TAFE RESEARCHER HONOURED

The lifelong contribution to TAFE research of Victoria University’s Berwyn Clayton has been recognised with the VET Researcher of the Year award bestowed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

The award, announced earlier this month by the chair of the NCVER board, Dr Peter Shergold, will be presented in July 2011.

Dr Shergold says Berwyn is a worthy recipient of the award: “Practitioners and policy makers connected to Australia’s training sector have benefited from Berwyn’s work over the past 25 years.”

VU’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of TAFE Dr Anne Jones says Berwyn has shown outstanding research leadership as director of the Work Education Research Centre at VU, and previously as head of a similar centre at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

“Berwyn’s leadership as a researcher has not only produced a large volume of evidence-based knowledge specific to vocational education, it has also extended to supporting and mentoring others. Many in the sector owe their emergence as researchers to Berwyn,” Dr Jones says.

“Berwyn is a passionate defender of VET teaching as a specialised practice and continues to be influential locally and nationally in contributing to state and federal policy development in this area.

“Over the past three years she had led NCVER’s VET practitioner research community of practice, and this program has recently been funded for a further three years.”

Berwyn says her research has focused on assisting VET teachers to maintain the high quality of their craft in the fast-changing labour market.

“Australian vocational education is highly regarded internationally for two chief reasons – our strong links with industry, which allow us to adjust courses and skills development to meet the needs of the labour market, and the high quality of our teaching,” she says.

“My work as a researcher with a strong teaching background has been driven by the need to support VET teachers to maintain the high course delivery standards in classrooms, labs and workshops.”

Ms Berwyn Clayton, Director, WERC

VICHEALTH AWARD FOR REPORT ON HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

A research team led by Victoria University has been honoured by VicHealth for a report on the experiences of gays and lesbians in community sport.

Dr Caroline Symons and her team from VU and Latrobe University received the Professor David Hill Award for Knowledge and Translation at VicHealth’s annual awards ceremony in Melbourne earlier this month.

Their report, ‘Come Out To Play’, identified barriers to participation and acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual
and transgender participants in community sport in Victoria.

Their research received widespread media attention when it was released earlier this year with findings that 42% of those surveyed had experienced verbal homophobia and almost half remained closeted in their sporting clubs.

Caroline says the award means a lot to the team because it signals the end to the silence that has surrounded homophobia in sport in Australia.

"The sporting world in Australia has been reticent to address discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and that affects access to and enjoyment of community and elite sport," Caroline says.

"It's time the sporting codes extended their excellent programs to tackle racism and sexism to promote equality for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people."

VicHealth chief executive Todd Harper says the category for Knowledge and Translation – named in honour of outgoing Cancer Council Director Professor David Hill – was hotly contested.

"Every year, VicHealth invests millions in research projects, but what made Come Out To Play emerge as our winner, was how the work Caroline and her team utilised strong research capabilities to put the spotlight on a very challenging issue," he says.

"We hope that this important piece of work inspires further investigation, so we can boot homophobia out of sports once and for all."

The VicHealth award is the second for the groundbreaking study, which is the first to examine discrimination faced by the GLBT community in Australian sport. In June the team received an award for the most outstanding contribution to sport from the GLBTI community from the ALSO Foundation.

WHERE’S WALLY’S WORK?

Congratulations to Senior Lecturer in Psychology Dr Wally Karnilowicz who has secured a book contract with Springer Publishing Company (New York) for his work involving identity construction within the framework of cultural psychology.

It is anticipated that the self-authored book, titled Psychological Interpretations of Identity and Culture, will be on sale from 2012.

Other activities include the publication of an autoethnographic study in the prestigious A* European Journal of Cancer Care titled 'Identity and psychological ownership in chronic illness and disease state'. The study explores Psychological Ownership and Identity related to prostate cancer and chronic illness. Themes include the patient–healthcare professional relationship and that Psychological Ownership is personal and grounded in an individual's sense of identity, control and perceived capacity to control illness or disease. The article is available on-line through http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2354.2010.01220.x/pdf.

In addition, Wally along with colleagues Professors Susan Moore and Cynthia Leung will have a research paper published in Australian Psychologist, titled ‘Characteristics and predictors of romantic relationships in late adolescence and young adulthood in Hong Kong and Australia’ and another in Social Development titled ‘Relationships, relationship styles, coping strategies and psychological distress among Chinese and Australian young adults’.

