Star Wars
Experts explore the dark side of space
MAKE YOUR MARK

ENTERPRIZE 2008

Now in its eighth year UQ Business School’s Enterprize competition offers emerging innovators the chance to make their mark with a $100,000 cash prize to help get great ideas out of the pipeline and into production. Competition closes on Monday 21 July 2008. For entry details visit our website www.enterprize.uq.edu.au. For more information please email events@business.uq.edu.au or call (07) 3365 8561.

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UQ BUSINESS SCHOOL

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA
MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

There is perhaps no greater challenge for UQ, and indeed other Australian universities, than the size of our classes. It is in oversized tutorials and in student:teacher ratios that universities nationwide feel the sharp edge of Australian governments’ retreat from higher education funding over almost two decades.

Consider that in the early 1990s the national average was about 14 students to each staff member, whereas it now sits at about 20 students to each staff member. This growth in student:staff ratios is one of many threats to the Australian university learning experience and the global competitiveness of our higher education system – not to mention the attractiveness of the university teaching profession.

While slightly better than average, UQ's student:teacher ratio is in the high teens. In future the balance between students and staff will be a telling indicator of whether UQ is achieving the imperative of providing a distinctive and high-quality education that is better national and international engagement. That means engaging with the people who employ our alumni and can tell us what their industries need, who collaborate with us, who buy our research outcomes and advice and who give our students primary and secondary educational experiences – to name just a few.

There will be other benchmarks for the UQ learning experience. By 2015, I would like to see about 25 percent of undergraduates spending a semester abroad; about 20 percent (excluding honours students) involved in research and receiving credit; and up to 20 percent completing an internship as part of their degrees.

We shouldn’t expect immediate or wholesale redress from the Australian Government, despite a major review of higher education and hints that the new Government is at least more sympathetic toward universities than its predecessor.

On the other hand, UQ staff hold a key to reinvigorating the learning experience, and that is better national and international engagement. That means engaging with the people who employ our alumni and can tell us what their industries need, who collaborate with us, who buy our research outcomes and advice and who give our students primary and secondary educations – to name just a few.

UQ has many of the basics right. We have national and international recognition for excellence in teaching and learning and research, and a commercialisation entity that benchmarks in the top 10 percent worldwide. We have productive global connections and research facilities that are among the best in the Asia-Pacific. We have some of the finest students and staff in universities anywhere and networks of impressive alumni. Moreover we have people, knowledge and ideas that others want. It is up to UQ to listen more attentively to what our partners and communities desire and need, to ask and answer questions, and to deliver.
Predicting whether a child will develop type 1 diabetes could be as straightforward as a simple blood test, thanks to UQ research.

Professor Ranjeny Thomas (pictured) and her colleagues from the Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine have identified a cellular pathway, known as NF-kappa B, that is activated in blood cells of people with the condition.

“Blood cells are the major infection and immune-control cells of the body, called monocytes and dendritic cells,” Professor Thomas said.

“Monocytes from healthy people are ‘quiet’ in the blood and if we expose them to infection outside the body, the NF-kappa B pathway gets activated.

“In individuals with type 1 diabetes, we found monocyte NF-kappa B was already activated and, when exposed to infection, the pathway shut down.

“As a spin off, by simply taking blood, we hope to now be able to identify if a child will develop diabetes.”

The pancreas of diabetics stops producing the hormone insulin, which is needed to control blood sugar.

Professor Thomas said the test would target families with a history of the disease, with the aim of picking up other children at risk.

“We are in a position to really investigate why the immune system loses control before the disease starts. That fundamental understanding will bring the vaccines of the future,” she said.

Two large earthquakes have occurred in quick succession in Sumatra, Western Indonesia, only months after experts publicly identified the area as a high-risk zone.

The quakes, which were measured at 7.5 and 7.0 on the Richter scale and caused significant damage and at least three deaths between them, occurred in February precisely in the regions pinpointed by researchers from UQ’s Earth Systems Science Computational Centre (ESSCC).

The successful forecast is the latest in a string of accurate predictions the group has made using pioneering computer simulation software.

In December last year, centre scientist Dr Huilin Xing presented related research at the 40th annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union to much international interest.

“The successful predictions so far have demonstrated the capability of our software, which has already drawn the attention of earthquake scientists from around the world,” Dr Xing said.

Building on this work, Dr Xing and team member Dr Can Yin are continuing to apply the modelling software to the southern Indonesian region that has become notorious since the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

With the Eurasian and Indian/Australian tectonic plates converging just off the coast, Sumatran waters will likely be the site of seismic activity for some time to come.

“The question is how big and where it will happen in the near future, and whether it will induce a deadly tsunami,” Dr Xing said.

In the meantime, ESSCC researchers will continue to perfect simulation software and the prediction process, hoping to contribute to significant improvements in the area.

“As we gain more experience and confidence in the process, we will no doubt work towards a more accurate and reliable earthquake forecasting platform,” he said.
OUTWITTING PHOBIAS

UQ researchers have unlocked new evidence that could help them get to the bottom of our most common phobias and their causes – and they’re looking for volunteers to test their findings.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians count snakes and spiders among their worst fears and, while scientists have assumed an evolutionary response is responsible, a team from the School of Psychology look to have proved otherwise.

According to Dr Helena Purkis, the results of the study could provide an unprecedented insight into why the creepy creatures are so despised.

“The past, this has been explained by saying that people are predisposed to fear certain things such as snakes and spiders that would have been dangerous to our ancestors.

“However, people tend to be exposed to a lot of negative information regarding snakes and spiders and we argue this makes them more likely to be associated with phobia.”

In the study, researchers compared the responses to stimuli of participants with no particular experience with snakes and spiders, to those with an expert knowledge of the animals.

“Previous research has argued that snakes and spiders attract preferential attention (they capture attention very quickly) and that during this early processing a negative response is generated,” Dr Purkis said.

“We showed that although everyone preferentially attends to snakes or spiders in the environment as they are potentially dangerous, only inexperienced participants display a negative response.”

The study is the first to establish a clear difference between preferential attention and the accompanying emotional response, and could significantly increase understanding of the cognitive and emotional processes involved.

