May I wish all staff, students, convocation members and supporters of the University an enjoyable festive season and best wishes for 2004. This year has been very challenging but has contained many highlights of significance to the University, the Hunter, Central Coast and the mid-North Coast regions of NSW that we serve, Australia and internationally.

This year will be remembered as the year for major review of the higher education sector, initiated by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, who brought forward a comprehensive range of new policies and the promise of long awaited additional funding. At the time of writing, the Higher Education Support Bill 2003 is before the Senate awaiting consideration and hopefully negotiation and resolution with the Minister. It is true to say that this is a landmark event in the relatively short history of higher education in this country. I am hopeful that our political representatives can bring this to a speedy conclusion and allow Australian universities to get on with the important work of higher education and research with an adequate funding base to allow for planned growth, and support for teaching, research and service to our communities.

May I congratulate 33 academic colleagues who were promoted this year in recognition of their excellent performance in teaching, research and service, especially Associate Professor Hugh Craig, Head of the School of Language and Media, and Associate Professor George Kurzera of the School of Engineering, who were promoted to level E positions from 2004. Congratulations also to the recipients of the Vice-Chancellor’s Awards for General Staff Excellence: Mr Andrew Bish of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences; Ms Susan O’Connor of Research and Research Training Services; and Ms Jenny Smith of the Faculty of Education and Arts (individual awards); the Wollutuka Administration Support team; and the University Security Services team (team awards); and the Highly Commended Award for the Industrial Design Workshop staff.

Other matters of significance to the University during 2003 were:

- Graduation ceremonies held on the Callaghan Campus in April and October; on the Central Coast campus, jointly with the Hunter Institute of Technology and the Central Coast Community College, in April; and in Singapore in October, with the largest number of overseas graduates, including the first cohort of engineering graduates from our partnership with the PSB Academy.
- Honorary degrees awarded to Dr Helen Garner, Dr William Bowmore, Professor Ralph Slatyer AC, AO, Dr Patricia Davis-Hirst, Archbishop Philip Wilson, Dr Peter Kleeman, Dr David Chew and Dr Michael Ellick; and Exceptional Service Medals to Mrs Patricia Flowers, Mr Philip Sketchley and Mr Ian Shepherd;
- Australia Day Awards to Dr June Heinrich (OAM), Professor Sandra Capra (AM) and Mr Wayne Stuart (OAM);
- Hunter Medical Research Institute awards to Professor Peter Gibson (Sparte Helmore Prime TV Award), Dr Amanda Baker (Pulse Young Medical Researcher of the Year), Ms Sabrina Pit (Pulse Education Prize) and Professor Allan Spigelman (Outstanding Achievement in Cancer Research);
- Successful commissioning of the FedSat Magnetometer in February, following the launch of the satellite by the Japanese Space Agency;
- Farewell to Professors Christina Lee, Irene Stein, Leith Morton, Robert Clancy and Robert Toia; Associate Professors Allen Oakley, George Horn, Elizabeth Chang, Garry Willgoose, Glenda Strachan, Imre Salusinszky, Phillip Moore and Margaret McNairy;
- Welcoming new staff members to the university including Professor Robert Celley (Central Coast School of Business), Professors Aron O’Cass and Patricia Gillard (Newcastle Business School), Professor Bill Purcell (Newcastle Graduate School of Business), Professor Venkataraghavan Lakshminarasimhan (School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), Professors Trevor Day, Paul Foster and Shane Scott, Chair of Pharmacy (School of Biomedical Sciences), Professors Mike Capra and Sandra Capra (School of Health Sciences) and Associate Professor Deborah Cockrell (Faculty of Health);
- Welcoming a number of distinguished visitors to the university including the French Consul General, the German Consul General, the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, the Rector of Hasnuddin University, Kunming University of Science and Technology, and Mr Clement Hi, Chief Executive of SEG International Berhad (SEG) Malaysia.
University signs China agreement

The relationship between the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) and the University has been strengthened thanks to an agreement signed in Beijing recently.

The signing of the agreement in October is a development of the student exchange program initiated between the universities several years ago. Already more than 30 students have participated in the program and the new agreement has been extended to include possibilities for research collaborations and staff development through study time in our respective research groups.

The signing at the Australian Embassy in Beijing was attended by the Education, Science and Training Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, and a delegation from the University headed by Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes.

"Harbin Institute of Technology is one of China's premier universities and we are proud to be associated with them in the continuation of an agreement which first commenced about four years ago," the Vice-Chancellor said. "Newcastle is a research intensive university and it is also a university that places great emphasis on the research partnerships which it develops.

"International partners represent a very important component of our strategic developments and we aim to develop partnerships with internationally recognised research intensive institutions such as Harbin."

The agreement demonstrates a desire to encourage academic staff to collaborate in research ventures, to share supervision of talented and skilled research degree students and to explore innovative curriculum design and teaching methodologies. In future, staff from HIT will spend time at the Newcastle campuses in Australia working beside University staff in teaching and research.

It is possible that some Newcastle programs may be taught in collaboration with HIT with traditional teaching methods or using online teaching facilities. Groups of students and staff from Australia will continue to be regular visitors to the Harbin campuses attending classes and developing a first hand appreciation of the region.

- Universities Meet Parliament program in June, during which Australian Vice-Chancellors met with Federal Parliamentary representatives;
- Alumni functions in Newcastle, Sydney, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur;
- Australian University Games involving teams of athletes from around the country during October. The University fielded 30 teams representing 20 sports, and succeeded in gaining gold medals in women's rugby and men's soccer, squash, basketball, discus and Taekwondo, as well being placed second overall;
- Awards of the Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence to Professor Warren Pengilly, and the Newton-John Award to Ms Janice Vaidhal;
- Appointment of John Ramsland as Emeritus Professor;
- Passing of Dr Ann von Bertouch and former Deputy Vice-Chancellors Emeritus Professor Michael Carter and Dr Doug Husley;
- 2003 John Turner Memorial History Lecture delivered by the Hon Kim Beazley;
- Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture delivered by Mr Noel Pearson;
- 2003 Morpeth Lecture delivered by Chief Justice Michael Kirby;
- 2003 Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture delivered by Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, CBE, AM;
- Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings to Professor Peter Stuchbury, Ms Sue Harper and Professor Richard Leplastrier for the Birabahn Indigenous Higher Education building;
- NUBot robotics team third place in the international RoboCup competition in Italy;
- Accreditation of the Bachelor of Medicine by the Australian Medical Council for a six year period, with a four year extension option;
- Purchase of the Advanced Technology Centre and the David Madison buildings from the NSW State Government;
- Launch of the Information Common at the Auchmuty Library;
- Membership of the Swedish Royal Academy of Science to Professor Graham Goodwin; and
- the success of our researchers in ARC (ranked 8th) and NHMRC grants rounds for 2004.

May I thank you for your contributions to the University during 2003, and wish you and your family best wishes for the Christmas/New Year period, and for a healthy and successful 2004.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President
University granted over $15 million in research funding

The University has had outstanding success in obtaining research funding from both the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), with the recent awarding of more than $15 million for research over the next three to five years.

In the NHMRC funding, the University received 10 project grants totalling more than $6 million over the three to five year period beginning in 2004. This represents an increase of over $3.5 million on 2003 figures.