Finally, Dr Karnilowicz also secured two grants for his work in community engagement this year including:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Flemington, Department of Human Services ($33,126.50).
- An investigation of perceptions, impact and outcomes associated with DHS housing services within the north and western metropolitan region of Melbourne, Victoria. North and Western Metropolitan Regional Directorate and Office for Housing ($77,000).

3RD INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON INORGANIC MEMBRANES

A/Prof Mikel Duke chaired the 3rd International Symposium on inorganic membranes on 26 November 2010. Dr Bo Zhu and Dr Nicholas Milne were conference secretariat.

The Symposium was sponsored by the Ian Potter Foundation, Victoria University and the Membrane Society of Australasia. 32 people attended to see talks by the invited international speakers, Prof Toshinori Tsuru of Hiroshima University, Japan, Prof Jerry Lin of Arizona State University, USA, Prof Wanqin Jin of Nanjing University of Technology, China and Prof Kew-Ho Lee of Korea Research Institute of Chemical Technology. Talks were also given by National membrane experts, Dr Bo Zhu of Victoria University, Dr Simon Smart of the University of Queensland, Dr Matthew Hill of the CSIRO and Prof Huanling Wang of Monash University.
The first ACMSM conference was held in 1967 at the University of New South Wales and since then another 20 of such biennial conferences have been hosted by various universities across Australia and New Zealand. ACMSM conferences provide the forum for academics, researchers and practitioners to discuss and review latest developments in the broad area of structural mechanics and materials. These conferences place strong emphasis on participations from research students. ACMSM21 provided this established forum with resounding success.

Over 150 delegates from the various universities around Australia and New Zealand, with additional representation from a further 15 countries ensured that the papers presented generated the desired discussions and information exchange that would encourage significant future collaboration between the participating universities and organisations. The invited Keynote presentations delivered by Professor Richard Liew Jat Yuen (National University of Singapore), Professor Ian Gilbert (University of New South Wales), Professor Mike Xie (RMIT University), Dr Gerard Van Erp (Queensland) and Mr Peter Bowtell (Arup) were a highlight, focusing on sustainable practice guidance in the areas of steel structures, concrete structures, structural optimisation, fibre composite materials, and contemporary multipurpose stadium design. These papers complemented the other 147 session papers on various topics in the broad structural mechanics and materials area.

VU had significant representation from Executive Management. The audience was welcomed at the pre-conference function by Professor Richard Thom and officially by Professor Chris Perera at the opening ceremony the following morning. The Gala Dinner held at the MCG had both Professor Linda Rosenman and Professor Michelle Towstoless as key speakers. Guest dinner speaker Professor Yew-Chaye Loo (Griffith University) gave a humorous and thoughtful historical account of past conferences in the ACMSM series.

From all accounts the conference was highly successful and created excellent exposure for VU particularly to the international structural mechanics and materials community.

The 21ST AUSTRALASIAN CONFERENCE ON THE MECHANICS OF STRUCTURES AND MATERIALS

FACULTY OF HEALTH, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

ACMSM21 was organised by members of the emerging Structural Mechanics Group at VU, and ably supported by the School of Engineering and Science and Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science. The local organising committee was headed by conference co-chairs Associate Professor Sam Fragomeni and Dr Srikanth Venkatesan, ably supported by Conference secretariat Ms. Sue Davies. Apart from the main representation from VU, the steering committee also comprised representatives from the University of Melbourne, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology and Monash University.

RACHEL WINS HDR UNIVERSITY MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE

We are pleased to advise that Rachel Winterton was the recipient of the 'University Medal for Excellence – Higher Degree by Research'. University medals are awarded to those students who have achieved academic excellence for results attained and/or overall performance, achievement and/or leadership over the duration of their course. The Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Elizabeth Harman, presented the medal at the graduation ceremony on Thursday, 02 December.

By way of summary, Rachel’s thesis, entitled “Feats of Fancy and Marvels of Muscle: A Social History of Swimming in Late Colonial Melbourne” was completed in a timely fashion, being submitted after only two years and seven months of candidature. In March 2010, the thesis was passed without further correction by all three examiners.

