young by doing so."

A lot of people die at 35 but are buried at 80. Whatever age it is, I hope I will die and be buried in the same year."

Mistletoe sculpture prize

A conversation between the director of the University's student art gallery and the owners of a family winery at Pokolbin has resulted in the establishment of an acquisitive sculpture prize and an exhibition that opened at Watt Space in October.

The Mistletoe Acquisitive Sculpture Award is named for Mistletoe Wines, the winery established by Ken and Gwen Sloane.

"We have always loved art and when we established our family winery in Pokolbin, a gallery naturally followed," Ken said.

While visiting galleries in Newcastle, the Sloanes met Anne McLaughlin, Director of Watt Space, and saw the fresh and diverse work of the University's students on show at the gallery. They made the Mistletoe gallery available as a site for students to exhibit their work, which led to keen interest from the winery's customers and good sales.

Anne says the idea of an acquisitive sculpture award, with the winning work having permanent residence in the winery sculpture garden, developed. Word travelled fast and Associate Professor Vlase Nikolekas from the School of Fine Art encouraged his sculpture students to visit the winery and look at the site.

The resulting exhibition of sculptures, all vying for the $2,500 acquisitive prize or the $500 encouragement award, opened at Watt Space on October 15. The competition will be judged by Miranda Lawry, Head of the School of Fine Art, Ken Sloane from Mistletoe and sculptor John Tutier. The winning work will be unveiled at Mistletoe Winery, Hermitage Road Pokolbin, on November 15.
Tracing the rise of Aboriginal activism

What began as a trip to the University’s Wollotuka Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre to seek help in completing a family history, has led John Maynard on an amazing journey that saw him complete a significant doctoral study on the rise of Aboriginal activism in the 20th century.

John, now a research fellow with the University’s Umulliko Centre, received his PhD at an October graduation ceremony for his thesis entitled: Fred Maynard and the Awakening of Aboriginal Political Consciousness and Activism in Twentieth Century Australia. Prominent historian Henry Reynolds says that John’s thesis has completely altered perceptions of the rise of Aboriginal political activism.

The study centres on John’s grandfather Fred and his role as President of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association – the first united Aboriginal political group to form in Australia.

Fred was born in Hinton, near Maitland but when his Aboriginal mother died at an early age, his father, who was an English labourer, deserted his children and Fred ended up in the care of a priest at Dungog. He became a wharf labourer in Sydney but it was during his travels around Australia that he realised what was happening to Aboriginal people and resolved to resist it.

Formed in 1924, the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association took on state authorities, notably the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board, to fight for four major platforms:

- Land rights for each and every Aboriginal family – a significant issue during the 1920s when independent reserves were taken away from Aboriginal people and allocated to returned soldiers;
- Stopping the removal of Aboriginal children from their families;
- Citizens rights for Aboriginal people; and
- Protection of cultural identity.

“The Association and their aims were very confronting to the Government agencies of the day,” John said. “It was virtually hunted and hounded out of existence.”

John says that oral evidence points to the fact that an accident his grandfather suffered on the wharves, that left him hospitalised for 12 months and eventually led to his death, was no accident. While he never met Fred, who died eight years before he was born, when his father was only 13, John learned more than he bargained for by delving into his family history.

“It’s great to finish my PhD because it feels like I haven’t been at uni that long,” John said. “I was 39 when I started in 1994 and had worked as a builder’s labourer, barman and a hairdresser, among other things. But I always loved to read and I love history.”

John says he was ‘kidnapped’ by then Wollotuka director Tracy Bunda and lecturer Deidre Heitmeyer to begin university study. He completed a Diploma in Aboriginal Studies and then a Bachelor of Arts at the University before doing his PhD.

“The support I’ve had from the University has been fantastic,” he said, “right across the board from Wollotuka and Umulliko, to my supervisors John Lester and John Ramsland, and Brian English and Ron MacDonald.”

His studies have led him to work for the National Library, the National Museum, the State Libraries of NSW and Victoria, and to travel widely working in Aboriginal communities across Australia.