Two of the successful grants awarded for five year periods were:

- Professors James Denham, David Joseph and Gillian Duchesne - $1,743,000 for a clinical trial to determine the value of hormone and bone mineral density therapy in early stage prostate cancer; and

- Professors John Forbes and Alan Coates, Drs Raymond Snyder and Michael Byrne - $1,566,000 for a randomised trial of anastrozole for breast cancer prevention in postmenopausal women at high risk.

In the ARC funding announced in October, the University received more than $8.9 million from three different schemes - an increase of $2 million over 2003 levels. The funding included:

- **Discovery Grants**
  Professor Rob Melchers received his fellowship as part of a grant totalling $555,000 for research in the 'Mathematical modelling of tidal, splash and coastal atmospheric marine corrosion for structural reliability assessment'.

  Associate Professor Irina Belova is the first female academic at the University to receive an Australian Professorial Fellowship. Together with co-investigator Professor Graeme March, she attracted $990,000 over five years for research in 'a predictive theory of kinetic demixing in engineering ceramics'.

- **Linkage Program**
  The University had an 83 percent success rate in the Linkage Program, compared to the national average of 50 percent, receiving 10 research grants with funding of $2 million. To this is added over $3 million contributed by industry partners to give a total in excess of $5 million.

- **Linkage Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities**
  The University received over $1 million to provide equipment for the Analysis of Thermal Decomposition of Solid Materials at High Pressures, Atomic Force Microscopy Facility for Soft Interfaces and High-Speed Confocal Microscope Live Cell Recording.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Ron MacDonald says the University has a national and international reputation for its research programs and researchers.

"The University's success with these highly competitive research grants demonstrates its exceptional research competence," he said. "The Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment is to be especially congratulated for its success rate of close to 40 percent for its applications."

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It's about decency

Federal Member for Fremantle, who recently became the first female Australian Labor Party president, Dr Carmen Lawrence, spoke at the University in October as part of the 2003 series of Public Policy Lectures organised by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CoffEE).

Dr Lawrence said that growing inequality could see Australia lose its character as a great egalitarian nation. There is a widening gap between Australia's richest and poorest and Dr Lawrence believes that a lot of people seem to accept the boom made by our political leaders that says Australia is a nation that gives everyone a fair go.

"There's a great deal of evidence now to challenge this...assertion," she said, "and while researchers may argue about the extent of the problem, they all agree that inequality amongst Australians is increasing and indeed that egalitarianism itself may be under threat as a defining social objective."

Australia reflects global trends, which show that while the Gross World Product has increased from 10 trillion in 1960 to over 43 trillion today, more than 2.8 billion people around the world - nearly half the total population - live on less than $2 a day. While in 1960, 20 percent of the world's population, who live in the rich industrialised countries, had 30 times the incomes of the poorest 20 percent, today it's 74 times.

"Inequality is not new but globalisation and the rigid prescriptions of the free market have massively accelerated the trends," she said. "I think the data I've just mentioned and many more like them should precipitate global action to redistribute wealth and power."

Dr Lawrence says that indicators show Australian society is less equal today than it has been in its entire history. She said our egalitarianism has historically been founded on a pragmatic commitment to sharing the wealth of the country and the benefits of productivity, particularly through the award and wage fixing system.
Engineered for success

The University excelled at the Engineers Australia National Excellence Awards in Canberra last month.

The Science and Engineering Challenge took out the prestigious Sir William Hudson Award for most outstanding engineering project and the Environmental Engineering Excellence Award went to Innova Soil Technology Pty Ltd, a spin off of research undertaken in the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment. The Cooperative Research Centre for Satellite Systems also won an Engineering Excellence Award for its work on FedSat – a consortium of the CSIRO, industry partners and various universities including Newcastle.

The University’s Science and Engineering Challenge is a program devised by the Faculties of Engineering and Built Environment, and Science and Information Technology, aimed at boosting participation in the enabling sciences in high school students. Challenge organiser Bob Nelson says he is thrilled with the outstanding result.

“We are running a program which the judges said has had a greater impact on engineering in Australia in 2003, than any other engineering project,” he said. “It’s been an outstanding year for the Challenge with over 4000 students from 128 schools competing in challenges.”

Innova Soil Technology Pty Ltd was developed as a result of research undertaken by Dr John Lucas and is part owned by the University’s commercial arm TUNRA, along with industry partners MCM Manufacturing and Combustion Instrumentation. Innova has developed a mobile soil treatment system that cleans contaminated soils effectively, economically and with low emissions, offering a viable alternative to established soil treatments such as ‘dig and dump’ or containment, at comparatively reduced cost.

FedSat is Australia’s first satellite in 30 years and is one of the world’s most sophisticated small satellites. It was launched in December last year from Japan. The Space Physics group at the University also supplied the magnetometer called NewMag, which measures the earth’s magnetic field as the FedSat satellite orbits at around 800 kilometres above the earth.

L–R: Professor Geoff Evans, Associate Professor John O’Connor, Mr Brian Pattinson (Chair of Science and Engineering Challenge Committee Dlbbro), Mr Martin Cole from the Institute of Engineers, Mr Rob Nelson and Professor Adriana Vagg

“One of the features of that is that government could be, and indeed should be, a major player in achieving equality,” she said.

Dr Lawrence, who holds a doctorate in psychology, began her parliamentary career in 1986 when she was elected to the West Australian seat of Subiaco. In 1990, she made history by becoming Premier of Western Australia, the nation’s first woman Premier.

She entered Federal politics in 1994, being elected in the seat of Fremantle, and was appointed Minister for Human Services and Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women until March 1996. She has since held Shadow Ministry posts in various areas including the Environment; the Arts; Industry, Innovation and Technology; Status of Women; and Reconciliation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

Dr Lawrence said she is convinced that education is the single most important element in the maintenance of a democratic system.

“Highly sophisticated elites are the easiest and least original things that a society can produce,” she said. “The most difficult and valuable is a well educated populace.”

She concluded her speech by suggesting that trends towards inequality in Australian schools and in our society are not inevitable and can be modified by sound public policy.

“Measures which improve the economic status of the least well off, increase employment, reduce inequality and civilise the workplace are likely to produce significant improvements in community outcomes for all of us.”

When asked during question time following the lecture why opposition leader Simon Crean was having trouble getting the ALP’s message across, Dr Lawrence said that he is being held responsible for a deep malaise in the Party.

“It’s not that he doesn’t know what he stands for but that the Labor party itself has come to be uncertain about what it stands for,” she said. “And it’s not a characteristic that’s unique to the Australian Labor Party. It’s actually similar to what’s happening to a lot of centre left parties around the world. They’ve become frightened of ideas and ideology.”

Dr Lawrence said that 20 years of preaching by economic rationalists that privatisation and market forces were the only way to distribute resources had taken its toll. She said the ALP needs to strongly assert their values and policies.

“It’s about reducing inequality, it’s about increasing opportunities for people to participate fully in society, it’s about fulfilling every capacity that they have - it’s about decency.”
Award caps year for Birabahn

The University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre, Birabahn, has taken home this year's prestigious Royal Australian Institute of Architects' (RAIA) Sir Zelman Cowan Award for Public Buildings.

The 2003 RAIA awards – the most prestigious in the design and construction industry – were announced in Tasmania in October. Philip Pollard, Director Facilities Planning and Strategy at the University says he is thrilled with the award.

"To be shortlisted with prestigious projects such as Federation Square in Melbourne is an honour, but to win recognises the design and research initiatives that the University employs," he said.

