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Pills plus exercise could be the answer to more independent aging

Early steps to improve later life

By Lindy Brophy

Is this the elixir of eternal youth?

Dr Tea Shavlakadze is sceptical. But she is excited about her discoveries in the area of aging, and the possibility of drug therapy to help keep elderly people's muscles from wasting.

The research fellow in Anatomy and Human Biology and her colleague Professor Miranda Grounds are looking at the mechanisms of muscle aging and Dr Shavlakadze has been invited by Novartis, one of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies, to spend another six months at their research institute in Boston.

Novartis are leaders in research into muscle wasting and Dr Shavlakadze has already spent 12 months in Boston, working on the possibility of drug therapies to slow down sarcopenia (loss of muscle strength and mass).

"It's a huge accolade for somebody who has so recently graduated," Professor Grounds said. She and Dr Shavlakadze wrote a book chapter on skeletal aging in 2005, just after Professor Grounds had supervised Dr Shavlakadze's PhD,

that emphasised the importance of age-related loss of nerve connections to muscles. They have been working on the area since then.

"There is a lot of interest in aging in the community," Dr Shavlakadze said. "The main focus seems to be on cardiovascular health. But muscle makes up 40 per cent of our body and it is sarcopenia that results in people being unable to move and losing their independence."

"Resistance or weight-bearing exercise is the only way to slow down muscle aging. But if we can find out what causes innervation, that is, what tells the nerves to 'let go' of the muscles, we can work on therapies that keep the nerves attached to the muscle, so elderly people can keep moving, slow down sarcopenia, retain some muscle strength and mass, and so their independence."

Such treatments might also be used by bed-ridden patients and HIV-AIDS patients, to help prevent muscle wasting.

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Never too young for campus life

Neither the global financial crisis nor a grove of jacaranda trees could stand in the way of UWA's new Early Learning Centre on the Nedlands campus.

The centre opened its doors to children in August and was officially opened late last month by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson – against a backdrop of the sound of happy children playing and laughing.

It replaces the UWA Child Care facility in Monash Avenue and provides long day care for up to 100 children under the age of five.

The impressive centre is a monument to sustainability, built of rammed earth, accommodating the jacaranda trees, using recycled rainwater, with a vegetable garden, passive solar heating and energy consumption indicators.

It is also a testament to perseverance, and Child Care Manager Joanne Powell hinted in her speech at the opening that



The Centre has carefully designed and equipped play areas (Photo by Elena Phatak)

the Centre overcame the hurdle of the GFC thanks to its strong supporters, including Executive Director Finance and Resources, Gaye McMath, Director Student Services, Jon Stubbs, and Associate Director Equity and Diversity, Beverley Hill.

UWA has a long history of support for onsite child care for both staff and students with young families. It was one of the first public institutions in WA to establish a child care facility.

The program at this new centre is guided by the national Early Years Learning Framework, Australia's first national curriculum for early childhood education. It will ensure that the centre is setting the

benchmark for early childhood education and care in WA.

Guests at the opening were taken on a tour of the centre and were impressed by the imaginative design, which strives to become an extension of the family home, offering an enriching, nurturing environment for children and families.

Students and staff from the Graduate School of Education, also on the Nedlands campus, will be involved with the centre as part of education teaching and research.

UWA's Child Care Services also includes a popular Out-of-School Care Centre in Parkway, which is featured in this issue of UWAnews.

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"A pill won't be the only answer," Dr Shavlakadze said. "It would still need to be combined with exercise." The medical profession generally agreed that exercise was the only way to slow down sarcopenia but nobody really knew how it worked.

Dr Shavlakadze has been working with mouse models, encouraging life-long exercise to strengthen the nerve-to-muscle contact. "Mice just love to run on a wheel and if they have access to a free-spinning wheel all the time, they will just keep on exercising," she said.

"Our preliminary information has shown some definite benefits, but we are still analysing the results."

She said that many humans now lived to 100 years of age, but muscle wasting became pronounced over the last 20 to 30 years, so the quality of many people's lives was greatly reduced.

"We want to improve the quality of life. If we know why muscle ages, why the nerve disconnects, we can create a pill that will work together with exercise to do that."

She said sarcopenia began around the age of 40 but did not become noticeable until about the age of 65. Exercise and



Tea Shavlakadze

other interventions were needed before then to prevent the muscle wasting, rather than trying to treat it later in life.

Dr Shavlakadze and Professor Grounds have published several journal papers over the past few years on therapeutic interventions for age-related muscle wasting.

Local groups getting closer to better asthma treatments



Philip Thompson



Nearly one in five Australian children have a form of asthma

A high standard of living is no protection against the insidious disease of asthma, which is more prevalent in Australia, New Zealand and the UK than anywhere else in the world.

One in eight adults and nearly one in five children in Australia suffer from asthma.

So it comes as no surprise to find out that Australia (specifically WA) leads the way in asthma gene research: trying to find out exactly what gene variants cause the disease, so that treatments can be specifically targeted.

The difficulty lies in the many different forms of asthma: some caused by allergies, some not, and some of them a combination of the two.

WA has four groups working in asthma genetics, three of them directly affiliated with UWA: the Lung Institute of WA, the Raine Cohort Study and the School of Paediatrics and Child Health. The fourth is the Busselton Group.

These groups are part of the Australian Asthma Genetics Consortium, headed by Dr Manuel Ferreira from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, which recently announced the discovery of two new genetic variants that increase the risk of asthma.

It was published in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The two latest discoveries are the geographical locations on the DNA where there are gene variants between asthmatics and non-asthmatics.

One is in the interleukin-6 receptor (IL6R) gene on chromosome 1 and the other near a gene called GARP on chromosome 11.

"IL6R is particularly interesting because it plays an important role in the immune system and inflammation," said Winthrop Professor Philip Thompson, director of the Lung Institute and senior author of *The Lancet* paper.

"The results suggest that asthma patients produce more IL6R in the lung than non-asthmatics which, in turn, contributes to

inflammation. Medications acting on that receptor may provide new treatment options."

He said asthma was an umbrella term to describe a mix of diseases with different subsets and different pathways. "The research is far more complex than simply finding a single gene for asthma. There are multiple genes involved.

"The pathway usually begins with an external trigger, such as house dust mite or cat hair, taking advantage of the abnormality of a certain gene, which alters the normal way a body would react. Several pathways lead to what we know as asthma."

Professor Thompson said WA was a powerful force in asthma genetics and the findings of the consortium had led to international interest and recognition.

"The NHMRC funding to put together this consortium has not only resulted in the genetic discoveries, but in an invitation to join international consortia," Professor Thompson said. "It shows that networking and collaboration can lead to something powerful, with key scientists combining their expertise. We were able to take advantage of the international collaborators' work to validate our work, and the results were published in the highest quality journal."

