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VU RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME (RDGS) FOR 2012 - NOW OPEN

The Office for Research is now calling for applications for the VU Researcher Development Grants Scheme (RDGS) for 2012. The guidelines (including the timelines for submission) and application form can be found at: http://research.vu.edu.au/vu_rdgs.php

Please specifically take note of the following important dates and events:

- Expressions of Interest to Associate Deans (Research & Research Training): No later than 10 June 2011.
- Applications due to Associate Deans (Research & Research Training) for review assistance and advice: No later than 30 June 2011.
- Closing date for applications with the VU Office for Research: 12 August 2011 by 4:00 pm.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Zana Stefanovski, Grants Administration Officer, Office for Research in the first instance on ext. 4710 or your Associate Dean (Research & Research Training).

NEW BOOK: CRITICAL ESSAYS IN APPLIED SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

By David Gilbourne (Professor at the University of Wales Institute Cardiff), Mark B. Andersen (Professor at Victoria University).

Critical Essays in Applied Sport Psychology is a thought-provoking collection of 16 essays discussing the field’s traditions, research models, and practices.

The editors have brought together a team of internationally recognized sport psychologists with backgrounds in various disciplines to offer insights into sport cultures ranging from youth sport to professional sport. The authors of these cutting-edge essays ask challenging questions about the current state of applied sport psychology, addressing the priorities of the field, its research methods, and its effectiveness in preparing students for research and consulting.

With ideas that will interest those in the applied sport psychology field as well as psychologists, psychotherapists, and research psychologists, Critical Essays in Applied Sport Psychology offers students and practitioners an opportunity to reflect on their own approaches to and assumptions grounding their current or future professional practice. Each essay offers a distinct perspective on applied sport psychology practice that challenges current applied training requirements and practices, with discussion questions at the conclusion of each essay to stimulate in-class discussion and individual reflection. Readers may also use these essays as springboards for pursuing new areas of research.

Part I of the text begins with six essays discussing the possibilities afforded by the use of research and inquiry within applied practice. The authors of these essays explore how stories of self and of others can facilitate an increased appreciation of the complexity of people’s lives both inside and outside of sport. The essays in part II concern issues in professional service delivery with special emphasis on alternative ways to conceptualize and practice applied sport psychology. In part III, three essays explore specific topics in sport psychology practice dealing with both sport-specific and general sociocultural contexts.

Critical Essays in Applied Sport Psychology offers valuable perspectives not only for sport psychology
STRENGTHENING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THAI SCHOOLS

Dr Mark Vicars, Dr Marcelle Cacciattolo, Dr Ian Ling, Associate Professor Tarquam McKenna of Victoria University and Professor Shirley Steinberg (Director of Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy) of Calgary University, Alberta, Canada are collaborating with colleagues from Suan Dusit Rajaphat University, Bangkok, Thailand. During the month of June the team will undertake the international research project in schools entitled, ‘Strengthening the Teaching and Learning of English language and literacy in Thai Schools’. The team returns to Thailand in November to work with 15 university teachers who will become co-researchers in this project. The project aims to evaluate effective English as a foreign language teaching practices in low socio-economic Thai schools. This project is funded by the Australian Government under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This project is supported by Dr Parichat Nitimnan, Dean of the Graduate School at Suan Dusit Rajaphat University.

In 2012 the project team from the School of Education, in collaboration with Professor Steinberg, will be editing a forthcoming book addressing intercultural second language methodologies.

professionals, students, and researchers but also for those who work alongside, manage, or employ applied psychology professionals. By looking beyond the traditional psychological skills training model, Critical Essays in Applied Sport Psychology offers new ways of uncovering and representing knowledge that will stimulate debate and open discussion on current research, methodologies, practices, and training requirements in applied sport psychology.

ACHPER AWARD

Each year the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Victorian Branch (ACHPER), calls for tertiary institutions to submit research projects to be considered for Student Awards of Distinction at the Undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral level.

We are pleased to advise that Rachel Winterton has been awarded an ACHPER Award for her PhD thesis entitled “Feats of Fancy” and “Marvels of Muscle”: A Social History of Swimming in Late Colonial Melbourne”. Her work was considered by an independent sub-committee and judged to be an outstanding research project. As an aside, her PhD is available on the VU library website and has had 293 downloads from 19 different countries. Supervisors of her thesis were Dr Rob Hess, School of Sport and Exercise Science, VU and Claire Parker, University of New England.

