IN THIS ISSUE

Business Ethics: Look to the East

The world’s second largest economy has its own business ethics and doesn’t need western values forced on it, according to VU Business and Law executive dean Professor David Lamond.

Professor Lamond spoke about the 2,500-year-old Confucian philosophy underlying Chinese business this month at Beijing’s Central University of Finance and Economics.

He explained the global financial crisis had shown western business ethics were often ignored and questioned how we could expect China to follow our example.

“In the West we act like we have the best ideas on business ethics and they should be adopted by China, and then events like the global financial crisis happen,” Professor Lamond said. “Our ideas have not even been adopted in the West so why would we think that China could or should adopt them?”

He said Confucian thinking had been informing ethical business practice in China for several millennia, providing a home grown solution that could work in China as well as the West.

“We in the West should look to learn from China rather than just think we are the teachers,” he said.

He said a follower of Confucian moral philosophy aimed to become a junzi, or a ‘person of virtue’ – an ideal that was still spoken of as the standard of personal integrity in China today. When applied to a business person, this ideal is termed rushang.

“The modern Confucian business person applies the Confucian principles of benevolence (ren), rightness (yi), propriety (li), wisdom (zhi), and trustworthiness (xin) to their business practice,” he said. “At the same time, the rushang respects the rule of law and avoids the limitations of administration by personal power alone (renzhi) and should welcome both feedback and criticism without enacting or supporting retribution on those who provide it.”

He said there was growing political and popular support in China for management based on Confucian moral philosophy.

“Far from needing to impose a western framework as solution, China has its own framework to derive solutions to the issues in business ethics it is confronted with, core ideas equally germane to the western context,” he said.

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MORE TIME FOR RESEARCH

Staff will get a chance to devote more time to research in the upcoming Collaborative Research Networks projects.

Opportunities exist for collaborative research with the University of Melbourne, Deakin University, Edith Cowan University and the CSIRO in three areas:

- Clinical Exercise Science and Active Living, led by Professor Michael McKenna.
- Water Management, led by Professor Stephen Gray.
- Education in Low SES, Diverse and
Underrepresented Communities, led by Professor Roger Slee.

Applications for the Education element close November 4, while the other streams have now closed. Projects will begin early 2012.

VU’s Education, Active Living and Water: Leveraging Victoria University’s Research Investment project was awarded $6.14 million earlier this year through the Federal Government’s CRN program.

The CRN aims to build research capacity in smaller less-research-intensive education institutions by supporting collaboration with other, more established research-focused institutions in areas of common interest.

For details visit www.vu.edu.au/research/crn

GEORDIE ZHANG: THE 3MT EXPERIENCE

Geordie Zhang says he had no idea what he was getting into earlier this year when he signed up for the Three-Minute Thesis competition.

“I thought, oh well, why not? It’s only at the faculty level,” he recalls.

The contest, hosted by the university’s Office for Postgraduate Research, invites doctoral candidates to present their thesis topic to a non-specialist audience in less than three minutes.

When Zhang won the faculty heat explaining his thesis on prioritising competing uses of broadband communication, he says he had to pinch himself.

Then he faced a university-wide competition “weak in the knees” and won the first prize of $2,000.

A month later he had to cut his Chinese honeymoon short, fly to Perth amid freak storms and Qantas industrial action and face 42 competitors from universities across Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

“It felt a bit like going to the Olympic Games,” he says. “The experience was absolutely amazing.”

But while the atmosphere was overwhelming, Zhang says his training from VU staff leading up to the event had prepared him well.

“I was really scared at the VU heats and finals but by the time I got to Perth I was so well prepared I could actually enjoy being up there performing – enjoying that three-minute moment,” he says.

Zhang says the 3MT competition is very useful for postgraduate research students to develop a clear sense of focus for their ideas.

“It’s so easy to get lost in postgraduate research: sometimes it’s like you have so many trees you forget which forest you are in,” Zhang says. “But 3MT forces you to clarify your ideas.”

He says he is grateful to all those who helped him prepare for and supported him during the competition.

Zhang studies in VU’s Centre for Telecommunications and Microelectronics.

WESTERN HEALTH CELEBRATES RESEARCH

Western Health will celebrate the quality and breadth of its research during November’s Research Week.

The program of addresses, symposia and workshops at Sunshine Hospital’s Western Centre for Health Research & Education will run November 7 to 11.

Keynote speakers include Austin Health’s research director Professor Neville Yeomans, the Royal Children’s Hospital’s Professor Kerr Graham, Health Department cancer expert Professor Bob Thomas and VU’s own Professor Warren Payne.