Comments by the examiners suggested that the thesis was 'an excellent contribution to the field’, ‘an intellectual concept that is sophisticated and daring’, ‘an outstanding piece of research that has publication potential’, and ‘a first-rate piece of research’.

The thesis was further commended for its innovative approach, clarity and argument, systematic and intelligent analysis, use and breadth of the literature and its sound methodology. The examiners’ rankings for thesis quality placed the work in the top 25% of these internationally in the associated field of expertise, and Rachel was also awarded the Victoria University Outstanding Final Year Research Student Award (School of Sport and Exercise Science) for 2010.

Dr Claire Parker from the University of New England was the co-supervisor of the project. A pdf of Rachel’s thesis can be accessed at the Victoria University Library website or via the website address below. http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/RobHess/
NEW RESEARCH ALLIANCE

Dr Beverley Lloyd-Walker of the School of Management and Information Systems, Faculty of Business and Law, with Prof. Derek Walker of RMIT, has been successful in gaining a $38,000 research grant from the Alliances Association of Australasia.

Alliances have increased in importance as a procurement method in Australia for infrastructure and construction projects and is now the preferred method. The aim of the research is to identify attributes of professional excellence in alliance project management.

The outcomes of the research will include the development of a capability maturity model to support professional development in the alliance industry.

SOME RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF DR EDER KIKIANTY

You may already be aware that Eder Kikianty from the School of Engineering and Sciences represented VU at the national 3 minute PhD presentation. It is believed that she was the only Mathematician representing their University in this capacity.

At the Graduation ceremony on Thursday 3 December Dr Kikianty received the University medal in the category of Postgraduate research students. On Friday 4 at the Chancellor’s celebration for Postgraduate Research Students, Eder received both the Vice-Chancellor Citation and Peak award in this category.

She recently finished a three month internship with The National ICT Australia (NICTA) Research Centre of Excellence and has been awarded a second internship with NICTA which have been made possible via the auspices of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute. The industry internship program for PhD students in the final stages of their candidature are aimed at high level interaction between industry and academia.

NEW WERC PROJECTS

WERC has been successful in attracting a number of new VET research projects including a continuation and expansion of the NCVER Community of Practice ($210,000) and the National Quality Council project “VET in Schools: strengthening delivery and assessment” ($63,000).

FEDERAL MINISTER GARRETT LAUNCHES WERC’S NATIONAL REPORT ON RETAINING YEAR 12 STUDENTS THROUGH VET

October saw the launch of a WERC-authored VET research report by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, the Hon Peter Garrett MP, in Parliament House. Commissioned by TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and the Australian College of Educators (ACE), the research ‘Enhancing the retention of young people to Year 12, especially through vocational skills’, profiles nine training models that have succeeded in keeping young people in education. More details are available here: http://www.tda.edu.au/cb_pages/Newsletter_22_November_2010.php. The project is also the subject of a story in the Sydney Morning Herald: http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/vet-needs-an-image-overhaul-20101118-17y88.html

NEW WERC NEWS

EDUCATION TEAM NEWS FROM WERC’S TECHNOLOGY IN

The Connected Lives project (undertaken with John Martino from the School of Education) has been awarded a 2010 B-HERT Award for Best Community Engagement, and was a joint finalist in the Participation and Skill Development section of the 2010 VicHealth Awards. The Technology in Education team, comprising Stefan Schutt and Dale Linegar, together with a team of programmers, is part of a successful bid by the Inspire Foundation for a $27 million, five-year Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing. The team has also been successful in two grant bids for 2011: a $40,000 Telematics Trust project to develop virtual worlds on USB data sticks, and a $30,000 Australian Flexible Learning Framework grant to undertake GPS-based mobile phone learning.

OPEN ADOPTION STUDY REVEALS LACK OF CLOSURE

Unique research by VU PhD graduate Dr Phillipa Castle received widespread media coverage in The Age, Sydney Morning Herald and on ABC radio’s Statewide Drive program this month.

Phillipa’s thesis reveals that birth mothers are still experiencing difficulties contacting children that were adopted almost three decades after laws were changed to give them this right.