LEADING THE WAY IN FIRE SAFETY

We can learn a lot about increasing home fire safety by closely examining the circumstances of those who have died in house fires. We can learn even more if we can compare this information with details about those who have survived a serious residential fire. Over recent years staff from the VU Centre for Environmental Safety and Risk Engineering (CESARE) and the School of Social Sciences and Environmental Safety and Risk Engineering have established a database with details from coronial files about those who have died in fires. The former Director of CESARE, Professor Ian Thomas, was a key driver of this initiative and we are continuing to build up the VU Coroner’s Fire Fatality Database to cover multiple Australian states. To date this rich resource has yielded nine papers and provided ground-breaking insights into risk factors. We are also in the process of developing a home fire survivor’s database, based on extensive individual interviews. The importance of these two resources has been recognised by key agencies and increased cash and in kind support has been forthcoming. We are pleased to announce that cash grants totalling $147,000 over three years have been secured from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Country Fire Authority and Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner for the further development and analysis of these two databases. The principal investigators for these projects are Professor Dorothy Bruck and Dr Michelle Ball.

KICK-STARTING LUNCHTIME RESEARCH CONVERSATIONS AT CTSR

On 9 May 2011, the Centre for Tourism and Services Research (CTSR) held an exciting research seminar with CTSR students and staff over an enjoyable lunch break. The purpose of the event was to provide an opportunity for PhD and Masters students to present aspects of their research to their colleagues and obtain feedback on their work in a relaxed and friendly setting. Ms Alexandra Law, who recently submitted her candidature proposal to the Business and Law Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee, presented her project ideas to the group.

Photo of the research seminar event is shown below.

Following the success of this initial event, similar lunchtime events will be held every month. Each month a research student is scheduled to present for about 30 minutes and the presentation is then followed by an informal question-and-answer session and constructive feedback by peers. The presentation topics will include: discussions of recently submitted and approved candidature research proposals, discussions of journal articles that the students are working on, methodological debates or analyses of students’ chapters in the context of individual theses projects. The aim is not to replace the work of supervisors but to contribute to the researcher development process and challenge the students to “think outside the square”; CTSR co-supervisors will attend these events.
Following the success of this initial event, there are plans to conduct similar events with the research students from the Centre for Strategic Economic Studies (CSES) and the School of International Business.

ILSCM AWARDED NEW CONTAINER LOGISTICS CHAIN STUDY CONTRACT

Following on from the successful Melbourne and Sydney Container Logistics Chain Studies, ILSCM and its partner Aurecon have recently been awarded the contract to conduct a similar study in South Australia for the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure in conjunction with Flinders Ports.

ILSCM Director, Dr. Hermione Parsons, commented that ILSCM and Aurecon have cemented a partnership that is now seen as having significant expertise in conducting these important container logistics chain studies, and whose data enables government and industry to conduct long term infrastructure planning.

FIFA PASSES THE BALL TO VICTORIA UNIVERSITY VOLUNTEERS

World soccer body FIFA has sponsored a Victoria University research study offering 60 middle-aged male participants the chance to test the health impacts of physical training.

Victoria University PhD student Fabio Serpiello has received a $32,000 Joao Havelange Scholarship from FIFA to study how different types of physical activity such as indoor soccer and running can help in the prevention of diabetes in middle-aged people.

“Scientific research has demonstrated that one of the main factors involved in the onset of diabetes is a sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical activity.” Mr Serpiello said.

“Australian males are at high risk of diabetes, especially middle aged men who are overweight and physically inactive. However, diabetes can be prevented through physical activity, and people at risk can get back to a healthy condition.”

Mr Serpiello said VU was offering volunteers the unique chance to improve their fitness and health for free, and have fun doing it.

“Physical training can reduce the risk factors of the disease but traditionally people who need to improve their health are told to exercise between three to five times per week at a moderate intensity. However, recent scientific evidence shows that high-intensity intermittent training is equally or more efficient than moderate-intensity exercise. This is what we will be testing.”

Men aged 35 to 55 who are overweight and physically inactive are encouraged to volunteer for the study, which will run for 12 weeks from June.

Eligible participants will have blood glucose screening, a full blood test and supervised physical training for free. The study will take place in the brand new Sport and Learning Precinct at VU’s Footscray Park campus.

