COVETED VISITING FELLOWSHIP FOR A VU ACADEMIC

Dr Iwona Miliszewska from the School of Engineering and Science has been awarded a sought-after Visiting Fellowship from the Centre of Teaching and Learning at the University of Windsor, Canada. The Fellowship, valued at $10,000, will give Iwona the opportunity to live and work in the University of Windsor environment for two months (January and February 2010) contributing new ideas to the evolving, learning-centred culture on campus, and developing collaborative teaching and learning research projects.

Like VU, the University of Windsor is an internationally oriented, multi-disciplined institution that actively encourages a broad diversity of students, academics, and staff. Those strengths vault it to the forefront of Canadian universities in the creation of an awareness and appreciation of difference including difference in ethnic backgrounds and cultures. In addition, the University of Windsor has just embarked on its most ambitious project: the establishment of a $112 million Centre for Engineering Innovation; thus the Fellowship opportunity will bring an additional relevance to Iwona’s School and Faculty.

AUSTRALIA-MALAYSIA INSTITUTE: RECEPTION FOR 2009 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Dr Iwona Miliszewska from the School of Engineering and Science, a recipient of an AMI 2009 grant to investigate An Australian-Malaysian Nexus on Transnational Education, participated in a Friends of the AMI reception at the Windsor hotel on 10 August.

Iwona’s project, conducted in collaboration with researchers from Malaysia’s National Higher Education Research Institute, involved the development of a dual Australian/Malaysian perspective on the needs and preferences of transnational students in various academic programs. It focused on investigating the importance of considering the educational, cultural, and social context of transnational students when selecting technologies and delivery models for transnational programs to create culturally responsive technological learning solutions.

Iwona’s AMI grant will also support the delivery of a panel session at a prime international event on borderless higher education, the Global Forum, in Kuala Lumpur in October 2009; the Forum counts the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, as one of its main sponsors. The Forum will bring together global leaders from higher education, government and business to engage in strategic discussions about the major issues facing cross-border education.
**WRITING THE WINNING GRANT APPLICATION**

The Office for Research will deliver a series of grant-writing workshops for early career researchers at the Footscray Park Campus between September – November this year.

**Date: September 30**  **Time: 10am – 12pm Room GPC A511**

The first workshop will be on appropriate writing style(s), including the use of plain and inclusive language, and format - specifically: summary, hypothesis, aims and needs statement.

**Date: October 28**  **Time: 10am – 12pm Room GPC A511**

The second workshop will focus on writing the design, outcomes and budget development.

**Date: November 25**  **Time: 10am – 12pm Room GPC C502c**

The final workshop will be on presenting the application, including the CV, role of personnel and editing/proofreading.

Places are limited, so if you are interested, please email Sandy Superina, Senior Grants Officer at sandy.superina@vu.edu.au


**CTSR HOSTS WORLD WELLBEING EXPERT**

Professor Pauline Sheldon from the University of Hawaii and Adjunct Professor in Travel and Wellbeing at the Centre for Tourism and Services Research, shared her expertise at a number of seminars and forums facilitated by the CTSR recently. Professor Sheldon is President of the prestigious International Academy for the Study of Tourism and Co-author of *Wellness and Tourism: Mind, Body, Spirit, Place*. She spent a busy week with Centre Director Professor Leo Jago, Wellbeing Program Leader, Professor Margaret Deery and Wellbeing Research Fellow, Sebastian Filep.

A highlight of Professor Sheldon’s time in Melbourne was the successful Spa and Wellbeing Breakfast Forum held at Crown Promenade. The Breakfast Seminar was co-hosted with Tourism Victoria and was so successful that VU’s role in establishing a research agenda in this emerging field was mentioned during the Tourism Minister’s launch of the Daylesford Spa and Wellbeing campaign in Daylesford. The Breakfast Forum featured Ms Susie Santiago from the international Santi Foundation, Professor Margaret Deery and Ms Chris White, Group Manager of Product Marketing, Tourism Victoria. Professor Sheldon also presented at an academic seminar with leading researchers from Deakin, Monash and Victoria Universities and participated in a number of key meetings with industry partners such as Parks Victoria. A number of research grant and publication activities were discussed as a result of Professor Sheldon’s visit as well as a proposed annual conference on wellbeing to be conducted with Tourism Victoria.