Professor Thompson said the inclusion of Winthrop Professor Peter Le Souëf, head of Paediatrics and Child Health, added value to the project. Professor Le Souëf is a world-renowned asthma geneticist. The other key contributors were Adjunct Associate Professor Alan James (Busselton) and Professor Craig Pennell (Raine Cohort Study).

The significant outcomes in the study highlight the major contributions that Western Australian medical scientists are making in the field of asthma and asthma genetics.

"I feel we are at a turning point in the search for treatments that target specific abnormalities. We know there is something on these chromosomes that is relevant to asthma. Now we need to drill down further and fine tune the map," Professor Thompson said.

The value of alumni

We often talk about our University as being a 'community' or a 'family' and it certainly feels that way, especially when staff and students work together to ensure the success of events such as Open Day and the Parents' Welcome, or in response to emergencies such as the hail storm in March 2010.

Just as families may have members living overseas, our University has a big contingent of alumni who, though geographically far away from the campus, stay in touch with the University and with each other.

In the last week, representatives from UWA travelled to both London and New York for such reunions. And in August we visited Shanghai, followed by stops in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

At these events, we were pleased to be able to recount the University's recent achievements – such as our growing national and international reputation as evidenced by our laudable standing in both the Shanghai Jiao Tong World University Rankings and *Australia's Good Universities Guide*.

At these events, we commend our alumni in their role as ambassadors, representing one of the University's key strengths. They reflect our commitment to education, research and lifelong learning. Through their friendship and support they help to direct and encourage future generations to aspire to a UWA degree.



Alan Robson
Vice-Chancellor

Other events at home – such as the Senate Community Dinner held earlier this month – remind us of the large and loyal family our University shares, whether as alumni, staff (some of whom are both) or friends from the broader community.

Through our many alumni who have taken on international leadership roles – such as the current Australian Ambassador to the United States Kim Beazley and the Australian Minister for Defence Stephen Smith – the State of Western Australia has developed strong relationships within government and civil communities throughout the globe.

For example, in London last week Professor Stephen Hopper, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and soon to be UWA's inaugural Chair in Biodiversity, was invited to speak about food security at an international forum.

It was my pleasure to give the keynote address at this forum where I was proud to recount our University's growing role in 'feeding the world', from our involvement in the Seeds of Life program in Timor Leste to our collaboration with international universities to find ways of adapting agriculture to climate change.

Alongside our staff, our alumni have contributed – over almost a century – to the development of our own State and to the wellbeing of people internationally. Their contributions continue in every field of human endeavour.

Talking about academic integrity

Academic integrity has been a much debated and researched topic in academia over the past decade.

Paradoxically, the advances in technology of that period have made it easier than ever to cheat and, at the same time, easier than ever to detect cheating.

Researchers in the area (also known as 'ethical scholarship', 'educational integrity', and 'academic conduct') are the first to acknowledge that not all academic misconduct is intentional and it falls to individual institutions to create a culture of ethical practice which encompasses both academics and students.

UWA's Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL) recently hosted the 5th Asia Pacific Conference on Educational Integrity for the first time.

Keynote addresses were delivered by Winthrop Professor Mark Israel from UWA's Law Faculty and Jude Carroll from Oxford Brookes University.

Professor Israel's address, *Building an adversarial culture: Research integrity and ethics in the social sciences*, drew attention to the tensions that exist between research ethics and research integrity. Jude Carroll, whose work in the area of academic integrity has spanned more than a decade, spoke on *How culture and context shaped and shapes the management of plagiarism*.

The two-and-a-half day conference attracted delegates from across Australia and New Zealand, as well as the UK, the US, Canada, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong. Multiple opportunities were created for delegates to share experiences and best practice as well as to make new research connections.

CATL's Assistant Professor Lee Partridge said feedback from the delegates was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.

The conference proceedings can be accessed at apcei.catl.uwa.edu.au

Three years' work in just three minutes

Unborn sharks learn to keep very still to survive; synthetic cannabis can save lives; and the CEOs of Nigerian banks do better the longer they stay in the job.

These were among the fascinating facts learned by the audience at the national finals of the Three Minute Thesis competition (3MT) at UWA last month.

Our University hosted more than 40 PhD candidates from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji as they condensed at least three years' work into polished three-minute performances on the Octagon stage.

The trophy went back to the University of Queensland (from whom UWA won it last year) with an impressive presentation from Matthew Thompson from UQ's School of Psychology and National Information and Communication Technology Research Australia.

His 3MT, *Suspects, Science and CSI*, looked at the reliability of fingerprint evidence in convicting people in courts of law.

Dr Michael Azariadis, one of the event's organisers, from the Graduate Research and Scholarships Office, said Matthew was relaxed with a clear, engaging style, who connected well with the audience.

"Ryan Kempster, the UWA finalist, also did extremely well and finished in the top 10," he said.

Ryan, who is supervised by Winthrop Professor Shaun Collin in UWA's Ocean Institute, talked about *Survival of the stillest: predator avoidance strategies of shark embryos*.

"The 3MT really teaches you to talk about your research on a level that everybody can understand," Ryan said. "Often I found that I would talk to people about my research and before I knew it I would be rambling on with some very technical information that seemed to me to be very straightforward. You learn from this competition to convey your work to a non-specialised audience."

Dr Krystyna Haq, who, with Dr Azariadis and Dr Joanne Edmondston, organised the finals, said everyone who took part in the 3MT competition would have found it an inspiring event.

"Listening to clear and accessible communication of research that covers a broad spectrum of topics has the potential to give researchers new ideas," Dr Haq said. "For competitors, the task of preparing a short talk that goes to the core of their PhD is very valuable in



Judge Alan Dench presents a cheque to People's Choice winner Jack Rivers

helping them articulate the essence of what they are doing and to reconnect mentally with why it matters.

"This has benefits in terms of motivation – something that it is sometimes easy to lose when focused on the detail of research."

The judges included Winthrop Professor Fiona Wood, Winthrop Professor Alan Dench, Dean of the Graduate Research School, Peter Holland, doyen of Perth broadcasters, and academics from some of the universities involved.

Audience members also had a vote and the People's Choice went to Jack Rivers

from the University of Otago, who is studying the use of cannabis to suppress the immune system in brain-damaged patients.

The event was tweeted live with more than 300 official UWA tweets going out in the lead-up to and during the event, and more than 70 people following the information.

Dr Lisa Cluett, from the ALTC Viral Project in Student Services, said the number of followers was very impressive from a Twitter account that had only been in operation for about a week before the event.

PM's awards help Pacific communities

Not very far from the northern coast of Australia, children as young as six are involved in dangerous child labour, clearing bushland, fishing in rough seas, and carving dug-out canoes.