Now based in Adelaide, John is continuing his historical research through grants from the Australian Research Council and IATSIS (Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies). His studies are examining proposals put forward in the late 1920s to establish a model Aboriginal state in the Northern Territory – a notion opposed vehemently by Fred and the Aboriginal Progressive Association.

He also won a biennial NSW Premier’s Indigenous Research Fellowship to examine the African-American influence on the rise of Aboriginal activism, after discovering that Fred modelled his organisation around the ideals of Marcus Garvey, whose early black rights movement in the US is recognised as the biggest ever established.
Age no barrier to learning

When Jo Riley took a poetry course at the University in the mid 1970s to fuel an interest ignited by helping her youngest son with his HSC English preparations, she began on a path that led her to graduate with a PhD this month.

Jo, who was in her late 50s at the time, says it was her poetry lecturer, Dr Donald Moore, who insisted that she sign up in the Open Foundation Course (OFC).

"We have since become friends," Jo says of Dr Moore, "and he told me that he used to wonder what I was going to ask him next and whether he would be able to answer me."

Although she began the 12 month OFC in mid year, Jo passed well after only six months study and then enrolled to do a Bachelor of Arts. She had a long standing interest in ancient history that she attributes in part to her English and Latin teachers at the Sisters of Mercy school at Parramatta.

"One of the first books I read during my childhood was my father's copy of Gray's Myth of Ancient Greece and Rome," she said. "From then on I was always seeing things through that model."

After majoring and completing Honours in Classics, Jo became interested in Justin, a Roman author from the third century AD who wrote an epitome of an important history by Pompeius Trogus.

She won a University postgraduate scholarship to complete her PhD thesis, which examined the portrayal of women in Justin's work, particularly the Babylonian Queen Semiramis and the mother of Alexander the Great, Olympias. Her work intersects with several disciplines including historiography, ancient history, literary criticism and gender studies.

"I began my PhD in 1991 and things were OK until 1993, when I began to suffer from ill health," Jo said. "I discovered in 1997 that it was cancer, so it became a bit of a struggle."

Jo says she and her supervisor, Elizabeth Baynham from the School of Liberal Arts, soldiered on and with the help of her husband John and her family, she was able to complete her studies.

She says the University was marvellous and that her age never held her back from opportunities to study and to tutor, first in criticism of crime novels and later in classics. She still lectures in the University of the Third Age.

"It was a relief to finish," 69-year-old Jo said, "although I think I'm ready to start writing again and possibly to publish bits of my thesis.

"I'm not the type of person just to stop doing things."

Researchers win humanities fellowships

Two University researchers have been awarded fieldwork fellowships from the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Dr Roger Markwick and Dr Philip Dwyer from the School of Liberal Arts will each receive a $4,000 grant to assist them in conducting their research overseas.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities Fieldwork Fellowships scheme enables recipients to travel overseas and access resources that are critical to their research projects.

Roger will continue his research on Soviet women at war (1941-45) when he travels to Russia in March next year to examine archive material. He intends to visit Moscow and Volgograd to interview women about their role in the Soviet war effort on the Eastern Front during the Second World War.

"This project will trace the actual experiences of women combatants in a multitude of dangerous roles: as fighting field nurses, as political commissars, as night fighter pilots, as machine gunners and snipers and, perhaps most dangerous of all, as partisans behind enemy lines," Roger said.

"Being able to visit with these women and establish personal contact can often open the way to unpublished personal papers such as diaries, letters and manuscripts."

Philip is currently writing a two volume biography on Napoleon and will consult engravings, prints, newspapers and collections of private and state papers at the Archives Nationales and the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.

He will travel to Paris in December.

"I started researching this topic some years ago as I wasn't really satisfied with the information that was currently out there," Philip said. "There have been many biographies written about Napoleon, but they never say anything new. This has reinforced the need for further research into the area."
Tick-borne pathogen discovered

The detection of a tick-transmitted bacterium, Anaplasma platys, by a Newcastle scientist last year, has led to further research at the University into the potential for ticks to transmit disease to humans.