Researchers are now seeking volunteers for a follow-up study, which will test their theory that love and fear, or phobia, involve the same basic attention mechanism.

The trial calls for people who work with or own dogs, cats, horses, cattle, snakes and spiders and also general members of the public who will form a control group.

INFO ➔ To learn more about the project or to register your interest, visit http://experiment.psy.uq.edu.au/fear

The University’s Centre for Native Floriculture (CNF) has developed an interactive CD-ROM to give potential growers and distributors of native flowers a head start on their business.

The resource is the first in a series of scenario-based interactive CDs that are being developed by the CNF, based at UQ’s Gatton campus.

Features include embedded information and website links, an overview of the equipment, capital and operating costs involved, and a “what if” function showing the effects of changes in price and production on business cash flow.

INFO ➔ Potential and current growers interested in obtaining a copy can contact Margaret Cover on (07) 5460 1307 or m.cover@uq.edu.au

DELICATE BUSINESS

The extraordinary results of an in utero stem cell treatment could lead to a new treatment for babies with brittle bones, as well as a range of other conditions.

Action Medical Research has announced the outcomes of an Imperial College London study, led by Professor Nicholas Fisk, that could lead to a stem cell treatment for babies with brittle bones – before they are even born.

Professor Fisk, who now heads the new $66m UQ Centre for Clinical Research, said the work held potential for improving treatment of other disabling conditions such as muscular dystrophy and congenital brain diseases.

Brittle bone disease or Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) affects babies while still in the womb.

The trial calls for people who work with or own dogs, cats, horses, cattle, snakes and spiders and also general members of the public who will form a control group.

The results, published recently in the journal Blood, suggest the treatment could be translated to human babies in pregnancies affected by OI.

LAWYERS LAND FINES

Poorly performing Queensland lawyers are usually fined for their actions – an inadequate response, according to a study of the state’s legal disciplinary proceedings.

The review of cases heard between 2001-2005 found quality of service and negligence charges had increased to 36 percent – a 10 point rise in as many years.

UQ graduate Dr Linda Haller and Dr Heather Green found the most common charges related to abuse of trust accounts, quality of service, conflict of interest and costs.


Dr Haller said disciplinary “scolding” gave an impression of adequate punishment, which in reality lacked substance.

“Despite the legislation being amended in 1997 to allow for discipline for incompetence, neglect and overcharging, lawyers in Queensland continued to be most likely to face discipline when their conduct was considered disgraceful or dishonourable by fellow lawyers.

“There’s been a lot of regulation of lawyers but whether it’s been efficiently used is another thing.”

INDUSTRY IN BLOOM

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RESEARCH PROBES TROOP HEALTH

The Centre for Military and Veterans’ Health (CMVH) has launched its largest study into the wellbeing of returned Australian troops.

CMVH researchers will use a survey to examine the physical, emotional and environmental effects on 12,000 current and former personnel who served in East Timor and Bougainville.

The study is the third phase of the Australian Defence Force (ADF)-funded Deployment Health Surveillance Program (DHSP), which will inform the health needs of former, current and future soldiers.

CMVH is a consortium of The University of Queensland, University of Adelaide and Charles Darwin University that seeks solutions to military and veterans’ health issues through research, education, e-health and public debate.

“Our aim is to provide a snapshot of the overall health of deployed personnel, in comparison with a non-deployed group and the general Australian population,” DHSP Head Associate Professor Susan Treloar said.

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Three University of Queensland research teams are involved in an $8.8 million AusAID initiative to improve the quality and effectiveness of Australia’s overseas aid.

The new program will fund research aimed at providing decision-makers with practical solutions to the most difficult development challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.

The first project, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, will analyse the opinions and experiences of Australians involved in disaster response overseas and consists of Professor Richard Taylor, Dr Bronwen Blake and Dr Fernanda Claudio.

The second study tackles HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea by investigating male circumcision and vaginal microbicides as preventative methods in men and women at high risk of infection.

Dr Andrew Vallely leads the research team, which also includes Professor Gail Williams, Associate Professor Peter Hill and Dr Megan Jennaway.

The third project will span five countries – Samoa, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati – as it strengthens cause of death and mortality reporting in Pacific Island health information systems. School of Population Health Head Professor Alan Lopez, Professor Taylor, Dr Chalapati Rao and Ms Karen Carter will work on the project.

Professor Lopez said AusAID’s funding of the initiatives was a “major success” for those involved and the University at large.

“This reflects the very significant efforts made by the School in recent years to develop a world-class research program in international health,” he said.

“Strategic recruitment of academics, targeted investment in particular fields of research and the excellent leadership of Professor Taylor have helped build real strengths in the public health priorities of Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.”

The School won three of the 27 grants recently awarded, which were selected from more than 500 applications.

Law school head a judicious choice

Professor Ross Grantham has been appointed the new Head of the TC Beirne School of Law at The University of Queensland.

Professor Grantham is an internationally recognised scholar who first joined UQ in 2004 as Professor of Commercial Law and was subsequently appointed Deputy Head of School.

Professor Grantham is a graduate of Auckland and Oxford Universities, as well as The University of Queensland, where he was recently awarded a Doctor of Laws. He is also admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand.

He said he was looking forward to meeting the challenges that lay ahead in leading one of Australia’s premier law schools.

“We now have at UQ just about everything we need to be an outstanding law school — a very able and talented group of staff, gifted students, a fantastically supportive local profession and a Vice-Chancellor committed to our success. The challenge for me is to make the most of these assets.”

Before coming to Queensland, Professor Grantham held positions as Professor of Commercial Law, Head of Department and Deputy Director of the Research Centre for Business Law at the University of Auckland.

He is widely published in the legal field, a member of the editorial board of The Company Lawyer and The Journal of Corporate Law Studies and Australian editor of The Journal of Business Law.

Professor Grantham replaces Professor Charles Rickert in the position.
new pharma hub

A NEW UQ CENTRE WILL FORM A KEY PART OF AUSTRALIA’S HEALTH AND PHARMACEUTICAL ANSWER TO THE SILICON VALLEY.