It has been a successful year for Birabahn, which also won NSW Royal Australian Institute of Architects awards in July. The distinctive building won an architecture award in the public buildings category, the Blacket Award for projects located outside of Sydney, and the Alfred Sharp Award for landscape and urban design.

After a limited design competition the winning design team, Professor Richard Leplastrier, Professor Peter Stutchbury and Ms Sue Harper collaborated closely with the staff and students from Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Umilliko research centre and facilities personnel to produce an integrated design for the building and its environment.

"The process was unique in that the design had to reflect its special use and place in education at the University," Philip said, "and evolved in direct response to the cultural and symbolic needs of the people who would occupy it.

"It turned out to be the perfect match of an attractive design and an economical and ecologically sustainable building, as well as being functional."

Birabahn's footprint is the shape of an eagle hawk, an important local Aboriginal totem. The eagle hawk, Birabahn, shares its name with an Aboriginal man who was renowned and entrusted with enormous wisdom and knowledge amongst the Awabakal people.

"Birabahn was designed with the objective of creating a strong relationship between the interior of the building and the outdoors," said Philip, "so that almost every room has access to the exterior."

The building is also the most advanced example of sustainable design at the Callaghan campus. It has no air conditioning or mechanical ventilation and requires only short periods of supplementary heating on overcast winter days.

"We hope Birabahn will be an example of how buildings can be both economical and environmentally sustainable while at the same time being functional and giving people who use it a great sense of belonging," Philip said.

Indigenous staff up for teaching award

The staff of Wollotuka, the University's School of Aboriginal Studies, have a great deal to be proud of.

Birabahn recently won the RAIA Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings and in addition, the academic staff of Wollotuka have been announced as finalists in the National Australian Awards for University Teaching in the Institutional Award category for Innovation and Practical Approach to the Provision of Services to Indigenous Students.

Professor John Lester, Head of the School of Aboriginal Studies, says the achievement is recognition of the dedication and commitment of Wollotuka's teaching staff, to providing the best possible education for the students.

"The University has a long history of excellence in Indigenous education and research, and reaching the finals is confirmation that our academic staff is at the top of their profession, an achievement we are extremely proud of," he said. "Wollotuka aims to provide an environment that nurtures the unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, ensuring the growth of knowledge and awareness in all Australians. At the heart of our endeavours is the aim to provide high quality educational experiences for all our Indigenous students."

Sandra Sirasch, Deputy Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education and Arts says the University has long been recognised as a leader in Indigenous education, achieving many firsts.

"To be finalists in the National Australian Awards for University Teaching is a great acknowledgment of our achievements," she said. The Institutional Award category for Innovation and Practical Approach to the Provision of Services to Indigenous Students is designed to recognise exceptional teaching for Indigenous students in the university sector. The winners will be announced at Parliament House on December 2.

The Australian Awards for University Teaching were established by the Commonwealth Government as a way of highlighting the importance of excellence in university teaching nationally, for the benefit of students and the community at large.
Agreement on Hastings tertiary education

Representatives from the University, Hastings Council, Southern Cross University and TAFE NSW, North Coast Institute, signed a unique memorandum of understanding (MOU) in October which will guide the development of tertiary education in the Hastings region.

The long term vision of the four organisations, dependant on continued Federal Government support and demonstrated community demand, is to establish a Port Macquarie Tertiary Campus in the Hastings. The MOU outlines how the four organisations will work together to facilitate the development, planning and operational procedures for such a facility.

According to Hastings Deputy Mayor Councillor Jim Pearson, the MOU is a very real step forward in the four organisations working together to identify and meet the tertiary education needs of the local community.

"The Hastings Higher Education Consultative Group has for some time been investigating the need to provide face to face higher education to students of the Hastings, so that they don't have to leave the area to pursue tertiary studies," he said. "The signing of an agreement between the Council, the universities and the Institute is the first time we’ve had a blueprint for sharing existing facilities, joint planning and a clear vision of a model that would combine the two universities and build on the existing TAFE network."

While planning and development for a Tertiary Campus is ongoing, local students from both Southern Cross and Newcastle universities are already using the resources of the North Coast Institute through the Learner Support Centre. The Institute and the universities are also exploring bridging programs for enrolled nurses wishing to upgrade their qualifications to Bachelor degree level.

The Federal Government has recently announced, subject to the passage of its higher education legislation, the allocation of 15 places to the University for local students to study nursing in 2004, based in Port Macquarie. In addition, Southern Cross University has dedicated 15 places for delivery of its Bachelor of Nursing course in Port Macquarie, commencing first semester 2004.

"The allocation of the nursing places and the guarantee of places in the University of Newcastle's Bachelor of Applied Information Technology degree program for graduates of the North Coast Institute are realistic indications of how positive this partnership can be," said Councillor Pearson.

As part of the MOU signing the representatives also unveiled a plaque to commemorate the dedication and passion for tertiary education in the region shown by former Hastings Mayor, Wayne Richards.

The late Mr Richards was the inaugural chair of the Hastings Higher Education Consultative Group and it is hoped that the plaque will one day be incorporated into new facilities as part of the Port Macquarie Tertiary Campus.

In a joint statement, the University and TAFE NSW, North Coast Institute, announced that students of North Coast Institute who have completed Information Technology courses since 1998 are being guaranteed places in the Bachelor of Applied Information Technology (BAppIT) degree program at the University.

The university places are available in the 2004 and 2005 intake for any graduates of four specific Information Technology diplomas: Systems Administration; PC and Network Support; Business Systems; and Network Engineering.

According to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian English the arrangement could have a significant impact on employment opportunities for graduates of TAFE IT courses offered by the North Coast Institute.

"The three year full-time BAppIT program has been designed in response to growing industry demand for degree qualified information technology professionals," he said. "By offering guaranteed places to students from North Coast Institute we can ensure they receive credits for their completed studies and provide learning pathways to employment."

The BAppIT is designed to meet the requirements of professional accreditation through the Australian Computer Society and allows students to combine studies in information technology with another specialisation such as accounting, marketing or sociology. This structure, combined with the focus on real-world applications and work related skills, will provide graduates with even greater employment potential in fields like computer programming, information systems development, IT support and e-commerce in small to medium enterprises as well as large organisations.

Director of the North Coast Institute, Neil Black, believes this agreement highlights the range of possibilities to extend tertiary education pathways in the region.

"Both the North Coast Institute and the University of Newcastle are committed to providing premium education and career opportunities and this agreement is an example of how we can work together to deliver on that promise," he said.
A way to enlightenment

For someone who values meditation, the idea of living a stone's throw away from busy teaching areas shouldn't seem terribly attractive. But for German artist, Stefan Laug it was the perfect environment to meditate and pursue his artistic work during his time as artist-in-residence at Ourimbah.

Located in the Hermitage, a tranquil and beautiful corner of the campus complete with resident wildlife, Stefan used his three-month stay to share his knowledge and art with the campus and the Central Coast community. His work, known as land art, involves a mixture of installation, performance and poetry.

Stefan uses meditation as a guide to both his life and his art, providing him with the vision of what he should do. His art is linked to a 10-year personal odyssey, which has involved studying the major religions of the world.

"This study galvanised my feeling that many religions take us away from our inner and natural feelings," he said. "I recognised while I was studying in Stuttgart, that I had to learn a lot to follow my natural feelings about art and that we miss an important aspect in art, that of spirituality.

"My art reflects that innate need for clarification of the things we don't always understand."