Kanau Sion, a PhD candidate from Papua New Guinea, said that 80 per cent of the PNG population lived in traditional rural communities and their children were involved in these potentially dangerous jobs and other physically and mentally damaging work.

Mr Sion, a social worker and university lecturer, aims, through the publication of his thesis, to help PNG nationals to see the dangers in child labour and for the rest of the world to understand why it is still happening in PNG.

"From the PNG perspective, it is not child labour, it is simply child work. The parents want their children to learn life skills and to get experience to prepare them for adulthood," he said.

"From the western perspective, it is wrong. If the physical, social and emotional health and well-being of the child is compromised by this work, then it is what we call child labour, which goes against many international conventions," said Mr Sion, who is supervised by Dr Sue Young, Chair of the discipline of Social Work and Social Policy.

"But it is not my intention to simply tell the people it is wrong. They must come



Children take part in a focus group on Manus Island

to that decision themselves. Implementation of solutions must involve the people themselves, so in my research on my island of Manus, I have stepped aside and let the people tell their stories.

"I hope that by reflecting on their own experiences they will learn and be inspired to take appropriate actions. And some of the people are already deciding that child labour is an issue.

"The title of my thesis is *Understanding for action: child labour in the PNG context*, and I hope that it will inspire change in my country as well as help the rest of the world to understand that these people believe they are doing the right thing by their children."

Mr Sion is funded by AusAID to study at UWA. He brought his wife and five young

daughters to live in Perth after he found the separation from them, in his first six months here, unbearable. His wife works part-time to supplement the scholarship.

He has been awarded a Prime Minister's Pacific-Australia Award, a prestigious award offered to recipients of long-term development awards (Australian Development Scholarships and Australian Leadership Award Scholarships). They are for postgraduate students from the Pacific, Papua New Guinea and East Timor, who are leaders or potential leaders in their countries.

Deborah Pyatt, Manager of the International Sponsored Student Unit in UWA's International Centre, said the PMPA awards were a breakthrough for postgraduate students from the Pacific islands and PNG. "It means they can get three months' experience before they go back to their countries, much better equipped to apply their knowledge and skills," she said.

Another winner of a PMPA award is Jenny Willie-Stephens, a dentist from Vanuatu, who is doing her Masters in Dental Public and Primary Health.

"The administration and management of oral healthcare services in my country is poor and thus affects the delivery of services to the rural and remote areas," she said. "It is for this reason that I decided to apply for a scholarship to study the public health aspect."

Sponsored by AusAID, she is studying dental public health administration and



Kanau Sion



Jenny Willie-Stephens



management, organisation and financing of dental care programs and development of resources, supervised by Winthrop Professor Marc Tennant, Director of the Centre for Remote and Rural Oral Health, and Dr Estie Kruger.

After finishing her course work, Ms Stephens' project has been based on the GIS mapping of private and public dental practices in NSW, to help the State Government plan and develop policies for its dental program.

She hopes to work with an NGO or government department in Australia, under the PMPA scheme, before returning to Port Vila where she has a position waiting as Principal Dental Officer for the Vanuatu Government.

"I have loved it here, so has my 12-year-old son. But I must go back and do what I can for my country. There is a lot of political instability there which, of course, affects public health."

The Prime Minister's Pacific-Australia Awards are part of the Australia Awards, an Australian Government initiative designed to promote knowledge, education links and enduring ties between Australia, our neighbours and the global community.

The PMPA Awards are fully funded by AusAID (Australian Agency for International Development)). For further information on the PMPA Awards, please visit pmpa.austraining.com.au

UWA's first PhD from Timor Leste

While Timor Leste fought hard for its independence from Indonesia, its people are happy to accept other countries' help in rebuilding.

As one of Timor Leste's closest neighbours, Australia is closely involved in the young nation's development. UWA staff and students are active in Timor Leste's agricultural and mining industries, through education and training programs, as well as research and development.

During the recent graduation season, Dr Marcal Gusmao became UWA's first PhD graduate from Timor Leste.

His doctorate in agricultural science will help him to pass on methods of improving crop yields to his students at the National University of Timor Leste.

He worked on a legume crop, grass pea, which tolerates both drought and water-logging. "Although the final seed yield is severely reduced by drought, the grass pea, unlike the chickpea, still produces a respectable seed yield," Dr Gusmao said.

"Further experiments found that a wheat crop, rotated with grass pea, had great nitrogen uptake and increased growth. One of my students is about to start research on adaptation of the grass pea to Timor Leste."

Funded by AusAID and supervised by Professor Erik Veneklaas, Winthrop Professor Kadambo Siddique, Adjunct

Professor Harry Nesbitt and Assistant Professor Ken Flower, Dr Gusmao is now back at his university and is also working for a United Nations development program on climate change.

Professor Siddique first met him in Timor Leste in 2006 and encouraged him to apply for a John Allwright Fellowship from the Australian Centre of International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and come to UWA.

Deborah Pyatt, Manager of the International Sponsored Student Unit in UWA's International Centre, said that after six months at UWA's Centre for English Language Teaching and three and a half years in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, he ended up being one of the most successful students, winning a UWA Convocation Post Graduate Research Travel Award.

With the help of the award, he presented his research findings to international food legumes conferences in Turkey and Syria.

After his graduation, Dr Gusmao thanked Professor Siddique, Professor Veneklaas, Dr Krys Haq from the Graduate Research School and Dr Cheryl Lange from Student Services for supporting his studies.

"I am now confident to undertake research and teaching to help the development of agriculture in Timor Leste," he said.



Marcal Gusmao after his graduation, with Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson, principal supervisor Erik Veneklaas and Dean of the Graduate Research School, Alan Dench

Out of school and into fun

Artists and performers are ‘busting’ to get a gig there, jealous of their friends who work there already.

It’s not a festival or a new theatre centre, but UWA’s out-of-school care centre, where it’s not only school children but potential staff who have to put their names on a waiting list.

The dozen casual staff who care for, entertain and play with primary school-aged children every afternoon after school and during the school

holidays, include a comedian, a dance and drama teacher, a writer and illustrator of children’s books and a singer who writes her own music and who filmed her video clip for YouTube at the centre.

They are joined by director Connie Van Rooyen and senior play leader Margarita Bautista, both of whom have psychology and primary teaching qualifications.

“We have a lot of fun here,” Connie said. “It’s not babysitting. Our play leaders

really engage with the children and I encourage them to step out of their comfort zone to lead different, exciting activities for the children. It’s the play leaders’ friends who are busting to come and work here because they know what a good time we have.”

The centre, the bright blue painted house on Parkway towards the south end of the campus, caters for up to 39 children. They are not always full during term time, but the holiday programs are legendary in the western suburbs and even regulars have to get in quick to secure a place.