The $120 million first stage of the Pharmacy Australia Centre of Excellence (PACE), will ease a chronic shortage of pharmacists and help improve health care nationally and globally.

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh inspected the 1.7ha PACE site last month and said Queensland was about to realise a plan to lead the nation in bringing pharmacy education, research and industry together in one location.

“The University of Queensland will be the first cab off the rank with the relocation of its internationally recognised School of Pharmacy to the precinct and a ramping up of its research into the Quality Use of Medicines,” Ms Bligh said.

A first for the Asia-Pacific region, PACE will combine Australia’s leading pharmacy educators and researchers with key professional organisations and commercial research and development groups.

UQ’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Development) Professor Trevor Grigg said the Queensland Government made PACE possible by donating the land – which adjoins the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane – in 2001. Construction follows an agreement between UQ and Aba Capital Partners.

“The location has risen in strategic importance since the Government donated the land. It is now part of what will become a concentrated health and pharmaceutical version of Silicon Valley.”

“PACE will be a stone’s throw from the planned Translational Research Institute, which will house UQ’s Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine and scientists from the Mater Medical Research Institute, Queensland University of Technology and the Princess Alexandra Hospital,” Professor Grigg said.

UQ’s School of Pharmacy will move into Stage One, which is scheduled for completion in 2010. In anticipation of PACE’s extra capacity, UQ has increased new pharmacy student enrolments from 185 in 2006 to 246 in 2008. Numbers will continue growing in order to ease a widespread shortage of pharmacists that is estimated to reach 3000 nationally in 2010.

“Optimal health care requires multi-professional education, as well as more graduates, and that is facilitated by co-locating education and research for health professionals in a centre such as this,” Professor Grigg said.

Other confirmed PACE partners and future tenants include The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia and the Australian Institute of Pharmacy Management.

Stage one will cover 10,155 square metres and include lab space, a 360 seat lecture theatre, other teaching facilities, offices and basement parking.

Subsequent stages are planned to incorporate up to 30,000 square metres to accommodate entities involved in health and pharmaceutical research and development.

— FIONA KENNEDY AND ANDREW DUNNE

Premier Anna Bligh and machinery operator Stephen Jorgensen at the PACE construction site.

BEQUEST FUNDS MOTOR NEURON RESEARCH CENTRE

UQ’s newest brain disorder research lab was opened last month in honour of the self-made millionaire Peter Goodenough, who lost his life to motor neuron disease (MND).

Mr Goodenough bequeathed more than $6 million to the Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) to help find a cure for MND.

MND is a group of disorders which causes muscle wasting and the loss of nerve cells that control speech, swallowing and respiration.

Queensland Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry Desley Boyle officially opened the Peter Goodenough and Wantoks Research Laboratory, on level six of UQ’s QBI.

Wantoks means close friends or relatives in pidgin English — a reference to Mr Goodenough’s time in Papua New Guinea and his three pet dogs and “best mates” whom he wanted recognised.

Ms Boyle said philanthropy was one way to boost Queensland’s low investment in research and development in comparison with other states.

Mr Goodenough’s bequest is the single largest donation to UQ from an individual.

The lab was completed in November 2007 and is now home to the Molecular Genetics of Human Disease team led by QBI’s Dr Robyn Wallace.

QBI Director Professor Perry Bartlett said Mr Goodenough’s unprecedented support would allow QBI and Australia to lead the world in discovering new therapeutic treatments for MND.

“Because discoveries can, and often do, come from unexpected areas of research, we must continue to pursue a multifaceted and strategic approach as there are so few clues as to what causes MND and currently no therapies to reverse the effects of the disease or to prevent its progression,” Professor Bartlett said.

In honouring the Goodenough legacy, Professor Bartlett said scientist and former Australian of the Year Sir Gustav Nossal would deliver the inaugural Peter Goodenough Lecture on July 15.

Three fully-funded scholarships for Papua New Guinean students studying engineering, law and neuroscience were also announced in Mr Goodenough’s honour.

Dr Wallace said she believed it would be at least a decade before a MND treatment became available.

— MIGUEL HOLLAND
Two University of Queensland researchers have joined elite company after being elected Fellows of the Australian Academy of Science.

Professor Peter Koopman and Professor John Mattick AO, both from the Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB), were recognised by the academy for significantly advancing the world’s scientific knowledge.

Professor Koopman was elected for his work on mammalian embryonic development, while Professor Mattick was acknowledged for research into the structure of genetic systems in higher organisms.

“I am proud and delighted, but not surprised, that professors Koopman and Mattick have been honoured in this way,” IMB Director Professor Brandon Wainwright said.

“They are both outstanding researchers whose discoveries have fundamentally altered their fields of science.”

Professor Koopman was part of the team that discovered the SRY gene that determines gender in mammals, hailed as one of the most important breakthroughs of the 20th century.

In addition to this discovery, Professor Koopman and his colleagues have also identified a large number of important genes such as Sox9, a critical gene for skeletal development, and Sox18, which controls blood vessel and lymphatic development.

Professor Koopman currently holds an Australian Research Council (ARC) Federation Fellowship and has received numerous awards including the 2007 GlaxoSmithKline Award for Research Excellence.

Meanwhile, Professor Mattick’s research is challenging the orthodox view that 95 percent of our DNA is accumulated evolutionary “junk” and serves no purpose. Instead, he is showing that it consists of a hidden layer of gene regulation that directs the development of complex organisms.

Both an Officer of the Order of Australia and an ARC Federation Fellow, Professor Mattick was a founding director of the IMB and has steered it from being a fledging institute to one of the country’s leading molecular research centres.

An Adjunct Professor in the School of Medicine at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital, Professor Nick Martin, was also elected to the Academy for his work on the genetics of human behaviour and complex diseases.

Innovative gene research involving scientists from the Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine has been singled out by the world’s most prestigious scientific journals.

Professor Matthew Brown’s work with the Wellcome Trust Case Control Consortium on isolating genes that cause some of the most common hereditary diseases, including diabetes and arthritis, has been selected as “Breakthrough of the Year” in Science and an “Editor’s Favourite” in Nature.

Professor Brown was one of the principal investigators in the study – the biggest of its kind – that will allow researchers to pinpoint who is at most risk from the diseases and could also lead to better treatments.