**ICGN 2009 SCHOLARSHIP**

Kumi Heenetigala of Victoria University was among the seven ICGN 2009 scholarships awardees of the International Corporate Governance Network Annual Conference in Sydney. The ICGN convenes the world’s premier international event on corporate governance each year in a different host country. In 2009, this was held in Sydney, Australia between the 13-15 July at the Hilton hotel. The three-day conference was hosted by the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors and the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees and included a welcome reception and gala dinner. The conference in Sydney reflected Australia’s commitment to high standards of corporate governance.

**June Smith Presents to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Corporations and Financial Services Inquiry into Financial Products and Services**

June Smith and her supervisor Professor Anona Armstrong, from the Faculty of Business and Law were invited to present the results of her PhD thesis to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Corporations and Financial Services Inquiry into Financial Products and Services on Wednesday 25th June 2009.

This inquiry was established after the collapse of financial groups Storm and Opes Prime, which cost thousands of ordinary investors hundreds of millions of dollars in lost savings. June’s submission on behalf of Argyle Lawyers and VU was among 400 submissions which can be accessed on the Committee’s web site. The purpose of the Inquiry is to make recommendations which will provide security for investors and restore confidence in the capital market. In particular, the Federal Government is determined to ensure that Australians have access to competent financial advice to help them make informed decisions about their superannuation (Sherry 2008 at p.5). The Committee’s report will be published in November.

The topic is a significant and important one. Recent public debate suggests that financial planning is becoming increasing relevant to the achievement of the political, economic and social objectives of Australians and their governments, including provision for retirement age and choice of superannuation fund (Weekes & Hoyle 2004; Wilson 2004; Sherry 2008). There is an ever increasing and commensurate need to obtain expert financial planning advice to ensure a financially sustainable lifestyle and to provide for retirement years (Peel 2004; Gallop 2003).

June is a Principal in the law firm, Argyle Lawyers. Her PhD thesis set out to explore the current individual and contextual factors that may be influencing the ethical decision making of financial planners and those that supervise their financial advice to Australian Consumers; financial services compliance managers. The conclusions from her thesis was based on an analysis of consumer complaints brought before the courts, a survey of financial planners and compliance officers engaged by Australian Financial planners licensees to provide financial advice to Australian consumers, and a focus group of a professional group of financial planners.

(L-R) Kumi Heenetigala, Prof Lakshman Watawala (CMA Sri Lanka) and Prof Anona Armstrong

The 2009 ICGN Annual Conference in Sydney, Australia brought together investors, directors, policymakers and stakeholders in a dialogue with a focus on practical action. Over 400 delegates attended from 35 countries. ICGN is partnering with the World Economic Forum and the UN PRI to bring together leaders in corporate governance from around the world to consider how to rebuild sustainability and trust for the long term.
The issues that June addressed in the submission were the role of financial planners; their training, competency, and qualifications; their conflicts of interest between receiving commissions for selling financial products and their giving advice to meet individual needs; appropriate modes of fees; appropriateness of information and advice provided to consumers and how the interests of consumers can best be served.

4. NEWS FROM THE AVATAR PROJECT TEAM

The Avatar Project has been awarded a $4,000 School Focused Youth Service grant to extend its innovative virtual world technology work at Debney Park Secondary College in Flemington, focusing on working with teachers of Art, Media Studies, Mathematics and Physical Education.

John Martino and Stefan Schutt from the Avatar Project are members of a youth and technology collaborative group funded by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and run by the Inspire Foundation. This group has recently been awarded a $19,000 Melbourne University grant to develop an ARC Linkage application for research into four areas connected with disadvantaged youth.