VU staff, researchers and students are welcome to attend any of the presentations.


RSVP to research@wh.org.au

SCHOOL’S IN FOR SUMMER

Some of the brightest young students from the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science will spend the next few months immersed in research.

The faculty’s Associate Dean of Research Professor Chris Perera said the 14 students were recommended by undergraduate course coordinators based on academic performance and interest in undertaking post-graduate studies.

Students represent key research areas across the faculty in projects covering sports nutrition, medicinal plant extracts, butterfly distribution, maternal health and rainfall patterns in the Yarra Valley.

For 2nd year mechanical engineering student Laurent LePage, spending the summer studying laser technology for surveying road topography was an opportunity too good to miss.

“I think you’d be insane not to take such a good opportunity,” Mr LePage said. “You can’t know whether or not you like research without trying it.”

This year for the first time a student from Dermal Therapies will take part in the program. In another first, the program has been offered externally, with second-year Biomedical Science student Michael O’Connor joining from Deakin University.

Professor Perera said the broadening of invitations was aimed at helping staff and students see other ways of operating.

Students are expected to produce a two-page project report, details of any papers submitted for publication and a peer presentation at a faculty seminar in February 2012.

NEW OFR STAFF MEMBER

The Office for Research welcomes Ms Ann Tuscheewski to the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group.

She will provide administrative support to the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health Engineering and Science HREC and the Institutional Biosafety Committee.

Ms Tuscheewski brings several years of administrative experience and qualifications in Animal Science and Management with her.
RESEARCHER PROFILE: DR MARTY GRACE

Professor Marty Grace left a career in social work behind her to join Victoria University back in 1991, and she has not lost her passion for social justice.

Within the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Grace has been researching the experiences of young people affected by homelessness and what works in helping them.

“If you can help people while they’re young you can prevent a whole lifetime of misery for them, as well as expense for the state,” she says.

This year Grace released a major report exploring the role of Melbourne Citymission’s Step Ahead program in the lives of young people affected by homelessness.

Grace and colleagues Dr Deb Keys, Aaron Hart and Bernadette Keys interviewed 28 ex-clients of the ‘foyer type’ program, which offers supported accommodation and linked services for up to three years while the young person is expected to study or work.

She says it’s expensive and slow but it works: Her study found 24 of the 28 were “protected against future homelessness” because they had built up their resources of education, community networks, employment history and health.

“The program works because it’s a holistic approach, it is intense and it lasts a couple of years – it recognises that exiting homelessness is a process that takes time because it is not as simple as putting a roof over someone’s head,” she says.

Stories of hope, a book featuring the young people’s stories, is due for release next year.

Next Grace wants to investigate homelessness among university students, focussing on how they accessed university from that position, what it’s like for them and what the university can do to help.

“People might assume we don’t have students affected by homelessness here at Victoria University, but we do, and there has been no real research into what that experience is like,” she says.

But Grace’s research interests are not confined to homelessness.

Working with Victoria University colleague Dr Enza Gandolfo, Grace also undertakes research into women’s crafts and creativity.

She says her collaborations with Gandolfo began shortly after they started running into each other at Spotlight on the weekends.

“It was like a shared guilty secret that we were into sewing,” Grace recalls. “Then we started talking about all the other friends and colleagues doing embroidery or other crafts and we stopped just having a laugh and developed a serious research project to find out why.”

It resulted in the 2009 book It keeps me sane, filled with stories and photographs of women and their crafts.

“It was so amazing to go into their homes and see the beautiful work being created and the sense of joy these women gained from it,” she says.

Now Grace and Gandolfo are teaming up for a study into a creative tradition of Coptic Christian women in Brimbank: the glory box.

Grace explains the glory box tradition, while not exclusive to that culture, is part of the Coptic women’s cultural tradition.

“Sometimes a glory box was an actual box or a chest, sometimes just a bottom drawer, and it contained a collection of things for girls or young women in anticipation of marriage: household linen, towels and sheets, embroidery, sometimes even crockery and cutlery,” she says.

But Grace says Coptic Christian women are concerned about their glory box tradition dying out and the study she is undertaking with Gandolfo will investigate its significance and whether it could be taken up by younger generations.

“What has become clear straight away is that it’s not the glory box as a material artefact they’re afraid of losing but what it symbolises: the love and care passed on from mothers to daughters and the cultural continuity associated with it,” she says.

Grace is Head of the Social Work Unit, School of Social Sciences and Psychology.

SELLING SEX SHORT

A new book Selling Sex Short explores the ‘pornographication’ of culture and the rise of violence in mainstream American-produced pornography.