The study represented a landmark in genetic studies of human diseases, as it demonstrated a method that could be applied to common conditions to successfully identify the genes involved.

The team isolated at least 25 genes that cause seven of the most common hereditary diseases, including diabetes and arthritis.

The genes are also responsible for heart disease, hypertension, Crohn’s disease, bipolar disorder and rheumatoid arthritis, according to results published last year in Nature.

Another 58 genes with possible links to the same family of diseases have also been uncovered by British and Australian scientists working on the $16.6 million (£7 million) study.

The project was named by Scientific American as “Research Leader of the Year” and by the American Heart Association as one of the “Top 10 Major Advances in Heart Disease and Stroke”.

Professor Brown leads the Musculoskeletal Genetics Group at the Diamantina Institute and is an expert in rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis, which is a type of inflammatory arthritis that stiffens joints and can damage the eyes and heart.

“Receiving accreditation from industry associations ensures our graduates are practicing at the highest level possible and that industry standards are maintained.”

PACFA promotes the development of professional psychotherapy and counselling practice in Australia, providing industry news, useful guidelines for practitioners and a national register of counsellors and psychotherapists.

The two-year Masters program, established in 2004, is offered through the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and provides students with the in-depth knowledge and practical skills needed to become a professional counsellor.

The coursework aims to ensure the quality and competence of counselling graduates who will serve individuals, couples, families and groups in the community.

INFO ➔ Contact (07) 3365 2068 or visit www.uq.edu.au/swahs
Recent research has identified a completely new type of vision never seen before in the animal world – and it probably comes down to sex.

Professor Justin Marshall, from UQ’s School of Biomedical Sciences and the Queensland Brain Institute, has found the common mantis shrimp sees light in a way that is vastly different to other animals, including humans.

“We are sensitive to light intensity and colour but we need cameras and filters to allow us to see different types of light,” Professor Marshall said.

“To find out these animals can see circular polarised light, it is as if we had discovered colour vision for the first time – it is quite a breakthrough.”

What puzzled Professor Marshall after making the discovery was working out what the unique talent was used for.

“After doing a number of tests over the years looking at the physiology and behaviour of mantis shrimps, we have come to the conclusion it is used for sex,” he said.

“It is probably some secret communication channel between males and females, while at the same time preventing predators from knowing what was going on.”

He said the mantis shrimp was an amazing animal as it had a very small brain but one of the world’s most complex visual systems.

“Humans only have three colour channels,” he said.

“These little guys have 12 and can see both linear and circular polarised light – it is remarkable.”

Circular polarisation is used by humans in things such as 3D glasses for movies, filters for cameras and medical imaging systems to detect skin cancer.

“It’s quite amazing to think how much circular polarisation technology we have and that 400 million years ago nature got there first with a mantis shrimp’s eyes,” Professor Marshall said.

Full findings from the research can be found in the March edition of the Current Biology journal.

While most university students were relaxing over the Christmas break, two UQ scholarship holders were busy monitoring Queensland’s marine habitats.

With financial support from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F), Marine Blancher and Ashleigh Fowler have been working on key research projects while completing their studies.

Fisheries Deputy-Director General Grant Hall, who presented the students with their scholarships in March, said the initiative was important in developing young talent in the science sector.

“Queensland’s commercial, recreational and traditional fishing sectors rely on undeveloped coastal marine fish habitats. This scholarship program further highlights the importance of marine fish habitats to fisheries management, not only within the department but throughout the State,” Mr Hall said.

“Through this initiative we hope to foster and encourage new research on marine fish habitats and support our future scientists in their studies,”

The program has been in place for the past three years and provides up to $10,000 toward scientific research on marine fish habitats. The scholarships are awarded annually as a part of a five-year agreement between DPI&F and the University, and foster important research linked to fish habitat management needs in Queensland.

“The findings from the two research projects will ultimately help long-term decisions about the sustainable management, protection and development of fisheries and fish habitats in Queensland’s waters,” Mr Hall said.

A remote-controlled plane is the latest hi-tech tool being trialled to count dugongs and whales in Moreton Bay.

Led by Dr Amanda Hodgson and Dr Mike Noad from UQ’s Centre for Marine Studies, the research team are investigating whether Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) fitted with specialised video cameras are a better way to count migrating marine mammal numbers.

The three-metre-long aircraft costs about $100,000, has a wingspan of five metres and a top speed of 200 kilometres an hour.

Key questions include whether the drone can replace manned aircraft to reduce costs, human risk and animal disturbance, while improving animal detection and identification.

Dr Hodgson said aerial surveys of humpbacks off North Stradbroke Island were due for July this year, with dugong counts in Moreton Bay and Hervey Bay planned for October.

The team has partnered with local UAV business Aerocam Australia on the test flights, with the $87,000 project funded by the Federal Government, James Cook University and the University of Newcastle.

Fisheries future assured
EQUITY NETWORK
Do you have a commitment to social justice and equity issues?
The University is seeking staff interested in becoming Discrimination and Harassment Contact Officers (DHCOS).

DHCOS are trained staff who have a commitment to fairness, a desire to assist people resolve conflict, an interest in supporting the elimination of discrimination and harassment and the capacity to deal with confidential, often complex interpersonal matters.
INFO ➔ If you or a colleague is interested in attending an upcoming training session, please contact equity@uq.edu.au or visit www.uq.edu.au/equity and click the “Contact Officers” link for further details.

NEW TEACHING TOOL
UQ has invested in a University-wide LabVIEW software site license to support teaching and research.

The software can acquire data from most sources and be used in experiments in fields as diverse as mechanics, human movements and structural engineering.

Staff can use LabVIEW to interface with real-world signals, analyse data and share results through intuitive displays, reports and the Internet.
INFO ➔ Training sessions will be conducted at UQ later this year, with dates yet to be confirmed. For further enquiries contact Ray White (ray.white@uq.edu.au) or visit www.its.uq.edu.au.

CONTROLLED RELEASE
A team of UQ experts helped establish the Australian Chapter of the Controlled Release Society (AUS-CRS) at the organisation’s inaugural meeting in Sydney.