The Avatar Project team’s new VicHealth-funded project Connected Lives, which examines the use of new technologies by young people living with multiple layers of disadvantage and disability, received a boost this week.

The CEO of Telstra, Mr David Thodey, agreed to provide in-kind support to the project through the use of wireless broadband connections for the term of the 12-month project.

2. CODE OF PRACTICE STUDY IMPACTS NATIONAL VET ASSESSMENT POLICY

A recent study undertaken by WERC and funded by the National Quality Council (NQC) is resulting in changes to national VET sector assessment definitions. The study sought to develop a national Code of Professional Practice for conducting validation and moderation in the VET Sector. The NQC Committee noted that “the report is aspirational and provides the VET sector with a way forward within a complex and difficult area where misunderstandings have been common.” The impact of the study has resulted in the NQC endorsing changes to the definitions of a number of technical assessment terms used within the VET sector across all national documents, including the AQTF User Guide.

NEWS FROM THE FACULTY OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

A team in the School of Education has recently been successful in obtaining a large grant to monitor literacy and numeracy in Victoria. Associate Professor Colleen Vale is Project Director working with Dr Anne Davies, Dr Neil Hooley and Dr Mary Weaven. The grant of $308,000 for the remainder of 2009 and 2010 and awarded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will evaluate a pilot program in two Victorian regions of a multifaceted approach to literacy and numeracy in low socio-economic status school communities. Seventy six schools across the Western Metropolitan and Hume Regions are involved. The pilot will focus on reforms that are intended to accelerate progress towards the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) literacy and numeracy targets, particularly for low SES school communities or disadvantaged students involving Koori, refugee, new arrival and ESL backgrounds. In broad terms, the evaluation will focus on how networks and schools designed and implemented approaches to improve literacy and numeracy, the extent to which these approaches improved outcomes, the facilitating and inhibiting factors of successful intervention and the particular details of strategies that provided the greatest improvement in student outcomes. A mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques will be used including the analysis of student test data and the development of personal accounts by school and network staff via a series of email dialogues and roundtables.


Rod Moore was invited to publish his article, “New Concepts and Challenges for Teacher Education for TVET – Work Integrated Learning through the Career Change Program”. The article was published in the International Journal of Education (IJE), Indonesia University of Education, Bandung, Indonesia. This research draws on quantitative and qualitative data gathered over 3 years to study the experience of these ‘beginning’ teachers as they undertake their initial teacher education and enter the profession simultaneously. This work is a benchmark practice in the University commitment to enhancing educational access, participation and success for young people in the region.

Assoc. Prof. Tarquam McKenna has published the book Heteronormativity - Workplace Discrimination in Australian Schools: Gay and Lesbian Teachers in Australia (VDM Verlag, May 2009).

3. VISIT BY LEADING NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

This month has seen a visit to WERC by leading representatives from WINTEC, one of New Zealand’s largest Institutes of Technology, and an organisation that has earned a reputation for excellence and innovation in trades training. Chris Stuart, WINTEC’s Head of School, Trades Engineering and Construction, gave a Trade Skills Pedagogy presentation entitled “Moving from Classroom to Learning Centres”, and discussed future collaborative possibilities with WERC including a teacher exchange program and technology partnerships.
Dr Neil Hooley’s book Narrative Life: Democratic Curriculum and Indigenous Learning, Springer, was launched at the American Education Research Association conference in San Diego earlier this year. It documents Neil’s research over a number of years regarding narrative curriculum for Indigenous children and has application world wide.