The first book from Dr Meagan Tyler in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology also looks at the integration of pornography in sexology research and the practice of sex therapy.

University of Dayton women’s studies director, Dr Rebecca Whisnant, described the book as “a much-needed intervention into the increasingly intellectually barren and ethically compromised realm of academic scholarship on pornography”.

Two pieces outlining aspects of the research for this book have already appeared on The Drum online.

Dr Tyler’s work on pornography and sex therapy was also included in the edited collection Big Porn Inc. launched last month in Melbourne.

STIGMA ADDS TO BURDEN OF PSYCHOSIS

New research shows the stigma of psychosis can isolate carers and make them more reluctant to access crucial support, especially in migrant communities.

Professor Terence McCann from the School of Nursing and Midwifery explored how caregivers of young people with a first episode of psychosis in 20 Melbourne families coped with the stigma.

He found some carers, particularly those from migrant backgrounds, chose secrecy and isolation rather than face the rejection, embarrassment or loss of status they feared in the community.

“Some caregivers simply shut themselves off from others,” Professor McCann said.

He said this approach could have troubling repercussions.

“Secrecy precludes the caregiver and the young person from receiving crucial support from others, it reinforces their social isolation and alienation from friends and neighbours, and for caregivers in particular, it heightens their overall burden of care,” he said.
“Secrecy may also mean the caregiver is more reluctant to access timely care for the young person.”

He said the secretive approach to mental illness among migrants was consistent with previous research, by Ryder and colleagues in 2000, in which Chinese-Canadian caregivers were more secretive about psychosis than European-Canadian caregivers.

Professor McCann said those who took an open approach with family and friends generally found it lessened their burden.

Family support ranged from discussing how to assist the young person to providing emotional support and sharing responsibility for care, he said.

Openness with friends cleared the way for emotional and practical support.

“For young people, openness and contact with others enable them to obtain greater support and acceptance from a wider range of people,” he said.

“From a community perspective, openness and contact with young people with a first episode of psychosis can help de-stigmatise the illness.”

The study was co-authored by Professor Dan Lubman from Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and Monash University and Eileen Clark from Clark’s Clerks, Albury. It was published in Psychiatry Online.

SYNCHROTRON RESEARCH

VU researchers are using the Synchrotron to look at ways of saving energy in dairy processing.

The team will map dairy compounds accumulating on the membrane surfaces used in processing, which impede their ability to operate efficiently.

A synchrotron is a large machine that accelerates electrons to almost the speed of light.

Armed with results provided via the Synchrotron’s infrared microscope beamline, researchers will be able to understand how this fouling mechanism occurs and propose strategies to clean the membranes, or even prevent such accumulation.

This could lead to new technology for processing dairy streams with near zero energy input.

The team consists of Institute for Sustainability and Innovation’s Associate Professor Mikel Duke, Dr Peter Sanciolo and Professor Stephen Gray; School of Biomedical and Health Sciences researcher Associate Professor Todor Vasiljevic; PhD student Angela Hausmann and Dairy Innovation Australia’s Associate Professor Nohemi Quispe-Chavez and Dr Mike Weeks.

Ms Hausmann is an Australian Postgraduate Award Industry PhD sponsored by an Australian Research Council Linkage Project in partnership with Dairy Innovation Australia Ltd.

MIGRANTS, REFUGEES NOT GETTING ON THEIR BIKES

New research by Dr Siewfang Law, from the School of Social Sciences and Psychology has revealed migrants and refugees are not only riding much less than other Melburnians, they are riding much less than they used to in their home countries.

Dr Law surveyed more than 400 Japanese, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan and Arab-African people living in Melbourne and found they were riding, on average, eight times less often here than they had back home.

Vietnamese migrants rode their bikes 24 times less often since arriving in Australia.

Dr Law said fear of riding on our roads was the chief factor behind their behaviour change.

“The notion of cycling on roads was perceived as dangerous for many of them, especially due to the greater speed of vehicles and the way bicycle lanes operate,” Dr Law said.

This was particularly true for the Japanese, who were used to riding bicycles on the footpaths in Japan.

Dr Law said the notion of safe cycling differed greatly between cultures.

“Many of these newly arrived migrants feel safer riding bicycles in their home countries, even with less safety features such as wearing helmets, using bicycle lights and wearing reflective jackets in the dark,” she said.

“But at home they are happy to ride with an umbrella in one hand, carrying groceries and riding with their children.”

Dr Law said more off-road bicycle paths and rider education for multicultural groups would help them join in the city’s cycling boom.