More than 100 participants with an interest in controlled release science – the study of targeted therapeutic agents and drug delivery – attended the event, with the executive including several UQ representatives.

Professor Istvan Toth (School of Molecular and Microbial Sciences) was elected during the meeting as President, with Dr Pavla Simerska (SMMS) appointed Scientific Secretary and Associate Professor Allan Coombes (School of Pharmacy) named Secretary.

KIDS LEARN LIFE SKILLS

Researchers from The University of Queensland are offering parents practical ways to help their kids learn the skills of life.

Fiona Graham, from the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, said children sometimes struggled to learn the basic skills and routines essential to managing everyday life, such as getting ready for school or learning to play with peers.

“Being successful at leisure tasks is also important for children’s healthy development but milestones such as learning to ride a bike do not just happen for some children,” Ms Graham said.

“Parents do their best to support their children to learn new skills but knowing what to do is not always easy.”

Ms Graham said a parent coaching study was planned for 2008, investigating an intervention in which parents learned how to recognise their children’s specific learning needs and what to do to help them build on current skills.

“Parents will very much be 'partners' with the therapist in this intervention of discovery and learning,” she said.

“Successful UQ equity initiatives include 26 and a range of scholarship, fellowship and return to work schemes.

Staff are also encouraged to access the Senior Women Seminar Series and the Edna program, which provides peer guidance on career and advancement issues.

Professor Keniger said the University was focused on boosting the number of women occupying top academic and administrative roles – one of the key priorities in the current UQ Equity and Diversity Plan.

UQ has held the EOCFW award since 2002, with the new citation valid until February next year.

Organisations whose policies and workplace culture support and promote women and educate against discrimination are eligible to receive the endorsement, with 10 organisations in Queensland singled out this year.

The achievements and contributions of women and the wider UQ community will be the focus of this year’s Diversity Week celebrations, which take place from May 12-16 under the theme “The Spirit of Diversity”.
INFO ➔ www.uq.edu.au/diversity-week

EOCA Employer of Choice for Women

women CHOOSE UQ

Proactive equity strategies have earned UQ an Employer of Choice for Women (EOCFW) citation for the seventh consecutive year.

Released by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) in advance of International Women’s Day, the accreditation is held by fewer than 100 organisations nation wide.

UQ Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Michael Keniger, whose portfolio includes equity matters, said the citation was a “stamp of approval” for ongoing work in the area.

“The University of Queensland actively supports and advances the needs of women workers and this latest achievement is proof of our commitment,” Professor Keniger said.

“We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and will continue to improve services and opportunities available to our female staff.”

Successful UQ equity initiatives include 26 weeks’ paid maternity leave after 12 months of service, flexible working arrangements and a range of scholarship, fellowship and return to work schemes.

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The achievements and contributions of women and the wider UQ community will be the focus of this year’s Diversity Week celebrations, which take place from May 12-16 under the theme “The Spirit of Diversity”.
INFO ➔ www.uq.edu.au/diversity-week
What do exploding stars, gender equality and Ultimate Frisbee have in common? Usually not much, unless you are Dr Tamara Davis.

The University of Queensland researcher is a new addition to the School of Physical Sciences, where she is using her knowledge of galaxies and supernovae to study the expansion of the Universe.

Dr Davis came to UQ in February after a two-year stint at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, to work on a project called WiggleZ. Rather than studying four skivvy-wearing children’s entertainers, Dr Davis will be examining the “bumps and wiggles” in the pattern of galaxies we see in the sky and using the findings to measure how quickly the Universe is expanding.

Her project tries to measure the mysterious dark energy that seems to be causing the Universe to expand at an accelerating rate.

Dr Davis said dark energy, jokingly known as “the dark side of the Force”, was a relatively new discovery in astrophysics that cosmologists were still struggling to understand.

The idea that the Universe’s expansion is accelerating seems to fly in the face of everything physicists thought they knew about gravity.

“It’s as though a ball thrown in the air has accelerated into space instead of falling back to Earth,” Dr Davis said.

“It may mean that Einstein’s Theory of Relativity needs revision, or that the Universe is filled with some sort of substance with anti-gravity.”

Dr Davis and the astrophysics team at UQ are trying to figure out which.

While these concepts seem far beyond the realms of everyday, Earth-bound life, Dr Davis said her projects potentially had very practical results.

“We’re trying to get down to the nuts and bolts of how the Universe works. At this moment we have no idea how the findings will be relevant to life on Earth but past examples of discoveries like this have resulted in unforeseen applications like electricity and nuclear power,” she said.

“We’ve got the Universe accelerating without any currently identified energy source, so maybe in the future we will be able to harness this as some sort of green energy to benefit humankind. “I think the possibility of a clean source of fuel is one of the things that makes this kind of fundamental research worth doing.”

While women are increasingly well represented in many areas of academia, Dr Davis said astrophysics was still a male-dominated field, with just 15% of researchers being female.

“I had been working in the field for about four years and published with about 40 different authors before I published with another female,” she said.

But Dr Davis said her male colleagues have never made her feel “anything but welcome” and she was drawn to astrophysics from her first forays into university study.

“Doing physics gave me the most options, it was a nice, flexible degree,” she said.

“Each step of the way it was the most interesting thing to do so I kept doing it.”

When she’s not unlocking the secrets of the Universe, Dr Davis plays Ultimate Frisbee, a non-contact team sport played with a flying disc.

She represented Australia in the sport at the World Championships in Germany in 2000 and Finland in 2004.

INFO ➔ www.physics.uq.edu.au/ap

~ TEGAN TAYLOR
Celebrate the Spirit of Diversity at UQ

The University of Queensland will hold its annual Diversity Week celebrations from May 12-16, 2008.

This year's theme, The Spirit of Diversity, calls for acknowledgement of our differences while searching for and building on what binds us together as human beings.

Members of the wider UQ community are encouraged to organise and participate in the free program of events, which includes the Vice-Chancellor's Equity and Diversity Awards on May 14.

For further information and to find out ways in which you can get involved, visit www.uq.edu.au/diversity-week

DIVERSITY WEEK
May 12-16, 2008  www.uq.edu.au/diversity-week
STUDENTS STRUT THEIR STUFF

A group of business students made the most of an unusual work experience offer when they helped out at the Myer Autumn Season Launch.