“We pick up children every afternoon from seven different schools in the area,” said Connie. They send a bus to six of them and staff go to Nedlands Primary School and walk the children back to the centre.

“Kids are really hungry at the end of the school day, so we give them a proper meal,” she said. “We’re the only out of school care centre I know of which serves pasta, burritos, spinach and feta parcels or pumpkin soup with garlic bread for afternoon tea.”

Full stomachs make for happy children who can then join in indoor or outdoor activities or do their own thing.

Connie said activities were carefully planned according to the age and gender of the children and whether they had particular friends at the centre. The day *UWAnews* visited, six children were baking muffins with Margarita in the kitchen; three were making masks and origami birds in the art room with Fiona; there was some serious excavation happening in the sandpit; Laura and three children were getting soaking wet playing with water, foam and bubbles; and two 10-year-old boys were waxing philosophical in the two-storey cubby.

“I reckon that this place is like a big game of chess,” said Max, who is in Year 5 at Rosalie Primary School. “We’re the kings and queens, the big kids. The little kids or the new people, they’re the pawns and they have to work their way



Laura enjoys the bubbles as much as the children



up through the ranks to bishop and then become kings and queens.”

Max and another boy were enjoying the haven of the top storey of the cubby, reserved for children over the age of nine, unless they invite younger ones to join them.

While they were talking quietly, the water play below them was getting more boisterous. “I make no apology for kids getting wet or dirty,” Connie said. “It’s a very active centre.

“Sometimes, parents are not sure if their children will like it here so I suggest that they come for an afternoon and watch what goes on. If their children want to sit in front of a computer after school, I suggest they look for another place.”

There are no computers and no television at the centre. There are quiet spaces with books, blankets and mattresses if children feel like privacy or rest. “Sometimes, in the holidays, when children are here for a long day, we might show a video, but often it’s one we’ve made ourselves,” Connie said.

Over the school holidays the children had two outings a week and three days a week at the centre, with themed days including explorers, occupations, craft fair and sports day.

There are musical instruments, sumo suits for wrestling on the trampoline, equipment for science experiments, arts and crafts, dress-ups and cubby-making supplies, with everything sorted and labelled for easy access.

The children use the campus grounds and the river foreshore during school holidays too. And staff sometimes frame and sell the children’s drawings at an art market on the Crawley campus, to raise money for more equipment.

The walls of the centre are adorned with art projects and photographs of activities, but no awards. “We don’t put in for awards,” said Connie. “We’re here for the kids, not for any recognition.”

But the waiting list says it all.

To find out more about the centre, contact Connie at outofschoolcare@uwa.edu.au



Connie in the art room



Origami after school



Margarita (right) helps with muffin baking

Socialising your research



Robyn Owens

Every few months, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Robyn Owens, hosts a lunchtime seminar for UWA's research staff. Last month's seminar was Socialising your Research.

*Research Development Adviser
Dr Vincent Wallace reports.*

What does the term really mean? Well, socialising, according to the OED, is 'the action or activity of participating in social activities or mixing socially with others'.

Looking in more depth, this includes things like co-operation, networking, participation, interaction, communication and relationship building.

Professor Robyn Owens opened the seminar, explaining that socialisation refers to the transfer of knowledge or information. She asked how we get newly-created, research-based knowledge noticed and used.

Not so long ago the socialisation process was mostly via publication, either through journal articles or books. But now there are too many papers published each year for any individual researcher to read them all, so how do you get yours noticed? Nowadays, we have to make more of an effort than simply publishing a journal article.

The seminar's first speaker was the School of Psychology's Professor Stephan Lewandowsky, an expert in

human memory and the role of scepticism in processing of misinformation.

He spoke of his efforts to promote the real science behind topics including climate change and to counter the misunderstanding among the general public.

The initiatives Professor Lewandowsky is involved with include contributions through conventional media such as the ABC. He also uses websites such as conversation.edu.au; and shapingtomorrowworld.org, the latter being an interactive blog specifically set up by three WA universities to discuss some of the current challenges facing our societies and potential solutions based on scientific evidence and scholarly analysis.

He spoke enthusiastically about how tools such as Twitter and Facebook can be used to get your message across and to keep abreast of developments in the field.



Stephan Lewandowsky

The other speaker, Professor Campbell McCuaig, Director of the Centre for Exploration Targeting, presented the efforts that CET have made in reaching out to the mineral industry, from which academia has been traditionally disconnected.

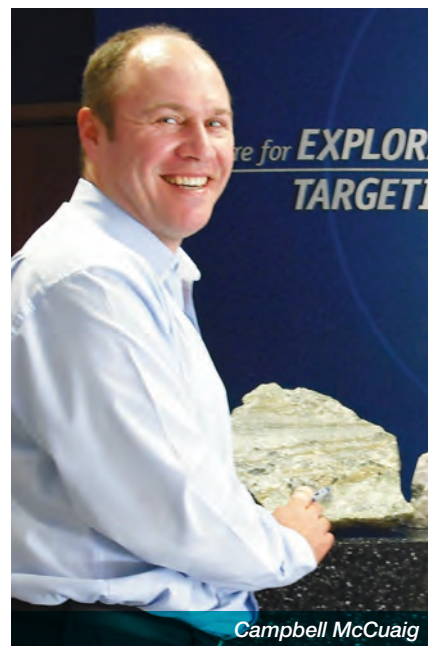
In an area that has global implications, this involved thinking about socialisation from the time of conception of any project and realising it has to be a team effort. To achieve this engagement both industry and researchers need to recognise the value of research and improve the uptake of ideas.

Professor McCuaig outlined the specific efforts CET staff make to promote the centre to industry end-users, understand their issues and to actively seek out opportunities to engage with them. This not only includes some of the suggestions above but also involves forming science advisory committees and seeking out leaders from around the world for collaboration: in effect these people 'socialise' your research and capabilities for you.

CET also recognises the importance of promoting their early career researchers and involving them at the research development stage all the way through to delivery to industry. The success of this strategy can be measured concretely: the CET and research partners won more than \$15 million from the ARC in 2010 alone. In addition, the centre is now financially self-sustainable, its publications appear in quality journals, and CET staff are highly sought after as thought leaders by both industry and academia.