Finding the tick-borne pathogen in dogs in central Australia was hailed as the most exciting discovery in the area of canine infectious diseases in Australia in a decade, as Australian dogs were thought to be free of this species of bacterium. It also served as a reminder that not all pathogenic organisms have been discovered and, more importantly, of the propensity of ticks and mosquitoes to transmit disease to humans.

Researchers from the University's School of Environmental and Life Sciences in the Faculty of Science and Information Technology assessed free-roaming dogs in a remote community in the Northern Territory for potential pathogens to investigate the dog's high mortality rates. Using Polymerase Chain Reaction technology, the study revealed dogs infected with Anaplasma platys, an organism which causes a decrease in platelet number (cyclic thrombocytopenia) and is transmitted by the brown dog tick.

Associate Professor Tim Roberts said ticks have been described as carriers of human bacterial disease since the beginning of the 20th century and tick-borne diseases in humans continue to be an emerging threat.

"Ticks are considered second only to mosquitoes in importance as vectors of human infectious diseases in the world," he said. "For example, granulocytic ehrlichiosis in dogs, cats, horses and humans is now considered a disease of major importance in Europe, US, Africa and Asia."

Several of the tick-borne infections that affect dogs can cause serious disease in humans including Lyme disease and encephalitis.

"The importance of the discovery of A. platys lies in the awakening interest in Anaplasma Ehrlichia species as potential human pathogens, in line with findings overseas," Tim said. "We know that human ehrlichiosis can produce variable symptoms ranging from mild to severe including undifferentiated illness with fever, headache, muscle pain, anorexia, tiredness, nausea, vomiting and joint pain."

The researchers - Tim Roberts, Graeme Brown, Anthony Martin and Hugh Dunstan - published their findings on Anaplasma platys in the July/August issue of Today's Life Science magazine. Their ongoing research is being conducted in collaboration with the Australian Rickettsial Reference Laboratory at Geelong, the Royal North Shore Hospital, NSW Parks and Wildlife, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory at Geelong and with researchers at the University of Kalmar in Sweden and University of the Free State in South Africa.

Professor elected to Nobel Academy

Professor Graham Goodwin from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment has been elected to the Swedish Royal Academy of Science, the institution that selects Nobel Prize winners.

Professor Goodwin is only the second Australian to be elected to the Academy. Emeritus Professor Derek Denton from the Howard Florey Institute at the University of Melbourne was elected in 1974.

The Academy was founded in 1759 and currently has 350 Swedish members and 164 foreign members. Many of the foreign members are Nobel Prize winners. It is divided into 10 classes and Professor Goodwin has been elected to the Academy's engineering category, as one of only 10 foreign members of that class.

The Academy says being elected a member constitutes exclusive recognition of successful research achievements. Professor Goodwin, from the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, is recognised as one of the most influential engineering researchers in the world for his work on control engineering systems and signal processing. His research is applied in areas such as controlling motor vehicle emissions, autopilot accuracy for ships and tolerances in rolling mill processes.

Professor Goodwin says it is a great privilege to be elected to the Academy as one of its foreign members.

"It is one of the most respected and prestigious organisations in the world. They expect to have the world's leading scientists listed as members so it is a great honour to be considered in their ranks."

Members gather in class meetings to discuss science or to report on advances in science, often in connection with the extensive work involved in nominating those who are to receive prizes, awards or grants.

Last year Professor Goodwin became a Fellow of the Royal Society in London and in 2001 he won a $1.125 million Federation Fellowship grant from the Commonwealth Government.
Nurse practitioners graduate

The first seven Master of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner) students graduated from the Faculty of Health in October.

Senior lecturer from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and course coordinator Ron Sharkey says nurse practitioners are registered nurses who practice at an advanced level and who are authorised by the NSW Nurses Registration Board to use what is now a legal title. "Advanced level practice incorporates the ability to provide care to a range of clients, and demands a wide range of therapeutic responses, sophisticated clinical judgements and clinical decision-making based on advanced knowledge," he said.

Kind nurses more effective

Nurses with good communication and relationship skills are more effective in caring for patients with long-term mental illness, according to findings of a PhD study by Assistant Dean (II) in the Faculty of Health Dr Ron Sharkey.