Whilst in Australia, Stefan created two installations, one at Lake Mungo and another at the Ourimbah campus. His work was accompanied by an installation entitled *The Gathering* by Lynn Brunet, lecturer in Art History and Theory at the campus.

Stefan's work entitled *Silent Light*, is a body of land art and performance work created since 1993. It evolved during a stay at a sacred site in Nikko in Japan in 1993 where the artist meditated on the meaning of an ancient scroll. The scroll suggested that in the practice of deep meditation the individual can experience the sensation of being surrounded by light.

His art draws on a range of spiritual practices such as geomancy, dowsing, divining, prayer and meditation as well as visionary experiences to determine the exact place and time of the performance. The installations are created with a series of tiny lights (sometimes hundreds) made of butter that are arranged in symbolic patterns.

"I have created performances in many countries including India, Korea, Japan, the Sinai Desert and in many European countries," Stefan said. "The installations are tended in all-night vigils where poems, prayers and invocations are created aimed at transforming energies within both the natural and human environment. People who are involved with the performances are often changed through realisation and find confirmation of experiences they have already had in their life.

"I believe that artists should speak about their work and make it accessible. In this way it is possible to create access to spiritual experiences and inner knowledge."

The project was generously supported by a Research Visitor's Grant from the University's Research Branch, the School of Humanities at the Ourimbah campus and Dr Barry McKnight, Director, Central Coast Campuses. Stefan Lang's work can be viewed at his website www.silent-light.de

University sports awards to Ourimbah

The Central Coast Campus Union took out Event of the Year and its Sport and Recreation Officer, Michael Knott, won the Administrator of the Year section. The Event of the Year win was for hosting the very successful Eastern Universities Indoor Games in April this year, the second successive year that they have won the award.

For organising the games and for his success in developing sport on the Ourimbah campus, Michael beat a strong field to win the award.

"It was a great honour to win," said Michael. "We are one of the smallest campuses in this region and to gain these awards is a major achievement considering we were up against larger and better resourced universities."

The Australian University Sport – East region comprises 26 members from universities and TAFE campuses around NSW and ACT.

Final year exhibition

This year's fine art exhibition by final year students at the Ourimbah campus was opened by Mr Tony Bond, General Manager of Curatorial Services at the Art Gallery of New South Wales on November 27.

The exhibition, entitled *Escape*, will be open daily from 9am to 4pm in the Fine Art Centre until December 11.
Trust provides an enduring link

Newcastle graduates Steve and Bill Burges have established a trust fund at the University in memory of their parents Bill and Iris.

The Bill and Iris Burges Trust, ultimately worth up to $4 million, will fund a chair in health sciences at the University. Retired educator Bill Burges said his father would like to have trained as a doctor but was unable to afford to study full-time.

"It was 1934, at the height of the Great Depression, and Dad was supporting his mother and younger sisters," he said. "He needed to get a job and could only study part-time at night and weekends."

Bill pursued a career in accountancy and local government, completing his qualifications by correspondence. At the time of his death Bill was an Honorary Life Member of Local Government Management of Australia and a Fellow, and Honorary Life Member, of Certified Public Accountants of Australia.

He met 11-year-old neighbour Iris Evans in Mayfield when he was 12 and they married in 1941. The couple built a home at Wallsend, about a kilometre from the University's Callaghan campus.

Both Bill and Iris devoted much of their working lives to the betterment of Newcastle, with Bill becoming Town Clerk in 1950, a position he held until his retirement in 1977. He was instrumental in much of the post-war municipal development in the city and its region and played a major role in establishing the Shortland (now Callaghan) campus of the University.

While neither Bill nor Iris had the opportunity to attend university, they valued education and both their sons studied at the University's predecessor, the University of NSW College, at Tighes Hill. Bill completed his metallurgy studies under Eric Hall in 1964 and his Diploma of Education in 1967. Steve graduated in 1967, the second year to graduate from the University of Newcastle, with degrees in physics/mathematics and civil engineering and was awarded first class honours.

Following the death of Iris in August 2000, Steve and Bill discussed with their father the idea of donating to the University. When Bill senior passed away in May last year, they began talking to John Marley, the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Health at the University, about establishing a trust.

"We fought hard in Newcastle to get a Faculty of Health," Bill said. "Medicine wasn't initially a part of the University and it was a couple of years before we were able to study biological science here. The frontiers of study today appear to be in the health sciences area."

Steve, who is Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle in the US, and his wife Sylvia, whom he met at Stanford when he was completing his doctoral studies there, have also arranged their estate to include a bequest to the University of Newcastle.

"Mum and Dad did a lot for Newcastle during their lifetimes," Bill said. "The Bill and Iris Burges professorship at the University will provide an enduring link between their names and the city they served so well."

Women@UoN seek equity

A forum will be held in Newcastle this month as part of an initiative aimed at boosting the number of women in senior and decision-making roles at the University.

The forum for academic women, to be held at Noahs on the Beach on December 11, will be the first in a series of workshops and meetings throughout next year as part of the Women@UoN initiative.

Women@UoN supports a goal of the University's Strategic Plan - to increase the proportion of women in senior academic positions and decision-making roles. It is part of the Women's Leadership Development Initiative, a strategy of the Equity and Diversity Unit and Human Resource Services.

The University's employment statistics show significant gender disparities, with a disproportionately high number of men in senior academic positions. The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) Audit Panel found no strong systems in place for supporting women at the University.

Workshops for academic and general women staff were held in June and July this year to identify developmental priorities for 2004. The December forum is the first in the planned series of workshops and forums for both general and academic women, with details to be posted on the web as programs are finalised. Preliminary details can be viewed at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/equity/women/program2004.htm

Women@UoN are strongly encouraged to register for the forums and workshops. Please contact either the equity unit (equityanddiversity@newcastle.edu.au) or Project Manager Julia Connell at the Newcastle Graduate School of Business (Julia.Connell@newcastle.edu.au) if you have any queries or suggestions.
The University held its largest overseas graduation ceremony in Singapore in October, with 155 graduates from Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Singapore receiving their awards.

The Singapore ceremony marked the graduation of the first cohort of students to complete their studies through the University’s partnership with Singapore’s Productivity Standards Board (PSB) Corporation. The University and PSB Academy began delivering undergraduate engineering programs in Singapore in 2001 to students who held a diploma qualification from a polytechnic and who had two years’ work experience.

The University honoured one of its distinguished alumni Dr David Chew Heng Ching, who is Deputy Speaker of the Singapore Parliament, by awarding him an honorary doctorate in engineering at the ceremony. Dr Chew came to Newcastle under the Colombo Plan in 1970, at the age of 18, to study engineering. He graduated in 1974 with a Bachelor of Engineering with first class honours and a diploma in engineering management, winning the University Medal for his outstanding performance.

Since his return to Singapore, Dr Chew has climbed the corporate ladder in industries including banking, manufacturing, trading, engineering, lifestyle, printing, publishing, education, construction, real estate and in the food and beverage sectors. Today he is recognised as a leading corporate figure and company director in Singapore.

Throughout his career, Dr Chew has contributed to the development of commerce and industry in Singapore. In 1998, he led the formation of the Singapore Institute of Directors and is a Fellow of the Institute, founding President and Chairman of its Governing Council. He has been committed to shaping ethical corporate governance practices and improving professionalism among company directors in Singapore and is on the national Council on Corporate Disclosure and Governance, as well as Deputy Chairman of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to his private sector commitments, Dr Chew also serves the nation as a Member of Parliament and has done so since 1984. He has risen to assume one of the highest-ranking parliamentary offices with his appointment as Deputy Speaker.