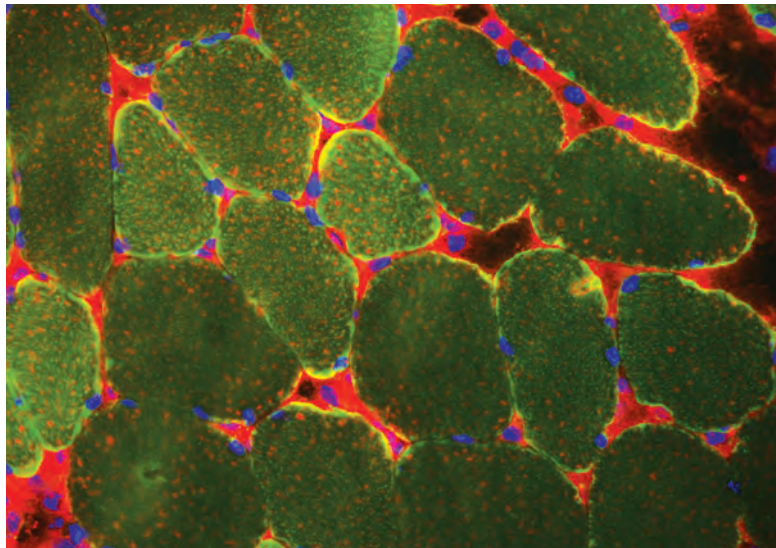
In the professional arena, social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter can be used to promote research, although at this time it's hard to know what impact these will have, but for now, they present an ideal opportunity to get your work noticed and help build networks and wide ranging collaborations to the benefit of all.

To keep informed about these seminars, make sure you subscribe to UWA's emailing list, Research Announcements.



Campbell McCuaig

Cell staff share their knowledge



Art, low birth weights and muscular dystrophy are all connected at CELL level.

CELLCentral, a commercial laboratory within the School of Anatomy and Human Biology, covered all three at their recent scientific meeting.

It brought together a newly-formed group of 24 professionals from the field of histology, which is the fine cellular detail of tissue.

Mary Lee, CELLCentral's scientific officer, organised the meeting along with colleagues Steve Parkinson and Leonie Khoo.

The guest speakers were three staff members from Anatomy and Human Biology. Assistant Professor Ionat Zurr from SymbioticA presented *Artistic Interventions with Histology* about artists working with the life sciences.

"We at UWA are, of course, very familiar with and work closely with SymbioticA," Ms Lee said. "But this was a real eye-opener for some of the histologists from other places, including Cutaneous Pathology and the State Department of Agriculture."

Dr Peter Mark's presentation, *Count your blessings: stereological analysis of growth-restricted placentas*, looked at the diets and stress factors that affect low birth weights in mammals.

And Dr Hannah Crabb talked about her muscular dystrophy research, using histology techniques to analyse necrosis (cell death) in muscle from mice with the dystrophic gene. The mice are exercised on treadmills to determine the effect of exercise on the degenerate muscle.

"It was great to have an opportunity to share knowledge, develop our professional interests and network with other histotechnologists," Ms Lee said.

"We now have more than 40 histologists in WA on our data base. The bigger network means that our colleagues who work in hospitals can call on us when researchers need their help but they're too busy with patients. We can do the histology for hospital doctors' research projects.

"And if we have problems with our work, we now have colleagues we can call on for help with different processes."

CELLCentral became a commercial entity in 2003 and offers histology and imaging services, as well as supporting research and teaching in the School.

Organisational and Staff Development Services has given Ms Lee funding to attend the fifth National Histotechnology Conference in NSW in November.

"We are hoping that, now we have a Histology Group of WA, we may be able to get the national conference here in 2013," she said.

Soils ain't just soils

Soil scientists may be the only people who find soil fascinating but there are plenty of them at UWA.

Researchers from the School of Earth and Environment recently turned out in force for the conference of the Australian Soil Science Society (WA Branch). Staff and students from the School accounted for a quarter of the 80 soil scientists from universities, industry and government agencies.

They played a significant role in the event's success. UWA researchers contributed nearly half of the presentations at the conference on topics as diverse as the carbon footprint of wheat and biodiesel grown in WA's wheatbelt to the philosophy of soil science.

The organising committee for the conference included Professor Christoph Hinz, Associate Professor Louise Barton and PhD candidate Georgina Holbeche, the President, Secretary and Student Representative of the WA branch, respectively.

UWA staff also chaired sessions on policy, nutrients, soil and roots, and disturbed and reconstructed environments. Several more UWA alumni helped organise the conference, presented research findings, chaired sessions and attended the conference.

The award for Best Student Presentation went to UWA PhD candidate Talitha Santini. She presented research aimed at turning alumina-refining residues into healthy soils. "After five years I found signs that the residue was becoming more suitable to plants and had some key properties of soil," she said.

Professor Hinz said the conference was a great success. "I think it was a valuable exercise to get the soil science community in WA together," he said.

Georgina Holbeche said the conference was an excellent forum for postgraduate students. "Many of us have projects focusing on issues within the state and it's important that our findings are disseminated throughout the WA soil science community," she said.



Louise Barton and Martin Fey looking at a soil profile during the conference field tour (Photo by Georgina Holbeche)

Teachers go back to school to become leaders



Launching the program: Helen Wildy, Sharon O'Neill, Liz Constable and Alan Robson

Better high school principals is the aim of a new partnership between UWA's Faculty of Education and the State Government's Education Department.

The Master's Degree of Public School Leadership will prepare aspiring leaders and refresh the skills of current principals of government schools.

The new program was announced by the Minister for Education, Liz Constable at UWA, with the Dean of Education, Winthrop Professor Helen Wildy, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson and the Director of the Education Department, Sharon O'Neill.

Ms Constable said that with many public schools being given more flexibility and authority, the program would help to provide the high quality leaders the community expected.

"Being a principal in a public school is an exciting and extremely important job," she said. "We are seeking the best teachers to develop modern and research-based skills that they can use in their schools."

Professor Wildy said the program would arm aspiring and current principals with skills, understanding and knowledge to lead schools with confidence.

"Our new program is hands-on, and draws on case studies of a range of different school types to confront many of the challenges that all principals face in their leadership roles," she said.

Ms O'Neill said it was the first time the Department had made an investment in encouraging leadership.

Prospective students will enrol in a Master of Education next year and transfer to the new Master's Degree of Public School Leadership from 2013.

The four core units will be leading teaching and learning; leading assessment and accountability; managing a school as an organisation; and leading curriculum innovation.

Ms Constable said principals were responsible for student achievement and had the power to develop creative and innovative solutions to problems.

"With an aging workforce, it is important that we plan ahead now to ensure we have a strong supply of skilled and experienced people ready to move into leadership positions," she said.

Teachers with a recognised four-year teaching qualification and at least two years' professional teaching are eligible to apply for the Masters, which is part of the government's Public School Leadership Program.

New position honours explorers

The tragedy of two lives taken early, five years ago, has been turned into a triumph for geologists and geoscientists in WA.

Next week, the Hammond Nisbet Geoscience Fund will announce the appointment of a new permanent academic position in UWA's Centre for Exploration Targeting (CET), the Hammond Nisbet Fellowship.