Public Relations and Events Manager for Myer Queensland Cate Gazal said the students’ contribution was invaluable in making the event a success.

“The students were a credit to themselves and the UQ Business School. They were enthusiastic in doing everything that was asked of them and added great value to the event,” Ms Gazal said.

“The opportunity to be engaged in the organisational process of such an event can also open doors for the students in terms of future work projects.”

Chloe George, Bachelor of Business Communication student

Jasmine Foo said being involved with the launch gave a rare insight into how the fashion world works.

“The hands-on experience and the fact that we were participating in so many aspects of the show was an eye-opener into the industry,” she said.

Jacqueline Moore, a Bachelor of Business student majoring in Event Management, was also enthusiastic about the experience.

“Fashion events contain so much planning that is easily forgotten and my eyes were opened to realise how many people were involved and the different types of preparation required for such an event.”

Dr Marie-Louise Fry, senior lecturer in Advertising and Public Relations, said such opportunities were a great way to gain exposure to industry practice and a better working knowledge of event management.

— TRISHA BARBOUR

Halting human traffic

Thirteen UQ law students have formed a human trafficking working group to provide recommendations to the Federal Government on the issue.

The volunteer group was created by Dr Andreas Schloenhardt, senior lecturer at UQ’s TC Beirne School of Law, in collaboration with a similar group from the University of British Columbia, Canada.

“A recent prosecution in Far North Queensland for sexual servitude and the discovery of 10 Korean ‘sex slaves’ in Sydney are evidence that non-citizens are at particular risk, regardless of their legal status in Australia,” Dr Schloenhardt said.

“Whilst widespread anecdotal evidence of the sexual exploitation of foreign workers in Queensland exists, there has so far been no comprehensive analysis of this problem.

“This initiative provides the first comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in Australia.

“It identifies and analyses reported and suspected cases of human trafficking where Australia has been the destination, transit, and/or source country.”

The group will meet once a week and work closely with government departments, law enforcement agencies and international organisations in Australia and abroad.

The students have already hosted guest speakers from Queensland Police and the Prostitution Licensing Authority, and plan to raise the issue of trafficking with other agencies in Queensland and Canberra.

Dr Schloenhardt said the working group, modelled on similar collectives existing in North American law schools, enabled students to have a meaningful impact on legal issues.

He said the model developed from the initiative would be used in future projects on contemporary legal issues and in developing a prototype for new academic courses involving team-based, long-term research.

“The analysis will enable us to develop effective policy recommendations to prevent and suppress this problem,” Dr Schloenhardt said.

— EMMA YOUNG

Pitch perfect

UQ PhD students and academics will learn more about getting great ideas into the market place at UniQuest’s annual research commercialisation workshops.

The two-day training events are held between April 17-18 and May 1-2 at the Novotel Twin Waters Resort on the Sunshine Coast and will feature creative group-work sessions and pitching practice with industry professionals.

After attending the event in 2006, Dr Darren Martin from the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology said the experience had an impact on the commercial development of his thermoplastic elastomers project (featured in this month’s Shortcuts).

“The workshop helped me to understand what I was committing to and what the potential rewards might be, and now the project is being reported on Daily Planet, a program on Canada’s Discovery Channel,” Dr Martin said.

As UQ’s main commercialisation company and the largest Australian technology transfer organisation, UniQuest offers workshop participants a rare opportunity to gain practical insights into commercialising their expertise.

UniQuest Managing Director David Henderson said the success of the initiative had been high, with more than 500 UQ researchers attending the workshops in the past five years.
With the help of a dedicated staff team, UQ cut an impressive 14 per cent of its daily electricity usage during Earth Hour on March 29.

Follow up figures were also promising, with energy savings boosted by almost seven per cent across the University’s operations a week after the event.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Greenfield AO said that UQ was proud to be among the Australian and international organisations who took part in the annual event, which helps raise awareness about energy conservation and climate change.

On 8pm on March 29, cities around the world turned off their lights for one hour to show it was possible to take action on global warming. Last year the first Earth Hour was held in Sydney, reducing the city’s energy consumption by 10.2 percent for one hour.

Non-essential lighting was turned off at UQ locations including St Lucia, Gatton and Ipswich campuses, the Indooroopilly Mine, Medical School at Herston, and the Moreton Bay and Heron Island Research Stations.

“We also encouraged staff to turn off their computers, monitors and associated equipment and lights in their work spaces before leaving work on the Friday prior, and this included laboratories, workshops, meeting rooms, kitchens and hallways,” Professor Greenfield said.

UQ is among Australian university leaders in developing green credentials and recently became one of the first to draw its electricity from renewable energy sources. It signed up to use 2.5 percent GreenPower, which will save 3400 tonnes of CO2 this year – enough to run about 580 homes every month.

The University has also reduced its water consumption by 50 percent since 2004 and its Green Office program has resulted in a 47 percent reduction in the amount of recyclable material going to landfill (2002-2007).

UQ SWITCHES OFF

Rising sea levels from global warming will threaten the livelihoods and homes of more than 200,000 people who live on coral atolls in coming generations.

The warning comes from UQ archaeologist and expert on the prehistoric use of coral atolls, Dr Marshall Weisler (pictured), who said the Central Pacific islands of Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, as well as the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, were most at risk.

Dr Weisler said the situation was more serious than people realised with agricultural land already being lost to rising seas in the Marshall Islands.

“People have shown me where there used to be gardens are now lagoons. There are coconut trees that are 20 metres off shore, half-falling over,” Dr Weisler said.

“In Kiribati, there are high tides that inundate portions of villages, so people are on dry land in the morning and on stilt house villages with water under their house during high lunar tides.

“There are very serious problems for the next generation, which may not even be able to live on the island that they are living on now.”

The International Panel on Climate Change has predicted sea levels could rise between nine and 88 centimetres this century.

Atolls are at risk because they are small coral islands, barely metres above current sea levels.

Dr Weisler said predicting sea level rises was complex as waters could rise by different levels and have different effects, depending on the atoll location.