Delivering the occasional address at the ceremony, Dr Chew said the graduates of the 70s, 80s and 90s in Singapore were beneficiaries of economic development and nation building and that many of them had been successful as a result of the opportunities created as Singapore’s economy took off.

“This is not to say there were no uncertainties or difficulties that faced individuals or our nation during that period,” he said. “The 1973 oil crisis, the 1985 economic recession and the 1998 financial crisis were some such road-blocks. But many of these road-blocks also presented opportunities along the way.”

Dr Chew pointed out that many Newcastle graduates over the past three decades have landed in careers undreamed of in their undergraduate days including Dr Khaw Boon Wan, Acting Minister for Health and Senior Minister of State for Finance; Permanent Secretary, Dr Tan Chin Nam; banking executive Mr Bill Chua; and successful entrepreneurs like Messrs Choo Heng Thong, Michael Chua and Alvin Lee.

“We took risks and seized the many opportunities that came our way in an emerging economy in the last 20 to 30 years,” he said. “Today, we have diversified as a body of graduates with varying degrees of success, permeating through all walks of society.”

He encouraged the new graduates at the ceremony to continue learning, saying rapid globalisation has created new opportunities for them, as well as some challenges.

“Gone are the days where we can expect to work in the same company for 30 years, expect an automatic annual salary increment, or expect to be rewar ded based on seniority,” he said. “We now have to innovate, catch up, learn new skills and be very flexible in our mindset, as well as our mobility, to advance our personal frontiers.”

Dr Chew also urged the graduates to take advantages of the cross-cultural ties they had made with Australia during their studies at the University of Newcastle.
"I am told that plans to formalise an alumni will be unveiled today," he said. "I would encourage all graduates to join the alumni, keep up friendships and contacts, seize the opportunities, take some risks. This would serve to grow the network over time and opens another chapter in the history of an institution with whom we share a collective belonging."

The University of Newcastle Alumni (Singapore) held an inauguration dinner held after the graduation ceremony. Chapter President, Mr Bill Chua, said the formation of the group marks an important milestone in the lives of many Singaporean and regional alumnus.

"We graduated with more than our university degrees," he said. "All of us learnt life skills that enabled us to thrive and succeed in a dynamic and challenging world. The list of outstanding alumni in Singapore's Who's Who attests to that.

"All of us have fond memories of the good times we had in the University. We were warmly welcomed and looked after by our professors and their families."

The objectives of the Singapore Alumni are to encourage, foster and strengthen relationships between the University and its graduates; to promote continuing relationships among the alumni living in Singapore and profile their achievements; to strengthen ties between the Singapore community and the University; and to assist the University in its objectives as a leading educational institution with a diverse representation of nationalities in its student body.

Newcastle graduate and Australian High Commissioner to Singapore Mr Gary Quinlan also spoke at the Alumni dinner, as did the Vice-Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes. The dinner was followed by an annual general meeting, at which the first Alumni Committee were elected.
Coal company seeks a sustainable future

The University will carry out research to help formulate a sustainable future for an open cut coal mining site near Gloucester in the Hunter Valley, in partnership with the mining company Gloucester Coal Ltd (GCL). Researchers from the Faculties of Education and Arts, Science and IT, and Engineering and Built Environment, will develop a sustainable land and asset use model for expired open cut coal mining properties.

The University’s Director for Regional Engagement John Dugas says the model will be a ‘best practice’ methodology or blueprint that is not only applicable to the Gloucester community and environment but can also be used by other communities and mine operators to map out responsible post-mining futures.

“The project uses strategic thinking and long range planning to achieve acceptable social, financial and environmental goals,” he said. “The evolving model is to be used to achieve the practical objective of integrating post-mining activities into existing and projected economic, social and environmental developments in the community.”

The project is likely to involve input from engineering, environmental science, human geography, health, earth sciences, aquaculture, arboriculture, and leisure and tourism. Future uses for the 40 square kilometres of land occupied by the mines could include agricultural activities, aquaculture, forestry, quarrying, rural subdivision and community village development using permaculture principles.

Coal mines have a limited life and with mining set to cease in the Gloucester Basin in the future, the University research will assist GCL in their ‘triple bottom line’ approach to exiting the site. Chief Executive Officer Gavin May says that financial viability, social responsibility and environmental sustainability are integral to the company’s philosophy.

“We want to partner with the University to develop a suitable land and asset use model that observes this approach,” he said. “We will provide a cash payment of $100,000 and in-kind support including accommodation, personnel, vehicle and equipment availability to the value of $120,000.”

Discussions are underway with staff from various disciplines and suggested projects to undertake in the next six to nine months include:

- irrigation and cropping – GCL are trialing evaporative techniques using different irrigation methods to reduce mine water storage. Trials will involve cropping over irrigation areas. Potential studies may involve monitoring impact of irrigation on soil quality; trials and economics of evaporation by irrigation; recommendation of suitable crops and monitoring of crop growth.

- Mammy Johnson’s River Ecology – the Duralie operation is a recently established coal mine operating adjacent to this river. Potential studies may involve upstream and downstream comparison of water quality and biodiversity; studies of the impacts of local community activity and agriculture on the river system.

- Duralie geography – establish a base map of the Duralie land asset including mapping of the geography, and an overlay showing land use that could act as essential base data for a more comprehensive blueprint of sustainable land use.

GCL has offered accommodation onsite to honours and other research students for Christmas vacation projects at the mines. The company’s contribution will fund around half of the projected study, with the University seeking grants funding to cover the remainder.

“The project is likely to succeed and this should be understood in the context of the outcome for the Gloucester community were this work not to be done,” John Dugas said. “Without such a focused exploration, the initiatives to deal with the mine closures could see a return to the past – the cow paddock solution.

“The clear opportunity and expertise exists to develop a much better road map to the future that will benefit all the stakeholders in the Gloucester Basin, and ultimately the whole nation.”

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Fellowship fosters collaborative research

A distinguished professor of civil engineering from the highly regarded University of Hannover in Germany will carry out collaborative research with the University's Geotechnical Research Group, led by Professor Scott Sloan, over the next six months.

Professor Peter Wriggers holds a chair in mechanics in Hannover and has been head of the Department of Civil Engineering there for the past two years. He is a specialist in computation - the development of algorithms and software solutions to engineering problems - and editor of the journal 'Computational Mechanics'. He is also the author of a book in the field, 'Computational Contact Mechanics'.

"I do research using finite element methodology and that is the link which brought me to Newcastle," Peter explains. "Professor Sloan's group is very well known for doing good research here on geotechnical problems and what we do is related to it."

Funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage professorial fellowship, Peter's visit will allow him to collaborate on a number of research projects at the University. He first met Scott Sloan, from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, at a conference in Sydney two years ago.

"Scott invited me to visit Newcastle for a day and that is how we made the link," Peter said. "We have kept in touch since then."

Peter has had a long-term relationship with the University of California at Berkeley in the US since he took a post-doctoral position there after completing his PhD at Hannover. He later spent six months there lecturing in civil engineering before taking up a position as professor in the university town of Darmstadt, Germany, where he worked for eight years. He has also been on sabbatical to Berkeley, as well as to Imperial College, London.

Scott and Peter hope the fellowship will lead to a longer-term relationship between the University of Newcastle and the University of Hannover. They are discussing future collaboration between the two civil engineering disciplines that could begin with an exchange of PhD students.