The campaign to establish the position, in honour of two brilliant exploration geologists, Dr Bruce Nisbet and Dr Rod Hammond, friends who worked together and died within months of each other, will be celebrated at the UWA Geoscience Foundation's annual cocktail party.

It has raised \$1.477 million and UWA has matched that to create a permanent \$2.8 million teaching and research position, contributing to the CET's vision of a sustainable long-term research enterprise.

Chair of the Foundation, Jenny Archibald, said the goal of the campaign was to inspire and mentor the next generation of explorationists by providing a world class teaching and research environment.

"Bruce and Rod were well-known in the field, not UWA graduates, but working extensively in WA, alongside UWA graduates," said Mrs Archibald. "Rod lived in Mexico in the last period of his life and died at the age of 49 after contracting histoplasmosis from caves in which he was working.

"His friend and colleague Bruce died four months later after a brief battle with cancer. But before he died, he said he wanted to set aside capital to stimulate long term support for teaching in exploration geoscience. He appointed four colleagues, Craig Williams, Peter Williams, Michael Etheridge and Nick Archibald, to oversee the fund. The Geoscience Foundation joined with the Hammond Nisbet Founders to garner support from the UWA Geology alumni," she said.

Craig Williams founded Equinox Minerals with Bruce Nesbit in 1993. Appropriately, on the night that the goal of securing the required funds and the appointment of Dr Steven Micklethwaite to the Hammond Nisbet

continued on page 13

Fellowship position is announced, Mr Williams will be the guest speaker at the annual Foundation gathering.

He will speak about the spectacular success of Equinox, which was taken over in July by Barrick Gold Corporation for \$7 billion.

The Geoscience Foundation had its genesis in the UWA Geoscience Alumni Group. The two groups merged in 2009, cementing 10 years of successful fundraising to ensure UWA geology and geoscience graduates are highly trained and ready to become part of their global industry.

It operates under the Office of Development and Alumni Relations and the Hackett Foundation, and is the University's most successful fund-raising alumni group and a significant benefactor to UWA.

Their next missions are to secure funding for two industry-sponsored academic positions and to raise \$250,000 for new microscopes.

The cocktail party has even more to celebrate next week, marking the 50th anniversary of the Woolnough Society, a UWA Geology student group.



The Hammond Nisbet Fellowship will promote exploration geology

UWA NEWS classified

RESEARCH GRANTS

Grants Awarded Between 17/09/2011 and 30/09/2011

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE AUSTRALIA CHINA COUNCIL

Assistant Professor Wei Liu, Associate Professor David Glance, Computer Science and Software Engineering (School of): 'Developing Mobile Health from Web Based Resources'— \$26,000 (2011)

INTERNATIONAL ALUMINIUM INSTITUTE

Professor Martin Fey, Talitha Santini, Professor Lesley Warren, Assistant Professor Mark Dobrowolski, Earth and Environment (School of): 'In Situ Remediation of Bauxite Residue – Stage 2'— \$231,610 (2012-13)

ST VINCENT'S INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

Associate Professor Erik Thompson, Associate Professor Gregory Goodall, Winthrop Professor Christobel Saunders, Associate Professor Robin Anderson, Associate Professor Alpha Yap, Dr Ian Street, Professor Keith Stanley, Dr Anthony Dowling, Surgery (School of), University of Queensland, St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne), University of New South Wales, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Hanson Institute, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre: 'Targeting Breast Cancer through Epithelial Mesenchymal Plasticity – EMPathy Project'— \$5,150,286 (2011-15)

TRANSLUCENT INC

Professor Gilberto Umana Membreno, Electrical, Electronic, and Computer Engineering (School of): 'Investigation of Rare Earth Oxide

thin-films for MIS Structures on Silicon'— \$14,700 (2011)

UWA RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AWARD SCHEME

Associate Professor Rhonda Clifford, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of): 'Evaluate evidence-based best practice for asthma reliever medication supply via community pharmacy'— \$26,427 (2012)

Dr Alan Duffy, Physics (School of): 'Visualising the Dark Universe for Next Generation Radio Telescopes'— \$14,610 (2012)

Dr Guillaume Watson, Mechanical and Chemical Engineering (School of): 'High Pressure Dynamic Adsorption Measurement System to Study Metal Organic Frameworks for Gas Separation'— \$25,415 (2012)

Dr Kym Guelfi, Sport Science, Exercise and Health (School of): 'Comparing the Effect of 12 Weeks of Aerobic or Resistance Exercise Training on Perceived Appetite and Circulating Levels of Appetite-Related Hormones'— \$16,250 (2012)

Dr Maria Celeste Rodriguez Louro, Humanities (School of): 'A Sociolinguistic Study of Syntactic Variation and Change in Australian English'— \$21,348 (2012)

Uta Bindl, Psychology (School of): 'Affect and Proactivity – The Role of Emotion Regulation in Bringing about Positive Change at Work'— \$26,920 (2012)

Dr Patrick Aboagye-Sarfo, Population Health (School of): 'Health Effects of Exposure to Asbestos in Childhood'— \$25,567 (2012)

Dr Teresa Williams, Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care (School of): 'Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) trial for treatment of Acute Pulmonary

Oedema by Ambulance Paramedics in the Pre-Hospital Setting'— \$29,619 (2012)

Dr Yong Song, Women's and Infants' Health (School of): 'Impact of Antenatal Exposure to Glucocorticoids on Fetal Diaphragm'— \$26,750 (2012)

Dr Etienne Laliberte, Plant Biology (School of): 'Predicting Plant Community Composition in a Megadiverse Botanical Region'— \$29,933 (2012)

Assistant Professor Amin Muger, Agricultural and Resource Economics (School of): 'Wheat Price Behaviour and Volatility in the Western Australia's Cash Market'— \$11,689 (2012)

Assistant Professor Chunbo Ma, Agricultural and Resource Economics (School of): 'A Sunrise Industry? The Diffusion of Household Rooftop Photovoltaic Systems in Western Australia'— \$9,300 (2012)

Dr Francois Teste, Plant Biology (School of): 'Mycorrhizal Community Composition and Production Along a Soil Age Gradient in a Plant Biodiversity Hotspot'— \$24,730 (2012)

Dr Qinghua Guo, Electrical, Electronic, and Computer Engineering (School of): 'Implementing a Reconfigurable Underwater Acoustic Communication Modem'— \$27,985 (2012)

Assistant Professor Nicole Jones, Environmental Systems Engineering (School of): 'The Influence of Nonlinear Internal Waves on Mixing and Transport in the Ocean'— \$20,943 (2012)

Dr Holly Clifford, Paediatrics and Child Health (School of): 'Epigenetic Mechanisms of Asthma and Allergy – Insights From a Unique Cohort of

Finnish/Russian Karelians'— \$23,990 (2012)