Those surveyed also complained about the start-up costs involved with cycling in Melbourne, with some explaining that cycling here was “socially exclusive” and even “elitist” due to the specialised clothing and equipment.

Many newly-arrived migrants and refugees said high property prices meant they lived too far away from the inner city to ride, while some respondents also mentioned cultural reasons for not riding, especially the Arab-African women.

Dr Law recommended organized riding events at cultural festivals, the promotion of cycling in different languages and having community leaders and women’s groups organise collective cycling events.

The study was in collaboration with Bicycle Victoria and funded by the Scanlon Foundation.

Dr Law’s research was aired on Radio National and 3CR, covered in the Age, Sydney Morning Herald, local media and The Conversation online.

DEVELOPING THE FIELD

A celebration of research by sport and exercise science students has doubled as work experience in event management and conference presentation.

The School of Sport and Exercise Science post graduate and honours symposium gave students the opportunity to present their research in a professional conference setting.

The 26 presentations were divided into two streams with one for exercise science and another for sport behaviour, history, sociology, philosophy and management.

Awards for the best presentations went to honours students Katie McDonald and Brendan Lazarus, and postgraduate students Gary Kuan and Emma Gallaher.

Katie McDonald said she was honoured to receive the award.

“Getting this recognition is very encouraging for me as I develop my research,” she said. “It was also great to see the other presentations because I can learn from how others are managing their research.”

The event was managed by a team of undergraduate
Event Management in Sport and Recreation students and attended by more than 70 staff and students.

Students reported that being involved in the organisation and delivery of the event made their learning much more real. This event was part of the School of Sport and Exercise Science’s class based projects that are a feature of its Learning in the Workplace and Community strategy.

School of Sport and Exercise Science postgraduate coordinator Dr Nigel Stepto declared the symposium a success.

“We were able to support our student researchers to deliver outstanding presentations and they gained valuable experience by presenting at in a rigorous academic setting,” he said. “Having the undergraduate students manage the event as part of their Learning in the Workplace and Community project reinforces the School’s commitment to supporting our students in all aspects of their learning.”

GERMAN RESEARCH INTERNS FOR SCIENCE, ENGINEERING

A program offering the chance to host German students as research interns is now looking for 2012 project proposals.

The DAAD RISE program provides well-qualified German students as interns for science and engineering research projects, with placements of six weeks to three months funded by the German government.

The program is an opportunity for researchers to receive assistance with research projects, strengthen ties with Germany and extend knowledge of the German culture, research landscape and higher education system.

Research Matters reported in September on Dr Nicoleta Dragomir’s experience hosting Susanne Birkhold though the DAAD RISE program, which said was “extraordinarily satisfying” both personally and professionally.

“I have been blown away by the calibre of the students,” Dr Dragomir said. “These students are the best in Germany; they totally understand what you are asking of them and they are motivated.”

DAAD is the world’s largest funding organisation for academic exchange, and supports more than 65,000 individuals every year in over 250 programs around the world.

The 2012 program is now calling for applications from researchers in accredited universities and non-profit research institutions. To register a research project, applicants must submit a one-page description to DAAD RISE 2012 before November 27, 2011.

For details visit www.daad.de/rise-programs

NEW PEOPLE AND PROJECTS AT WERC

Major mining company BHP Billiton has commissioned VU’s Work-based Education Research Centre for research into skills acquisition, training, retention and transfer.

The research will guide all facets of BHP Billiton Iron Ore’s training operations including induction, safety and compliance, systems, technical, leadership and refresher training.

Meanwhile a research consortium that includes WERC’s Deputy Director Shelley Gillis has been commissioned by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to produce a technical and vocational education and training quality assurance framework for the East Asia Summit countries.

This framework will help countries develop, assess and improve the quality of their technical and vocational education and training systems.

In another project Associate Professor Gillis, WERC’s Geri Pancini and other educational measurement experts will investigate the Australian Core Skills Framework and Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey to measure their correlation.

WERC has also welcomed two new VET experts to the team staff: Principal research fellow Hugh Guthrie from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and research fellow Dr Catherine Down from Charles Sturt University.

Meanwhile, the centre is hosting visiting scholar Dr Betty McDonald from the University of Trinidad and Tobago, as part of an Endeavour Executive Award.

ECOSYSTEM THINK TANK

VU researchers have joined a think tank for early-career researchers to develop fresh solutions for some of the country’s most stressed ecosystems. Dr Megan O’Shea and Dr Patrick-Jean Guay from the school of Engineering and Science and ISI joined 58 other early-career researchers for the Theo Murphy High Flyers Think Tank in Brisbane, from September 29 to 30.