Ron carried out a qualitative study, using the 'grounded theory' method, to find out what patients with serious mental illness thought about the nurses who care for them, as well as interviewing the nurses themselves. His thesis, 'Relationships between nursing care and health outcomes for people with long term, serious mental illness', discovered what Ron had known intrinsically – that the most important attribute for nurses to have was a 'nice, helpful' nature.

"I became interested in psychiatric nursing when I took a job in the field to earn some money while I was travelling," he said. "I knew then that the patients were attracted to certain nurses who were friendly and caring to them."

Ron, who completed a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) at the University of Queensland to pursue his interest, has been teaching nursing at the University since the program began at the Newcastle College of Advanced Education in 1985. He says that his research findings on the effectiveness of good relationships with patients are not only relevant to mental health nurses but to all health professionals.

"We are looking to integrate communication skills into all our undergraduate health courses at the University," he says. "The first skill you need is listening, the next is being able to show the patient that you are listening so that they know, and the third is to learn to reflect on what you are hearing and think more about the patient's needs."

Ron plans to publish his thesis and will deliver his findings at health conferences. He graduated with his PhD in October.
Pearl oysters purify polluted waterways

PhD student Scott Gifford is part of a University team researching the ability of pearl oysters to remove nutrients and pollutants from coastal waters.

Scott, from the Faculty of Science and Information Technology, says that their research shows that a modest pearl oyster farm will not only return commercially marketable pearls of high quality, but also that the oysters, each capable of filtering ten litres of seawater per haul, can successfully reduce nutrient and pollutant loads within the waterway.

“Our aquatic environments face a number of pollution threats from sewage inputs and stormwater runoff in addition to organic pollutants and heavy metals derived from industry, agricultural and domestic applications,” said Scott. “We’ve found that pearl oysters are capable of filtering large volumes of water and concentrating nutrients and some contaminants within their tissue and shell while forming a new pearl.”

Early results from the Wanda Head, Port Stephens pearl oyster farm indicate that for every tonne of oyster material harvested, about 14kg of nitrogen, 0.7kg phosphorus and up to 8kg of heavy metals are removed from the environment.

Scott travelled to New Zealand last month to present research into the use of pearl oysters to mitigate nutrient and metal inputs into coastal waters at the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Asia/Pacific and the Australasian Society for Ecotoxicology meetings.

Further research into the prospect of using pearl oysters to absorb nutrients and pollutants within their tissues, and then harvesting the oysters to remove the pollutants from the ecosystem received a boost last month with Port Stephens Pearls committing as an industry partner to support the research.

Help sponsor rural medical education

With the first cohort of medical students from the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) completing their final exams last month, the Department is seeking sponsors to help construct a multi-disciplinary education centre in Tamworth.

In February 2002, six fourth year medical students commenced their clinical studies at the UDRH at Tamworth Base Hospital.

The UDRH has developed a program that allows fourth and fifth year medical students to undertake their education within the New England Area Health Service at Tamworth Base Hospital. The aim of the program is to expose students to the challenges of rural medicine and the communities of northern NSW.

UDRH Director, Associate Professor Peter Jones said the students who have undertaken these programs will become the first students at any university in Australia to conduct all their clinical training in a rural environment.

“It is hoped that with positive experiences, these students are more likely to return to the area upon graduation, thereby assisting in developing the health services within the region,” he said.

Professor Michael Hensley, Head of the School of Medical Practice and Population Health said he is pleased with the UDRH’s progress and acknowledged the work done by Professor Jones and the UDRH staff.

“The academic staff of the UDRH, the University and local clinicians support these programs and the medical and nursing staff of the New England Area Health Service undertake significant amounts of the training and development of the students,” he said. “Without their professionalism and enthusiasm the UDRH’s programs would not be as successful as they have been to date.”

The UDRH is currently constructing a multi-million dollar multi-disciplinary education facility within the Tamworth Base Hospital grounds and is seeking private sponsors to assist in its construction. Each seat within the lecture theatre can be sponsored for $1,000. Each seat sponsor will be recognised through the affixing of a plaque to the seat.

For further information about the sponsorship packages contact Andrew Wall on (02) 6768 3300 or email ajwall@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
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