Maria Almbro, Animal Biology (School of): 'Postcopulatory Consequences of Antioxidant Availability and Oxidative Stress in Crickets'— \$7,682 (2012)

Michael Champion, Humanities (School of): 'Pre-Augustinian Theories of Just War – The Greek Sources'— \$23,922 (2012)

Dr Guiyong Zhang, Mechanical and Chemical Engineering (School of): 'Soft Tissue Simulation: Material Model and Numerical Implementation using Smoothed Finite Element Method'— \$18,052 (2012)

Dr Andrea EMBERLY, Music (School of): 'Exploring the Impact of Music on Refugee Children's Lives in Western Australia'— \$29,322 (2012)

Dr Chun Baek, Environmental Systems Engineering (School of): 'An Investigation of the Influence of Antecedent Soil Moisture Condition on the Rainfall-Runoff threshold Value of a Roaded Catchment'— \$14,546 (2012)

Marit Kragt, Agricultural and Resource Economics (School of): 'Measuring Public Preferences for Carbon Farming Offsets for Improved Climate Policy'— \$25,125 (2012)

Dr Karim Benmessai, FEMTO-ST: 'Tuneable Whispering Gallery in a Maser Oscillator'— \$14,546 (2012)

Cornelia Bertram, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of): 'Identifying the Clinically Effective Anticancer Component of Tea Tree Oil'— \$24,894 (2012)

Daniel Wedge, Earth and Environment (School of): 'Full Tensor Gradient (FTG) Data Visualisation for Mineral Exploration'— \$14,546 (2012)

Assistant Professor Demelza Ireland, Biomedical, Biomolecular

and Chemical Sciences (School of): 'Optimisation of a Triple Immunotherapy for Malignant Mesothelioma – Steps Towards 100% Tumour Cure in 100% of Mice'— \$26,948 (2012)

Dr Sascha Schediwy, Physics (School of): 'A Single-Photon Detector at Microwave Frequencies'— \$29,602 (2012)

Dr Igor Shufrin, Civil and Resource Engineering (School of): 'Nonlinear Mechanics of Fragmented Structures: Stability of Beams and Plates'— \$14,545 (2012)

Dr Gianina Ravenscroft, Medical Research (UWA Centre for): 'Viral Gene Therapy for Actin-Based Skeletal Muscle Diseases – Efficacy Studies in Mouse Models'— \$4,985 (2012)

Dr Bruce Webber, Plant Biology (School of): 'Neighbourhood Nightmare or Urban Legend – The Alert List Status of Rosewood'— \$25,601 (2012)

Samuel Kelly, Environmental Systems Engineering (School of): 'Internal Tides in the Timor Sea and Bonaparte Basin'— \$29,414 (2012)

Mark Waters, Plant Energy Biology (ARC Centre for): 'Smoke Signals and Shoot Branching Hormones – How Do Plants Tell the Difference?'— \$25,334 (2012)

Dr Rebecca Fuller, Physics (School of): 'Quantitative Molecular Imaging

(QMI): The Future of Medical Diagnostics'— \$30,000 (2012)

Assistant Professor Steve Su, Mathematics and Statistics (School of): 'A Novel, Unified Approach to Portfolio Optimisation in Finance'— \$10,335 (2012)

Dr Yinghui Tian, Offshore Foundations Systems (Centre for): 'Developing a Numerical Pipe-Soil Model from Centrifuge Tests that describes the large Displacement Behaviour of Offshore Pipelines Shallowly Embedded in Sands including the Berm Effect'— \$19,167 (2012)

Dr Susanne Den Boer, Plant Energy Biology (ARC Centre for): 'Sperm Management in Honeybees – Counting Sperm on Honeybee Eggs to Measure Queen Fertility and Egg Insemination Success'— \$24,310 (2012)

Assistant Professor Peter Metaxas, Physics (School of): 'Nano-scale Traps for Magnetic Domain Walls'— \$25,211 (2012)

Syed Islam, Dentistry (School of)/ Oral Health Centre: 'Computer Aided Diagnosis and Treatment Planning of Dentofacial Deformities Using 3D Data and Graphical Models'— \$26,233 (2012)

Joshua McGrane, Graduate School of Education: 'The Empirical Synthesis of Unfolding and Rasch Models to Rigorously Measure

Environmental Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours'— \$23,310 (2012)

Pauline Van Eeden, Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care (School of): 'Differential Gene Regulation during Elderly Sepsis: Correlation with poor Clinical Outcomes'— \$30,000 (2012)

Assistant Professor Charles Price, Plant Biology (School of): 'Evaluating and Extending Approaches for the Automated Classification of Leaf Images'— \$20,600 (2012)

Dr Jeremy Shaw, Microscopy, Characterisation Ctr (00012), Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences: 'The Search for a True Sixth Sense – Identifying Magnetoreceptive Cells in Animals'— \$23,055 (2012)

Dr Estabelle Ang, Dentistry (School of)/ Oral Health Centre: 'Tissue Regeneration is Oral Health'— \$25,000 (2012)

Dr Lies Notebaert, Psychology (School of): 'How Individual Differences in Selective Attentional Processing of Melanoma Related Information Contribute to Adaptive Prevention and Early Detection Behaviour'— \$12,950 (2012)

Dr Sasha Jenkins, Earth and Environment (School of): 'Unravelling Microbial Phosphorus (P) Cycling in Soils Receiving Different P inputs'— \$25,996 (2012)

Dr Shannon Simpson, Child Health Research (UWA Centre for): 'Assessing the Impact of Posture on the Relationship between Ventilation Distribution and Structural Lung Damage in Children with Cystic Fibrosis'— \$22,439 (2012)

Dr Adeleh Shirangi, Child Health Research (UWA Centre for): 'Developing and Validating a Job Exposure Matrix to Assess Occupational Exposures to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) in Relation to Birth Weight, Gestational Age, Fetal Growth and Fetal Death'— \$27,051 (2012)

Dr Niki Foster, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of): 'Food-Borne C. Difficile: Prevalence in Meat Products and the Potential for Amplification in Raw and Cooked Meats'— \$23,294 (2012)

Dr Hannah Crabb, Anatomy and Human Biology (School of): 'Oxidative

Stress and Thiol Proteomics in Dystrophic Muscles from Mdx Mice'— \$29,372 (2012)

Jasminka Murdzoska, Paediatrics and Child Health (School of): 'Is Methylation of GST Promoters Associated with Enzyme Function and Measured Lung Health Outcomes?'— \$19,615 (2012)

Dr Jennifer Tickner, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (School of): 'Investigation of the Role of the BH4 Domain of Bcl2 in Bone Homeostasis'— \$29,000 (2012)

Dr Jaafar Abduo, Dentistry (School of)/ Oral Health Centre: 'A Comparison of Actual and Virtual Protocols for the Construction of Dental and Maxillofacial Prostheses'— \$29,690 (2012)