For more information or to register as a volunteer for the study please contact Fabio Serpiello on 9919 4736 or email fabiorubens.serpiello@live.vu.edu.au

HI-TECH CLUB FOR YOUTH WITH ASPERGER’S SYNDROME OPENS IN FOOTSCRAY

A hi-tech learning club for young people with Asperger’s Syndrome opened in Footscray this month after a Victoria University project showed how computer tuition improved their social skills, confidence and happiness.

In what is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia, the not-for-profit space, called The Lab, will cater for local Asperger’s youth aged 10 to 16 years with an interest in computers and design. It will run on Thursday afternoons after school and will cater for six to eight young people.

Participants will learn from computer programmers and designers who are already working in the space, developing virtual world technologies for VU, Monash University, Canberra Institute of Technology and private companies. These technical experts will work with the young people on a one-to-one basis in areas such as programming, 3D digital design and gaming.

ABC Local Radio conducted a live cross to The Lab during its official opening on May 12.

VU Work-based Education Research Centre (WERC) senior educator Stefan Schutt and technical manager Dale Linegar said they had received significant encouragement from parents with children who have Asperger’s after announcing their idea for The Lab earlier in the year.

“We are very excited about the opening and giving these young people a dedicated space to express themselves creatively outside the constraints of a normal classroom,” Mr Schutt said.

“By pairing these young people with tutors who have technical expertise in areas of mutual interest, The Lab seeks to improve the wellbeing and life prospects of young people who are often highly skilled but whose condition can lead them to fall through gaps in the mainstream education system.”

Mr Schutt said The Lab was created after he and Mr Linegar conducted a research project with VicHealth last year in which young people with Asperger’s gravitated towards the use of technology.

“Kids with Asperger’s often have very high IQs and they’re really gifted but they don’t have the social skills that most other kids do,” he said. “They can face problems in the real world, but when you put them in front of a computer they’re fantastic.”

He said the study found that online technologies gave participants the confidence to learn about social interaction because it was seen as safe, mediated and not as confronting as face to face contact. They also valued the chance to meet others with the condition.

Mr Linegar said a parent support group was now being conducted, as well as an information website for carers and young people.

“The Lab is about providing ‘objects of affinity’ for these kids, in this case technology, which they can chat about and analyse together,” he said. “The most positive thing is showing the families of these kids that they are talented. That’s a really powerful thing.”
LINKING AUSTRALIA TO BRAZIL’S OLYMPIC RINGS

Members of Brazil’s 2016 Olympic Committee and peak universities spoke at a special collaborative research symposium at Victoria University in late April.

‘Towards 2016: Australian and Brazilian Strategies for Success’ provided a platform for researchers to explore areas of collaboration between Australia and Brazil in the lead-up to the 2016 Olympic Games.

Guest speakers included Professor Luis Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Head of Sports Science, Brazil’s Olympic Committee, and Professor Allan Hahn, Chief Scientist at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS).

“It was an exciting opportunity for guests to meet other researchers with similar interests in fostering research collaboration, to exchange ideas and explore funding opportunities,” symposium organiser and VU Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living (ISEAL) Professor David Bishop said.

“There was a lot of discussion about the challenges and successful models for research collaboration, and different research approaches, and we look forward to the strengthening of our Brazilian relationships and the new opportunities that will be created from this event.”

Guests from the Federal University of Alagoas, the University of Sao Paulo and VU were treated to a traditional Aboriginal welcome and dance performance before the presentations kicked off.

ISEAL’s Director Professor Hans Westerbeek spoke of his excitement for South America in the lead-up to the Olympics, and the untapped opportunities for Australian and Brazilian universities to work together, specifically in the area of innovation.

ISEAL has already created a new partnership with one of the top-ranked Brazilian universities – the Federal University of Alagoas, that has specialised research expertise in sport science and is a member of the prestigious Rectors Council.

As a result of a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, the Federal University of Alagoas has committed to sending its leading sport science researcher, Professor Dr Adriano Eduardo Lima-Silva, on a visiting fellowship to strengthen inter-institution collaborative research activities. Professor Adriano was also recently awarded a prestigious Endeavour Research Fellowship to spend more time at VU to conduct collaborative research.

The symposium was hosted by VU’s ISEAL, with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Council on Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR), the Federal University of Alagoas, Brazil, and the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

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