Hannover University is the largest institution of higher education in the Lower Saxony region of Germany, with more than 25,000 students enrolled. It offers 16 degree courses across 17 different faculties. The civil engineering department employs 190 staff and is sub-divided into more than 20 institutes, each with a chair.

While in Australia, Peter plans to visit some other universities and will also holiday in Melbourne, where his daughter has qualified to sail in the World Championships for 420 dinghies.

Employment studies back on agenda

One of the University's leading academic research centres, the Employment Studies Centre (ESC), was re-launched in October.

The ESC, established in 1990, provides a focus for research and consultancy on workplace, industry and labour market issues. ESC Deputy Director Dr Julia Connell says the Centre has coordinated major projects on training and skill formation, trends in the workplace and organisational change among other areas.

"The ESC also contributes to public policy analysis in areas such as wage bargaining, gender equity, and regional development," she said.

The Centre is housed in the Faculty of Business and Law, with research conducted by associates in multidisciplinary teams, across several faculties and schools, in disciplines including management, economics, accounting, finance, geography, environmental science and sociology.

The ESC is a division of TUNRA, the University's commercial arm, and has attracted over $1 million in funding and established a leading reputation in academic and contract research. ESC clients include government agencies, private organisations, training bodies, trade unions and voluntary bodies.

"Recent studies cover employment patterns, case studies of high performance workplaces, national and regional surveys of training and skill formation at the industrial, regional and national level," Julia said.

The re-launch of the Centre includes a change in senior management. Heading the team is Associate Professor John Burgess, Director of the ESC, with Dr Julia Connell as Deputy. Around 50 people attended the ESC relaunch at the Newcastle Graduate School of Business.

The ESC runs regular conferences, seminars and workshops. For more information see the website on: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/bus-law/centres_groups/esc/seminar/index.html
Study rates corporate governance

A report by two University researchers has again given Australian companies' corporate governance structures a mixed review with only 15 companies receiving a top rating.

The 2003 Horwath Corporate Governance report was commissioned by Sydney based chartered accountants Horwath NSW and conducted by Associate Professor Jim Psaros and Michael Scamer of the University's Business School.

The report assesses the corporate governance structures of Australia's top 250 publicly listed companies by examining the independence of each company's board and other key oversight committees - the audit, remuneration and nomination committees - and awarding them a star rating out of five.

"The first Horwath Corporate Governance Report was issued in 2002," Jim Psaros said. "It was intended to be a one-off project providing a snapshot of Australian corporate governance hot on the heels of high profile collapses such as HIH Insurance, OneTel, Harris Scarfe and Ansett."

The interest that the report generated indicated the level of interest in corporate governance in Australia, with more than 8,000 downloads of the report recorded and the key findings reported in the major financial press throughout the country.

"The 2002 report was successful in further raising awareness of corporate governance, and adding an objective, empirical component to the broad discussion," Jim said. "It may have been presumed that with the very public corporate governance debate that resulted from the corporate calamities such as HIH Insurance, OneTel, Harris Scarfe, Enron, and WorldCom, that corporate governance structures and independence levels may have improved."

The researchers were concerned to find that the independence levels of Australia's top 250 companies' Boards of Directors and associated committees appeared to have deteriorated since the 2002 report.

"This suggests that some companies are either unwilling or very slow to act," Jim said. "Accordingly the ASX Corporate Governance Council Guidelines may be very necessary to prompt action by some companies."

The research contained in the report is derived from the 2002 Annual Report disclosures of Australia's top 250 Australian companies based on market capitalisation. The report contains an overall assessment of each company's corporate governance structures.

To test whether good corporate governance makes a difference to the share price of a company, the data from the 2002 Horwath Corporate Governance Report was reviewed. All companies that were considered to have 'good to outstanding' corporate governance structures were compared with companies that were considered to have 'adequate to poor' structures. The annual percentage change in share price of all these companies was calculated after adjusting for dividend payments. On average, it was found that the share price of the 'good to outstanding' companies increased by 11.09 percent while the average share price of the 'adequate to poor' companies decreased by 8.91 percent. This provides some evidence that the market places significant value on the existence of good corporate governance structures within companies.

Surveying skills on track

Two Newcastle students have taken home an Excellence Award from the Institution of Surveyors NSW.

Dane Preston and Greg Niland from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment received the award from the Institution for the top final year project for university students in NSW for their surveying project on the Fassifern to Toronto 'Coffee Pot' railway line. This is the fifth time in six years that students from the University have won the student project section. Joint award winner Dane Preston, says the award is the highest honour that a surveying student in NSW can achieve.

"Greg and I are thrilled with the results, especially since the survey works were undertaken for the community based non-profit organisation Toronto Coffee Pot Tramway and Museum Society," said Dane. "We first met with the Society in November 2001 when they sought assistance from the University for their ongoing project to restore the Fassifern to Toronto rail line. The Society is also attempting to restore a replica of the original 'Coffee Pot' steam engine to run along the rail corridor for educational and community purposes."

The students conducted fieldwork including Levelling, Cadastral Surveying and Topographical Surveying to create a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) covering the Fassifern to Toronto rail corridor. The final plans, including a topographical detail plan, cover a survey strip of 30 metres wide and 3.8km in length. They were designed so that they can be interpreted by people with limited engineering knowledge.

"This award has already resulted in increased interest in the project which we believe can only benefit the Society and their plans," Dane said.

Dane is currently in his final year of a Civil Engineering degree. He and Greg graduated with Bachelor of Surveying Honours in 2002.
Keats fund China HIV research

An ongoing research project being funded by the Keats' Endowment Research Fund looks set to slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS in China.

Former PhD student at the University, Dr Wang Shuguang, is working with psychology Conjoint Professor Daphne Keats on a project that followed on from his doctoral studies into sexual risk-taking behaviour of young men in two employment sectors in China.

The current project, HIV prevention in ethnic minority groups in China from a cross-cultural psychological perspective, involves work undertaken with the Yi people and the A-Ba Tibetan group. Shuguang and Daphne travelled to Sichuan province in China to explore different ways to communicate the importance of condom use as a preventative method against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, which are prevalent in these ethnic groups.

"We made contact with a European condom company that was interested in social marketing in China and supported our project by donating free condoms," Shuguang said. "We used different strategies to influence different networks of people."

Amongst the ethnic people, there was widespread poverty that mitigated against the purchase of condoms and no tradition of condom use. While Shuguang had previously distributed literature to market the use of condoms in China, the ethnic groups didn't read and the researchers had to develop oral stories to communicate their message.

"We developed four stories that told the people why condom use is important, how to use them, how to care for their health and how to continue using condoms," Shuguang said. "We also organised activities in the countryside and invited them to attend workshops to encourage them to diffuse the message by peers."

Shuguang first came to the University a decade ago, completing his PhD studies in psychology under Daphne's supervision. He was in the first cohort of students to undertake undergraduate sociology studies at the Sichuan University of China after the Cultural Revolution. He left China following the Tiananmen Square event, and went to the University of California where he trained in HIV behaviour assessment, before coming to Australia.

"It was a big headache for us trying to work as sociologists in China," he said. "I found that so many young people were getting sexually transmitted diseases but it was difficult for me to explore behind these issues which are embedded in social processes and structures."