The team of Associate Professor Tony Kruger, Anne Davies, Bill Eckersley, and Fran Newall along with Professor Brenda Chereditchenko (Edith Cowan University) have published a research report entitled Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships for Teaching Australia. The report is based on research funded by Teaching Australia - Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, Canberra.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade recently awarded a three-year research grant of $90,000 to Professor Dorothy Bruck (SSSP). The project is entitled Investigation of ‘survival’ factors in serious residential fires and will involve extensive interviews of survivors of serious home fires. This qualitative data will be coded into hundreds of different demographic, behavioural, building and fire safety variables which will then be directly compared with variables in the Coronal Fire Fatality Database, created and developed at the VU Centre for Environmental Safety and Risk Engineering (CESARE) by Professor Ian Thomas and Dr Michelle Ball (SSSP). This is a unique methodology internationally and the identification of factors associated with survival and non-survival in residential fires will help the fire safety community develop better targeted activities to help prevent residential fire fatalities. This joint VU/MFB project will involve considerable in-kind contributions from the MFB.

In July and August 2009, Associate Professor David McCallum and Professor Garry Wickham from Murdoch University chaired the Social Theory and the Law section of the Research Committee of the Sociology of Law in Onati, Spain and presented research papers to that group. A report entitled Interventions in Aboriginal Child Removal in Melbourne’s West: A Scoping Study prepared by Paolo Balia, David McCallum, Christopher Sonn, Karen Jackson, Tarquam McKenna (Victoria University) and Colleen Marion (Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place) was presented to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Indigenous Gathering Place) was presented to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, who provided a grant to encourage research in this field.

Dr Finex Ndhlovu, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Communication and the Arts and Research Associate of ICEPA, has recently published a research monograph titled The Politics of Language and Nation-Building in Zimbabwe (Peter Lang, 2009). The book, based on Finex’s highly regarded doctoral research, “examines the exclusion of minority languages (and their speakers) from the mainstream domains of everyday social life in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It considers forces of hegemonic nation building, subtle cultural oppression and a desire for linguistic uniformity as major factors contributing to the social exclusion of Zimbabweans from language groups other than Shona and Ndebele. The book interprets the various forms of language-based exclusion exercised by Shona and Ndebele language speakers over minority groups as constituting a form of linguistic imperialism. Contrary to the popular view that English is Zimbabwe’s “killer language”, this book argues that linguistic imperialism has very little to do with whether the dominating language is “foreign” or “indigenous”. While the focus is specifically on the politics of language and identity in Zimbabwe, this case study gives an insight into the complexity of identity and nation building in postcolonial Africa.’ The book will be formally launched in October 2009 by the eminent sociolinguist Professor Michael Clyne.

NEW POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW STARTS IN THE SCHOOL OF SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

The cross-disciplinary areas of Motor Control and Sport Psychology have been bridged by the recent appointment of Dr Jacqueline Williams, the new Post-Doctoral Fellow based in the School of Sport and Exercise Science and Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport (CARES). Dr Williams, who completed her PhD at RMIT in 2007, has been a Research Officer at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and will maintain that link with an Honorary Fellowship whilst at VU.

Dr Williams’s research, known as the Motor Imagery Through Childhood or MITCh project, will focus on motor imagery in children. Working in collaboration with Professor Tony Morris and Dr Alan Pearce in CARES and Professor Vicki Anderson from Murdoch, investigation will determine the age at which young children develop the ability to accurately utilise motor imagery, and to document changes in motor imagery ability that occur with age throughout childhood. Later research will incorporate the technique of transcranial magnetic stimulation to associate the motor areas of the brain associated with imagery training. The application of the research will assist in developing interventions for children with developmental coordination disorder or motor impairments.

IT TAKES MEMBRANES TO FILTER OUT THE WASTE

APPEARED IN THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN ON 25/07/2009.

The new generation of membrane technology will be a key part of the development of sustainable solutions for infrastructure, according to industry experts. “Australia and New Zealand are already seen as among the world’s best in this field and in a leading role in many specialised areas,” says Mike Duke, principal research fellow with the Institute of Sustainability and Innovation at Melbourne’s Victoria University.
“After all, Australia is a major manufacturer and exporter of membrane technology, and has been for several decades. We have academic researchers working on the basic science issues, people in industry working on applications, and of course some very good public sector research institutions. Research groups like the UNESCO Centre for Membrane Science and Technology at the University of NSW and the ISI are considered among the best in the world.”