Dr Guay focussed on the Murray Darling Basin while Dr O’Shea provided input on Melbourne’s peri-urban grasslands. The group also discussed Queensland’s Bowen and Surat basins and Ningaloo Marine Park in Western Australia.

The think tank was organized by the Australian Academy of Science and funded by the Royal Society London. The results will be launched and presented to the government later this year.

LEARNING THE BASICS

September’s VU Researcher Induction workshop provided an overview of crucial research-related information to researchers and staff.

Office for Research Director Dr Neale Yates spoke to the group about VU’s $11 million of research income and 700 research publication points.

He also spoke on the importance of Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) results for university reputation: ERA currently ranks VU’s Food Science and Electrical and Electronic Engineering ‘above world standard’.

Research Librarian Jenny Cameron explained the library’s vital connection to research and the role of Research Ambassadors, who provide peer support for researchers in areas such as candidature preparation.

Research Grants Manager Sandy Superina gave her utmost tip for writing grant applications: read the rules!

“It’s always essential – even if you think you already know them – to read the rules carefully and begin the draft application early,” Ms Superina said.

eResearch Associate Director Dr Lyle Winton spoke about the role of eResearch.

“It exists to understand how research is evolving in the digital age, to build infrastructure and services to work on research projects together and eventually provide next-generation researchers with the skills they need,” Dr Winton said.
Ethics & Biosafety Manager Anthony Benka explained how any research involving people, animals, GMOs or potential bio-hazards could only commence with approval from the appropriate ethics committee.

The next twice-yearly induction will run early 2012.

SPEAKING CROSS-CULTURE

A new book examines cross-cultural contact in multi-ethnic societies.

*Intercultural Relations in a Global World* was co-edited by Dr Nicole Oke from the School of Social Sciences and Psychology with Michele Lobo and Vince Morotta.

It looks at what makes cross-cultural communication work in various contexts including English-teaching in China, multi-language internet forums in Malaysia and communication between Japanese migrants to Australia, their parents in Japan and their children here.

“Multicultural communities exist across the world these days and working out ways to negotiate difference that is more than just tolerating difference is still something that we’re learning to do,” Dr Oke said.

Meanwhile Dr Oke has guest edited a special issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* focusing on temporary migrant work, which is about to be published, including an article by her looking at how temporary migration in Australia connects us with Asia and the Pacific.

VU RESEARCHERS EDITING JOURNALS

Professor Chris Perera of the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science recently accepted the role as editor of the International Water Association’s *Journal of Water and Climate Change*.

The journal publishes refereed research and practitioner papers on all aspects of water science, technology, management and innovation in response to climate change, with an emphasis on reduction of energy use.

This is a sister publication to the *Journal of Water Reuse and Desalination* which publishes articles on water treatment and integrated water management and is edited by Institute for Sustainability and Innovation director Professor Stephen Gray.

Meanwhile Academic Coordinator for Research in the School of Engineering and Science Dr Gitesh Raikundalia has recently joined the editorial board of the newly established *International Journal of Information Science*.

Published in the USA by Scientific & Academic, the journal covers various research topics in Information Science.

AQR RENAISSANCE

The success of a recent Association for Qualitative Research conference has organisers talking about a ‘renaissance’ of the organisation.

School of Education head and AQR committee member Dr Tarquam McKenna said the latest Cairns AQR/DPR Downunder research conference was a huge success.

Dr McKenna said the conference was a celebration of living in an exciting global community.

“The conference explored historical moments, respectful spaces, peace and respectable inquiry that should be happening for all disenfranchised people,” he said.

The keynote speakers included Professor Fazal Rizvi, Professor Bob Lingard, Professor Linda Smith and Professor Pat Sikes.

Victoria University was well-represented with seven staff attending and presenting from both sectors of the university.

“The conferences operate to interrupt oppression and repression, to no longer tacitly enable the falsification of evidence and enable the regeneration of critical discourse with compassionate objectives,” Dr McKenna said.

Dr McKenna and the School of Education’s Iris Dumenden and Dr Mark Vicars all have lead roles on the AQR committee and acknowledged the $5,000 seed grant provided by VU.

HEALTHCARE SENSOR NETWORKS


The text discusses concepts and examples of clinical applications including fall prevention for the elderly, activity monitoring of children and monitoring of people with Parkinson's disease.

Editors include Dr Daniel Lai from the School of Engineering and Science and Professor Rezaul Begg from the School of Sports and Exercise Science.

The 15 chapters cover solutions for healthcare and sports applications requiring higher data bandwidth; longer network operational time, robust network design in dynamic environments, and lower costs versus high computational demand.