Shuguang says his generation of students have helped to foster a change of attitude to education and research in China. He is grateful to Conjoint Professors John and Daphne Keats, whose Research Fund has helped him to continue his research in China, and says that Daphne, with her background of 11 visits to China over the past 25 years, is easy to work with. Daphne says she and John were happy to fund the studies, with over 50 ethnic minority groups in China, some with up to 50 million people.

"We thought that if we could effectively train small groups of the Yi and Tibetan people to educate others about the benefits of condom use, using variations of stories to fit local contexts and languages, we could use the method to help other ethnic groups," she said. "By providing just a little bit more money in the right places with the right people, we have been able to make a big difference, which is just so thrilling."

Now working as a research fellow with the University of NSW's National Centre in HIV Social Research, Shuguang says he will continue looking for funding support to extend his intervention strategies into other groups in China.

"In China, most scholars are slow to adopt and develop successful international experience in behavioural research," he said. "I would like to use the successful model of Australia's treatment of HIV and modify it for use in China."

Take a walk on the wild side

To commemorate United Nations Day, international students from the University took a walk on the wild side at Newcastle's Blackbutt Reserve recently.

'Getting To Know Us' Day is an initiative of the University and Blackbutt Reserve that gives international students the chance to learn more about Australian flora and fauna. Marion Allan, the University's Community Projects Officer, says around 60 international students made friends with the wildlife, coming eye to eye with the resident koalas, kangaroos, wallabies and native birds and experienced the diversity of the Australian bush first hand.
Researchers from the University and the University of Massachusetts in the USA are working together to uncover new facts about the works of William Shakespeare.

The researchers have been awarded almost $170,000 in grants from the Australian Research Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities in the USA, to develop software capable of analysing the writings of William Shakespeare.

Lead researchers Professor Hugh Craig, Head of the School of Language and Media, and Professor Arthur F. Kinney, Director of the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies at UMass, say they hope to expand the knowledge of Shakespeare and clarify historical disputes over the authorship of his work.

The two teams of researchers will use a method called Computational Stylistics to count the frequency of both common and rare words to detect writing styles, and determine if and when there have been collaborations. Computers allow researchers to conduct searches of large databases of works including those of Shakespeare, to detect patterns of word use that are specific to each writer.

"By using computers to do these searches, on a scale not previously possible, it becomes clear that individual styles are detectable even down to quite short passages," Hugh said.

Professor Kinney says that they also hope to discover more about Shakespeare the man, whether, for example, he spent his first seven years as an actor in a theatre group and which group. He says that by searching Shakespeare's writing for rare words it may be possible to determine what he was reading during specific periods of his life, what roles he might have been playing and what stage props were used by different acting companies.

The Centre for Literary and Linguistic Computing at the University will be working on the project with the Center for Renaissance Studies at UMass; something Hugh says is a first.

“We believe that this is the first time the NEH and ARC have joined to fund an international collaborative project like this,” he said.

The work will ultimately be chronicled in a book to be titled, 'Shakespeare: The Early Modern Theater and Computational Stylistics', with plans to develop the methods to study other authors.

Students awarded prestigious grant

Two highly creative students were awarded prestigious William Fletcher Trust grants in November.

Emma Weis, a Fine Art student from Tamworth, and Minyo Weight, a Wildlife Illustration Honours student, originally from Sydney, both received $1000 to further their studies in design and the visual arts.

Emma, who hopes to one day to take home the Archibald Prize – Australia's premier portraiture award, was delighted to discover she was one of the fortunate grant recipients.

"The grant is a great incentive for me to follow my ambition and in the interim help with the cost of art materials."

Thanks to the University's Flexible Delivery Program, Emma is able to complete her degree program in her hometown of Tamworth. The University/TAFE affiliation offers students the opportunity to study Fine Art at their local TAFE.

Minyo Weight, who recently gave birth to a baby girl, moved to Newcastle from Sydney on completion of a science degree to undertake the Wildlife Illustration Honours program at the University, the only one of its kind in Australia. She was overwhelmed by news of the award.

"The opportunity to study science and art is an inspiration and I feel honoured to be a grant recipient," she said. "I hope to combine motherhood with a successful career in wildlife illustration."

Miranda Lawry from the Faculty of Education and Arts and Christine Sanders from the Faculty of Science and Information Technology are extremely proud to have not one but two grant recipients studying at the University, building on the excellent reputation the University has for design and the visual arts.

The Trust is the legacy of Hunter born artist William Fletcher, a renowned artist described as one of the finest painters of Australian wildflowers. The William Fletcher Trust is a charitable trust designed to assist the development and advancement of young talented artists in NSW.

The William Fletcher Trust grant certificates were awarded at a presentation ceremony by the Trusts Chairman, Ms Eula Guthrie AO, in November.
Electronic resources available 24/7

Students will have improved access to electronic scholarly resources thanks to a new Information Common opened at the Callaghan campus in November.

The opening of the Common in the Auchmuty Library is culmination of 18 months of detailed planning, consultation and renovations to implement a state of the art collaborative learning environment.

Executive Director Education Services and University Librarian Lynne Benton says that from the outset of the project, the design brief had been to create a dynamic study environment which complements the traditional library environment while creating an inviting and exciting atmosphere.

"An Information Common is a supported electronic resource center" she said. "These resource centres are emerging as an important addition to many university libraries. Other institutions in Australia and overseas are already experiencing the exciting facilities provided by an Information Common."

The Auchmuty Information Common has been designed to allow staff and students 24 hour access to digital resources and scholarly information collections using state of the art equipment. The University has responded to the increased demand for access to electronic information resources and calls for more computing and IT facilities, services and equipment. The Common brings together electronic learning resources, computer hardware and software and media production facilities in a supportive atmosphere.

"It is intended that these facilities will significantly improve access to digital scholarly information collections, as well as boost support for information literacy programs which are already an integral part of the service we provide," Lynne said. "The Library's Information Desk has also been relocated to the Common to provide professional information, research and IT support."

Student surveys over the last few years have shown that students want more computer access and group study facilities to support collaborative learning. The Common contains various configurations of computer terminals on 16 'pods' which will give students the opportunity to work collaboratively or individually. Students will also have access to a cafe, casual seating, a training lab, express terminals and a ready reference collection in the Common.

The extended hours of the Information Common will begin in 2004 and the ability for it to be readily secured from the rest of the library means that when the library and other on-campus computing labs close, students will have the opportunity to relocate to (or stay in) the Information Common if they wish to continue working.

Wetlands clean stormwater

Two Bachelor of Environmental Science Honours students from the University have helped to prove that artificially constructed wetlands can be highly successful in removing pollution from urban stormwater.

The students analysed two different urban stormwater management systems on the NSW Central Coast which incorporated constructed wetland systems in the treatment process. The stormwater management systems were constructed by Lake Macquarie and Wyong Councils to minimise the impact of urbanisation on sensitive environments that receive water.

Phillip Geary from the School of Environmental and Life Sciences in the Faculty of Science and Information Technology says constructed wetlands use native wetland plants and natural processes to improve water quality and can effectively remove contaminants in urban stormwater.

"They can be classed into two major categories, surface flow and subsurface flow constructed wetlands," Phillip said. "Surface flow wetlands have free visible water on their surface, whereas in subsurface wetlands the water is entirely contained below the surface. In this type of constructed wetland, the stormwater flows through the root zone of the plants where treatment by bacteria and filtering occurs."

Both the surface flow wetland system at Croudace Bay on Lake Macquarie and the sub-surface flow wetland system at Blue Haven near Wyong, were analysed over a six month period during a number of heavy rainfall periods.