Although there is a great variety of membrane types, the central principle is that a membrane operates as a filter, capable of capturing or rejecting fine particles even molecules from a stream of liquid or gas. Australian expertise in the area grew out of the use of membranes in water treatment as well as food production, especially the dairy sector, and important membrane research in foods is being carried out at the University of Western Sydney.

Membranes also will play a central role in planned large-scale desalination projects. A group called the Advanced Membrane Technologies or Water Treatment Research Cluster, led by Stephen Gray of Victoria University, brings together scientists from CSIRO and leading universities to develop the next generation of water-related membrane technologies, with a research focus on improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Another membrane-based project is a pilot plant to treat non-potable groundwater in remote and regional areas. The solar powered plant, located in western Victoria, is being developed by the ISI on behalf of GWMWater, the water authority covering the area, as a model for future projects.

Duke nominates greenhouse gas capture as another crucial area for emerging membrane technology, as related technologies for carbon geosequestration begin to fall into place. Membranes can be used to separate carbon dioxide from power station flue gas and to treat gases before combustion to make the power plant more efficient as well as to prepare Australia for a future hydrogen economy. Duke notes that the University of Queensland, the University of Melbourne, Monash University and the CSIRO are internationally renowned for their membrane research in this area. The particular characteristic of membranes, of course, is their capacity to collect and concentrate waste material, and this raises a lot of possibilities when you begin to think about waste in a different light, as some companies are starting to do, he says.

“There is the potential to extract value from material that would otherwise incur costs for disposal. This interest in what is collected rather than the purified stream represents a new and very important avenue for the development of membrane technology. It is a special focus for researchers at the University of Auckland.

“In the past few years there has been a major shift towards internationally recognised research and development, including advanced membrane materials such as inorganic, polymeric, nanotechnology and electromaterials. This movement has now acquired a critical mass of researchers and industry participants, who see the potential of membrane technology to provide innovative solutions to global issues.

Such research includes Flinders University and the University of South Australia, which have active programs in advanced membrane materials.”

Membrane research in Australia and New Zealand recently took a key step forward with the establishment of the Membrane Society of Australasia, which will act as a conduit for the exchange of information and expertise, with Duke as the chairman. Industry membership includes membrane manufacturers, process designers and users of membranes such as water authorities.

“In Europe, North America and Asia, organisations like this have proved to be very valuable,” he explains. “There is every reason to think the same benefits will be seen in Australia and New Zealand, especially given the strong interest and positive feedback the MSA has already received.”

In the short term, the association is focused on conferences and workshops to help build connections between membrane researchers, industry and users. The MSA is also supporting Australia’s bid to host in 2014 an international congress on membranes and membrane processes, a central event for the global industry.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

THE IAN POTTER FOUNDATION

The Ian Potter Foundation is one of Australia’s leading private philanthropic organisations. Applications in this round will be accepted for the following program areas:

- Arts
- Education
- Community Wellbeing
- Community Wellbeing International Travel

Please read all the relevant information on the Potter website and use the correct application form. The final Travel and Conference round is also now open. Applicants must apply using the Travel and Conference application form and adhere to the specific funding guidelines relating to this scheme.

Website: http://foundation.ianpotter.org.au/program_areas.html

Closing date for all the above categories is 1 October 2009.

AUSAID AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AWARDS 2009

The aim of the Australian Development Research Awards (ADRA) is to attract high quality research that informs policy development and increases the general stock of knowledge around development issues.

Proposals should address pertinent and cutting edge questions in development research in the following areas of high priority:

- Disability-inclusive development
- Economics
- Gender
- Performance-linked aid

Applicants can apply for funding for projects up to three years in duration, with successful proposals eligible to receive between A$100,000 and A$300,000 per year.

Website: http://www.ausaid.gov.au/research/default.cfm

Applicants are invited to submit Online Applications to AusAID by 5pm AEST Friday 18 September 2009.

THANK YOU to all who contributed to the content of the Research Matters bulletin. 😊