Dr Ali Mozaffari, Social and Cultural Studies (School of): 'Revolutionary Built Environment? The Production of Architecture in the Islamic Republic of Iran'— \$23,394 (2012)

Dr Michele Thums, Research Services: 'Context and Drivers of Movement of Indian Ocean Whale Sharks'— \$25,500 (2012)

Dr Emile van Lieshout, Animal Biology (School of): 'Minimising the Cost of Sexual Conflict – Strategic Investment into Female Resistance'— \$11,346 (2012)

Dr Shamim Samani, Social and Cultural Studies (School of): 'Contributing to a Sustainable Population Strategy – Muslim Women in the Western Australian Workforce'— \$14,660 (2012)

Dr Erika Sutanto, Child Health Research (UWA Centre for): 'Combating Viral-Induced Inflammation in Cystic Fibrosis Lungs of Children'— \$25,700 (2012)

NEW STAFF

25 August to 21 September 2011

Zoe Allison, Receptionist, Oral Health Centre of WA

Troy Anning, Administrative Officer, Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care

Sean Ashton, Manager, Human Resources

Robyn Barlett, Office Coordinator, Human Resources

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Yee Ming Chan, Computer Support Officer, Student Services

Dr John Davidson, Research Assistant Professor, Computer Science and Software Engineering

Alana Dempsey, Accountant (Taxation), Financial Services

Dr Steven Denyszyn, Research Associate, School of Earth and Environment

Dr Xiaowei Feng, Lecturer, Offshore Foundation Systems

John Fisher, Manager, (Student Office) Psychology

Shanel Goodman, Administrative Assistant, Engineering, Computing and Mathematics

Catherine Haigh, Research Associate, Paediatrics and Child Health

Dr Rachel Hammond, Associate Professor, Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care

Melissa Kirkham, Education and Outreach Officer, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Myrtille Lacoste, Research Officer, Plant Biology

Assistant Professor Bei Li, Assistant Professor, UWA Business School

Sandra Mata, Research Assistant, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences

Dr Steven Micklethwaite, Research Associate Professor, School of Earth and Environment

Christopher Mitchell, Research Assistant, UWA Centre for Medical Research

Naseem Mkandawire, Administrative Assistant, Student Services

Julian Mould, Trainer/Educational Developer, Centre for Advancement of Teaching and Learning

Cindy Nankiville, Administrative Officer, UWA Business School

Claire O'Farrell, Research Officer, School of Surgery

Jennifer O'Neil, Director, Albany Centre

Dr Chae Park, Clinical Prosthodontist Oral Health Centre of WA

Warren Starr, Diving and Boating Safety Officer, Vice-Chancellery

Michelle Tate, Technician, Physics

Fenna van Charldorp, Manager, Development and Alumni Relations

Mariet Visser, Physiotherapist, School of Surgery

Richard Walliker, IT Security Administrator, Information Technology Services (ITS)

Laurel White, Administrative Officer, Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care

Liam Woodhouse, Painter Facilities Management, Maintenance Workshop

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NOTICES

Applications are called for the Fay Gale Fellowships 2012

The Fellowships assist staff at an early stage in their career to spend a period of time overseas, normally of not less than three months, working in another educational institution.

Applications should be sent to Bob Farrelly, Director Human Resources by Friday 11 November 2011.

Academic or professional staff who hold ongoing appointments or who have completed not less than two years continuous contract service at the University, and who are employed either full-time or on a part-time basis of 50 per cent or more are eligible to apply for a Fellowship. ARC Post Doctoral Fellows are not eligible to apply.

There is no application form. There are also no rigid criteria to be met. The Fellowship is intended to be broad, to cater for both academic and professional staff. The Committee will give preference to staff who have not previously travelled overseas and who have a particular need for assistance because of their family commitments.

For more information and help with applications, please see: hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr_projects/fg_fellows

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Practising what I preach

Whenever someone asks me “What do you do?” I normally pause for a moment wondering which answer to give.

The issue being that I have two jobs at UWA. Well I would say that one is a job and the other my vocation. Most of my time is spent as a research development adviser (RDA) for the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences. The rest of my time, which as for many academics, also encroaches on my evenings and weekends, I do research.

I graduated with a degree in physics and I wanted to use my knowledge to have a direct impact on people's lives. I think I was always destined for a career in physics. As a boy any gift I received was played with for about a day before I proceeded to dismantle it to see how it worked, much to the dismay of my parents.

I guess if I was able put it back together again I would have become an engineer.

I therefore went on to do a PhD in medical physics at a specialist cancer hospital in the UK, the Royal Marsden. My research was on developing a new technique for diagnosing melanoma. It was there that I became passionate about a field called biomedical photonics which uses light to diagnose and treat disease; and incidentally it was at that time I made my first tenuous links to UWA. I would never have guessed that 14 years later I would be writing this!

After my PhD, I spent a few years as a post doc in the USA, again working on a variety of biomedical problems, this time using microscopy techniques. There I experienced the problem familiar to many young researchers: the uncertainty of post doc positions and short-term contracts.

So I decided to move back to the UK to a permanent position in industry albeit in a start-up company, which has its own inherent risks. I was there for eight years and luckily I was able to continue my research career by publishing papers and writing grants, the essentials to academic ‘success’. But I felt drawn back to academia so I decided to get back to the kind of research that I'm passionate about, which ultimately brought me to Perth.

Sometimes in life, opportunities pop up unexpectedly and I was given the chance to join the team in the research development office as an RDA. This role involves helping researchers with issues related to internal and external research funding, which covers grant applications, publications and citations and improving their track record to be competitive.

As I have won two ARC grants of my own I find myself sitting on the fence between doing my research and advising researchers.

There is a great synergy between the two roles: as a researcher I'm aware of the many hurdles and problems the community faces, especially when it comes to funding and publishing papers. As an RDA I can sympathise, but there is no secret formula to writing a winning grant: you just have to make sure you do the basics well, which includes ensuring quality and making it interesting to the reader.



Dr Vincent Wallace
Research Development Office and School of Physics

Sometimes the roles are at odds with pressures from both sides but I really feel that I'm having the best of both worlds. I've been lucky in that my research would not be possible without my collaborators, many of these overseas, and the journey I have taken from graduation to UWA has allowed me to develop and nurture those relationships that are proving fruitful now. This really shows the importance of networking, developing and maintaining links.

Although my individual story is unique to me, it's not too dissimilar to many people in academia. I feel my journey has given me the experience I can take to my RDA role to hopefully give the right advice to those seeking it. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing researchers with whom you have worked closely win grants or awards that you have encouraged them to apply for. This not only builds their track record but improves the reputation of the University.



UWA NEWS

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