Through detailed monitoring of stormwater runoff from each treatment facility, researchers found that both facilities performed extremely well in the removal of most of the major stormwater pollutants such as phosphorus and suspended solids before the runoff entered the lake systems.

"However, with respect to nitrogen removal, the subsurface wetland system appeared to remove more nitrogen from stormwater than the surface wetland system," Phillip said. "Subsurface flow wetlands have several advantages over surface flow wetlands and could be expected to remove more nitrogen because of the different treatment processes occurring, however, they are generally more expensive and more complex to design."

The research results are very encouraging given the commitment that both Lake Macquarie and Wyong Councils have shown in installing stormwater treatment facilities, incorporating either the subsurface or surface constructed wetlands in their design, Phillip explained.
Herbarium celebrates botanical life

The University opened the Don McNair Herbarium in October, celebrating a lifetime dedicated to collecting, identifying and preserving plants by Don.

Don was born in Mayfield in 1920 during the time of Newcastle's industrial growth, when conservation and the protection of species were foreign concepts. But he had a fascination for things that grew; which was nurtured in the family's vegetable patch. However, as a young man in the 1930s in Mayfield, he had no opportunity to pursue his hobby as a career and instead went into industry at Lysaghts. He later became an auto electrician and a mechanic.

Don ran several successful businesses until his retirement in 1983, but never lost his passion for botany, and on his many trips in pursuit of business around the state, the return journey always included collecting, photographing and identifying of plants.

Don, through his association with the National Herbarium in Sydney and his study through community programs at the University, became a widely regarded authority on plant species and taught the subject at both the University Technical College and at WEA centres. He became a visiting Convocation Scholar in 1985 and Honorary Research Associate in the Department of Biological Sciences from 1986 to 1993. Such was his knowledge and respect as a botanist he was chosen as the first Director of the Hunter Botanical Gardens. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the University in 1993 in recognition of his lifetime work in botany.

Don's collection totaling 9,600 specimens was moved from his home to the University during the early 1990s and has gradually been remounted, labeled and catalogued by Don and a dedicated group of volunteers. After more than 15,000 hours of work the herbarium was opened.

The project is not unlike a garden, says Don. It is never ending, with things to do, plants to collect, to research and to explore. The herbarium also comprises collections from other botanists including the H C Dorman collection, the J Turner collection and the P Williams collection.

Managing diabetes with diet

A HMR researcher at the University is looking for people with Type 2 diabetes for a new study on managing diabetes with diet. Anne Matley from the Faculty of Health is completing the research as part of her PhD which is examining the use of higher protein diets in the management of Type 2 diabetes.

"About 7.5 percent of adults have Type 2 diabetes," says Anne. "Many of them are overweight and we know that weight loss can help to manage blood sugar levels and to reduce the risk of heart disease."

The aim of the research is to see if one diet is better than another in managing diabetes by achieving better blood sugar control, reducing heart disease risk factors or achieving greater weight loss. A number of small studies have suggested that greater weight loss may be achieved with higher protein diets although it is not clear if people can maintain their weight loss any better.

"I am interested in finding out if participants given nutrition advice based on their usual food preferences do any better than people given advice which conflicts with their usual preferences," Anne said. "We are also looking at quality of life and levels of depression, anxiety and stress to see if these are affected by the type of diet people are advised to eat."

Participants will be weighed and measured, and asked to complete a food diary. They will have blood tests to measure glucose, insulin and cholesterol levels and will be allocated a group for either the standard dietary education or education based on a higher protein low fat diet. They will attend education sessions, complete another food diary, and be weighed, measured and tested so that comparisons can be made. One year later, the testing and food diary will be completed again to see if participants have been able to maintain any changes. Interested participants should contact (02) 4921 5644. People who are vegetarians or who have known kidney disease will not be eligible.
Creating a vibrant business culture

Professor Paul Ryder returned to an academic role in the Faculty of Business and Law in October satisfied with the many milestones he achieved during his term as Deputy Executive Dean.

Initially appointed Head of the Newcastle Business School and the Newcastle Graduate School of Business (NGSB) in 2002, Paul assumed the additional responsibility of the Central Coast School of Business in August last year and was also appointed Dean of Business. He took on the role as Deputy Executive Dean in May of this year.

Paul says that the period has been challenging and rewarding, resulting in the development of two new programs in the NGSB including the highly successful Doctor of Business Administration, the first professional doctorate offered by the University.

"I am gratified by the support from the Vice Chancellor's Strategic Initiative funds for these initiatives that have resulted in 12 new staff appointments, mainly at senior levels," he said. "This infusion of new senior staff will create a vibrant culture in the business schools that will carry the University forward over coming years."

The University's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program has moved up significantly in rankings of MBAs offered in the Asia Pacific region published recently by Asia Inc - from the bottom tier to the middle range in 12 months. Under Paul's leadership of the NGSB, there has been record growth in international student numbers in six consecutive intakes, resulting in the NGSB being an engine for internationalisation for the University.

The Professorial Accounting bodies re-accredited the Bachelor of Commerce program and the new accounting major in the Bachelor of Management in 2003 for the NBS and the CC School of Business.

Paul is an assessor for the Australian Research Council and has held the position of President of ANZAM (Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management) on a number of occasions. He is a Distinguished Fellow and Life Member of ANZAM. He is looking forward to overseas study leave in 2004 where he will be researching new forms of strategic alliances in universities to promote commercialisation and internationalisation. Paul will also investigate the latest trends in DBA programs and undergraduate hospitality management programs for the University.

Faculty International and Remote Services Unit

In response to strong international and offshore enrolments in the newly established Doctor of Business Administration program, the Faculty of Business and Law has established the Faculty International and Remote Services (FIRS) unit.

FIRS will enable the Faculty to administer this increase in student numbers and to better align the provision of services to students. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Brian English approved the creation of FIRS, which will provide administrative support for international postgraduate coursework, offshore and remote students, who will enrol in their programs of study through FIRS.

FIRS is located in the Faculty administrative wing in the Social Sciences building (Room SRS131), facilitating closer interactions with Student Services, Finance and Marketing staff. Several general staff from the Newcastle Graduate School of Business, who were responsible for administrative matters related to postgraduate coursework students, have re-located to Callaghan to staff the FIRS unit.

National conference on unemployment

Federal Treasurer Peter Costello recently announced that Australia's unemployment rate could drop to five percent, a level he describes as a benchmark for full employment. Full employment will be one of the issues to be discussed at the 10th National Conference on Unemployment to be held at the University in December.

According to Professor Bill Mitchell, Director of the University's Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CoffEE) there is need for a new approach to employment policy.

"It is incorrect to say that Australia is at full employment when unemployment equals five percent," he said. "To be counted as employed, you only have to work one hour. The increasing casualisation of the workforce means that there is an increasing number of workers who do not have their hours aspirations satisfied."

CoffEE will host the Conference on Unemployment, to be held in conjunction with the Centre's annual Path to Full Employment Conference. Supported by the School of Policy, the event will be held at the Callaghan campus over three days from December 10.

Bill says the Conference will appeal to a large audience, with papers organised around a number of themes including macroeconomic policy and full employment; regional development issues; welfare to work issues; hours of work; overwork and underemployment; unemployment and its impact on particular groups; and policy responses to unemployment. It will feature speakers from the US, Europe and Australia.

Full details, including registration, are available through the Conference homepage http://el.newcastle.edu.au/coffee/conferences/2003
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