Despite legal protection, complete breakdowns in communication with adoptive parents still occur and birth mothers often feel “undeserving” when exercising their right to see the relinquished child.

Phillipa interviewed 15 birth mothers aged 21 to 50 who had relinquished a child since the introduction of open adoption in Victoria in 1984.

Open adoption allows the birth mother to choose adoptive parents and negotiate a court-ordered agreement that details the frequency of contact between her and the child.

Phillipa’s study, titled ‘A unique loss: The experience of birth mothers in open adoption’, found 20 per cent of the birth mothers experienced an interruption to agreed

VICTORIA LAW SCHOOL CHRISTMAS FUNCTION FOR PHD STUDENTS

The end of year Christmas function was held on 3 December for PhD students and their supervisors at the Victoria Law School. It was a great day of interaction between students and supervisors. In this photograph are the students, their families and supervisors.
contact times with the child or a total breakdown of the relationship with the adoptive family.

“The most disappointing aspect is that these birth mothers don’t feel confident enough to challenge these violations of their legal agreement in the County Court,” Phillipa says. “Unfortunately, the law is not a useful tool of repair because a court case is too confronting or intimidating.”

“It shows that birth mothers with terminated arrangements do not utilise the power of the Court if they think the child does not desire it, even if they believe that the child’s response is merely a reflection of the adoptive parent’s influence.”

She says training for adoptive parents needed to ensure they were “genuinely open to open adoption”.

“In some cases the adoptive mother was described as jealous, and contact between the child and birth mother was manipulated, minimised or withdrawn.”

Phillipa says that open adoption was a generally positive practice because contact between a birth mother and her relinquished child is “at least a partial solution to a painful decision, and a salve to an enormous loss for both parties”.

“Its main drawback is that ongoing contact is continually ambiguous. The birth mother sees that the child is ok and that they are ok without her. It is a solution that appears resistant to fully resolving the grief associated with the act of relinquishment,” she says.

“As painful as it might continue to be, contact appears better than nothing. One woman told me that it is better to be happy and hurt than hurt and not know about it.”

**DORIS TAKES ON JOHN SAFRAN AND FATHER BOB**

Ever heard the joke about the Catholic, the Anglican and the Jew?

Doris, who graduated earlier this month at the age of 71 after battling breast cancer, revealed the details of her controversial thesis to host John Safran and Catholic Priest Father Bob in the ABC Southbank studios.

Her research found that the Anglican Church was deeply involved in the religious fight against communism in Australia during the early Cold War and its influence reached the highest echelons of power.

It is believed to be the first major Australian study of the influence of Anglicans in Cold War anti-communism.

Doris says political leaders at the time used religion and the strength of the Church to “obtain their ends”.

“While numerous studies have examined the role of the Australian Roman Catholic Church in fighting communism in the 1950s, little attention has been paid to the position and power of the numerically dominant Anglican Church,” Doris says.

“The Encyclical issued by the Pope at the time prevented any Catholics being involved with communism. But the pressure the Archbishop of Canterbury exerted on the Anglicans did not prevent some being admirers of the communist system, which meant there was conflict within the church.”

Her study highlights the high number of Anglican representatives in influential positions in the government, the military and the judiciary during Cold War Australia.

“These powerful elites were able to influence social opinion both directly and indirectly,” she says.

“There were prominent members of the Anglican Church who were very helpful to the anti-communist Menzies government at the time. There were no overt statements about this link between Church and State but there probably didn’t need to be. It was all pretty well understood.”

Church newspapers were also used as a tool to spread anti-communist propaganda, particularly the evangelical titles.

“The papers disseminated anti-communist news items from local and international sources and were powerful shapers of opinion. It was quite amazing that there was so much fear considering the small numbers of communists in Australia at the time, estimated to be 20,000 at the most.”

Doris says her study had the potential to upset some Anglicans but the research was important “because it can be used as a lesson for the current fear, ignorance and misunderstandings of Muslims”.

“It shows how we should really start to step back and think about things rather than just blindly follow the leader.”

Father Bob concluded the interview by admiring “the enormous number of people who graduated from Victoria University and who treated you (Doris) so hospitably when you went there as an older student”.

Doris, who thanked Professors Phillip Deery and Robert Pascoe for their support during her PhD, has also appeared in numerous local community newspaper articles.