He said island nations would face tough decisions in the future about land ownership, economic futures and relocating entire countries within other nations.

“In Kiribati, where is the next generation going to live?” he said.

Dr Weisler said he hoped Japan’s Ministry of Environment would continue to fund further studies into the sustainability of reef islands.

He spoke about the prehistoric history of coral atolls at an atoll management conference at the University of Tokyo in February with some of Japan’s leading experts in the area.

The group recommended there be more study into the adaptive capacity of atoll islands, more modelling on atoll development and more public awareness of the current situation.

“The people on these islands have a small voice because they are not Western, industrialised countries with high populations. People aren’t paying attention to them,” Dr Weisler said.

– MIGUEL HOLLAND

ISLANDS ON THE EDGE

“There are very serious problems for the next generation which may not even be able to live on the island that they are living on now.”

CHRIS STACEY
Mining natural resources

Staff from the Indooroopilly Experimental Mine site are observing with delight the return of native fauna as an extensive revegetation project continues to see results.

UQ is into the second year of a seven-year landscape management plan for the site, which was originally a working silver and lead mine.

Senior Supervisor of Grounds Shane Biddle said it was an exciting project with the University working in close partnership with local environmental groups.

"Over the years, a number of pest plant species have colonised the site, ranging from stands of Chinese elms and camphor laurels to thick infestations of asparagus fern, cat's claw creeper, lantana and duranta," he said.

"The landscape management plan divides the site into 11 management areas and we’re looking to reduce fire hazard risks, erosion and control weed populations, while identifying and encouraging native flora and fauna on site.

"The plan also proposes strategies to unify the site with regional fauna and flora corridors."

The University is helping to maintain the plantings by installing 30,000 litres of rainwater tanks on site, with another 10,000 litre tank to be installed, and by extensive mulching of the gardens.

Specialist gardener Mr Phil MacDonald, himself a UQ Bachelor of Applied Science graduate, said the University’s Experimental Mine was a significant inner-urban bushland site that provided a link between remnant vegetation on the Brisbane River and the Mt Coot-tha forest.

"Native wildlife observed by staff and students on site have included carpet snakes, Burton’s lizard snake, white-headed pigeons, eastern whipbirds, king parrots, a swamp wallaby, tawny frogmouth owls and pheasant coucals," Mr MacDonald said.

INFO ➔ Members of the community who would like to assist in the project can contact Mr Biddle on (07) 3365 2280.

– JAN KING

Sound experiment

The first cohort of UQ Bachelor of Biomedical Science students received a taste of what lay ahead when they gathered for a day of hands on experiments recently.

From determining the velocity of nerve signals in toads to calculating the speed of sound across the Great Court, the young scholars were shown a snapshot of the new research-focused program.

Program Director Associate Professor Peter Thorn said the day’s activities – centred on the theme of “reaction time” – represented the first of many opportunities that will set the degree apart from others.

"The idea is that students will take part in activities that introduce them to the process of science research," Dr Thorn said.

"While we have similar courses to those in the Bachelor of Science, we have supplemented them with a range of additional activities that will have a research focus, of which our introductory day was the first."

Kicking off their time in the University’s research-rich environment on a high note, the students were also the first to use the new world-class Science Learning Centre in St Lucia’s Priestley Building.

"While students will begin with courses providing a broad foundation in the biomedical sciences, they will later choose from specialisations that include things like neuroscience, human genetics, physiology, pharmacology, immunology and infectious diseases and molecular and cellular biology," Dr Thorn said.

"We do have a research focus that builds on the research expertise of UQ scientists and will see our students ideally equipped for a career in science research."

For now though, the opening intake of 139 biomedical students will be keenly focusing on the lessons from their debut experiments.

They found that reaction times are dominated by the time it takes for the brain to process information. Dr Thorn said it was a fitting introduction to the type of work they will complete during their degrees.

"Additionally, unlike the Bachelor of Science which runs for three years, the Bachelor of Biomedical Science is a four-year program that includes an honours project," he said.

"For this final year, honours year students will be embedded in a lab and undertake a detailed research project."

– LUCY MANDERSON
Teaching a top priority at UQ

A passionate teacher with a strong profile in educational research is the new leader of UQ’s Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI).

Professor Merrilyn Goos took over as Director of TEDI on February 1, and at a time when increasing emphasis is being placed on teaching and learning, her role will no doubt be a challenging one.

“The teaching and learning landscape is changing, both inside and outside the University,” Professor Goos said.

When Professor Paul Greenfield took over as UQ’s Vice-Chancellor at the start of the year, his first major administrative move was to create the portfolio of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), confirming he too considers this area very important.

Professor Deborah Terry, who was appointed to the position, said she was pleased that someone with great enthusiasm for teaching and learning, as well as a high profile in academia, had been selected to lead TEDI.

“Professor Goos is a highly respected academic in education who brings considerable expertise and vision to the position,” Professor Terry said.

“I am looking forward to working closely with her in her new role.”

TEDI’s role is to provide support services and staff development opportunities that enhance teaching, learning and other aspects of educational development.

Professor Goos, whose career in education began in 1986, said she hoped to build on TEDI’s existing work with a focus on engagement.

Professor Goos succeeds Ms Beth Cavallari, who served as the Institute’s Acting Director for the past two years following the departure of long-serving Director Ms Denise Chalmers.

Career affair

When Charanpreet Soin attended the 2007 UQ Careers Fair she was there to work, not find a job; yet she now embodies the event’s success.

As a Student Ambassador with the Office of Marketing and Communications’ Student Recruitment team, Ms Soin’s day consisted mostly of fielding questions at the information desk and ensuring things ran smoothly.

“I was given some time off to explore the fair and inquire about possible jobs and opportunities within my field,” Ms Soin said.

“I met with numerous HR and company representatives, in particular Rose Boyd from Arup.”

As a final-year Environmental Management student, Ms Soin was particularly interested in Arup – a global firm of designers, engineers, planners and consultants.

“Arup has been instrumental in some of the world’s most impressive projects and is the creator of a growing number of them,” she said.

Ms Soin completed a month of work experience with Arup in June 2007 and was offered a position with the company’s graduate program in August.

She began working as a Graduate Sustainability Consultant in January 2008, and this year returned to the Careers Fair as a representative for the company.

“Our business is structured around teams, so graduates to senior leaders all work together in a supportive environment to achieve results, providing an advantage to our clients’ businesses and projects,” Ms Soin said.

“Highlights would have to include Arup’s global reputation and the opportunities to work on projects from around the world with people from numerous diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.”

And while Ms Soin is currently enjoying the challenges of her two-year graduate program, she has some admirable career aspirations.

“I am originally from Kenya, East Africa, and I would like to see sustainability brought into the culture and mindset of Africa,” she said.

“I also see myself undertaking a Masters degree somewhere down the line, possibly in Developmental Practice, focusing on sustainable living for developing countries.”

The 2008 Careers Fair, held on March 12, saw more than 5500 students meet with 178 exhibitors at the UQ Centre.

Dean of Students and Careers Fair organiser Dr Lisa Gaffney said UQ students had an excellent reputation with employers and many gained employment through the event.

“I find it very satisfying to see former students like Charanpreet find jobs at the fair and return in future years to represent their companies,” Dr Gaffney said.

– Penny Robinson
First Person

Research in practice: Dr Louise Kuchel tracking snow shoe hares in Canada

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Dr Louise Kuchel
Teaching-focused lecturer, School of Integrative Biology

I came to UQ from a stint in Canada, where my work was mostly research-based, primarily in the fields of animal physiology, ecology and biochemistry.

While overseas I worked on a variety of interesting projects, investigating topics from the field energetics of snow shoe hares (how do they stay warm in the Arctic winter?) to the disappearance of Pacific salmon stocks during their yearly migration from the ocean to freshwater spawning grounds.

I also have a UQ connection, completing my PhD on the Australian echidna here at the end of 2003 in an earlier reincarnation of the School of Integrative Biology (SIB).

This experience allows me to bring to my new position both a history with the school and its staff, as well as fresh ideas and influences from international research groups.

But what has all of this got to do with being a “teaching-focused” lecturer? Perhaps surprisingly, quite a lot. You may have noticed an increasing international rumble about the need to improve the quality, efficiency and attractiveness of science education at all levels.

There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the economies of countries such as Australia are becoming increasingly reliant on sectors that use scientific technology and knowledge. We are also living in an age where our societies are facing global issues (climate change and water quality and availability just to name a few) that require scientific understanding from the public if they are to be addressed. And thirdly, we have fewer young people choosing to study science subjects in high school, which in turn means falling numbers undertaking university degrees in the area and establishing scientific careers.

As a recent report from the American Research Corporation shows, these factors create a large disparity between supply and demand for scientists and the skills they possess.

As part of its commitment to address these issues, UQ has introduced a new type of lecturing position, and I jumped at the opportunity to apply. A teaching-focused lecturer differs from a traditional appointment by replacing their role in research with finding new ways to improve teaching and learning practice.

This approach involves making observations about teaching and learning, referring to existing knowledge on these topics and generating and testing questions and hypotheses. This differs from traditional education research because it upholds traditional scientific rigour while advocating a more “hands on” approach (keep an eye on UQ News for future examples of such projects).

An additional requirement is to remain current with research through supervision of postgraduate students, collaborative projects and conference attendance.

I do bring a bundle of enthusiasm and teaching experience with me to UQ, having taught in a wide variety of subjects and settings (field, lab and lecture). I have also been engaged in community outreach, most notably as a Scientist in Residence with the Vancouver School Board, where I helped to develop and deliver a series of inquiry-based science lessons with Grade 6 teachers.

I am delighted to return to UQ and warm and sunny Brisbane. I am especially delighted to be working amongst such a positive and experienced group of people and see my role here to be multifaceted: to be a conduit for good teaching practice and information within and outside the University; to develop and test new approaches to teaching science; and ultimately to be part of a team effort to lead UQ to the forefront of excellence in teaching and learning in Australia and abroad.

Thanking our donors

UO’s 2008 multi-faith Thanksgiving Service will honour 87 anatomy donors, the largest number in the event’s history.

The Thanksgiving Service will be held on Wednesday, May 7, at the UQ Centre from 5.30pm, and coincides with 40 years of Chaplaincy at UQ.

UQ Chaplaincy administrator the Reverend Peter Rama Rau said the event would be among anniversary highlights of the year for UQ’s Chaplaincy Services, which was formed on June 13, 1968.

Initially staffed by three Christian chaplains, Chaplaincy has now grown to become the UQ Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Services, representing the Buddhist, Christian, Islamic and Jewish faiths.

“Chaplaincy provides a model of the way different religious groups representing very different traditions can work together harmoniously, to provide services to the whole University community,” Rev Rama Rau said.

He will join with representatives of the local Christian and Jewish communities, together with staff and students to conduct this year’s event.

The UQ Thanksgiving Service organising committee chair is Leo Brown of the School of Biomedical Sciences.

“The gift of donors is important for the training of professional groups including medical, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, science, speech pathology and audiology, dentistry, pharmacy and human movement studies students,” Mr Brown said.

UQ has been holding the Thanksgiving Service since 1992, when it acknowledged all donors to the School of Biomedical Science’s Bequest Program since 1927.

INFO ➔ www.uq.edu.au/sbms/thanksgiving-service
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HANDS ON LEARNING

Two University of Queensland Mechanical Engineering students have swapped the lecture theatre for a palm oil mill in Papua New Guinea this semester.

Fourth-year students David Shaw and Adam Brown are working at New Britain Palm Oil Limited (NBPOL) as part of the Professional Engineering Placement Scholarship (PEPS) program.

Offered through the School of Engineering, the initiative allows students to put their engineering skills into practice in a range of workplaces while gaining credit towards their studies.

Mr Shaw said participating in PEPS had enabled him to see a different part of the world and gain valuable industry experience at the same time.

“Things are so different to Australia, so we had to adapt to a totally different way of working,” he said.

The young engineers are both completing research projects during their time in PNG which will benefit NBPOL’s operations.

Mr Shaw’s work involves optimising the operation of a screw press that extracts oil from the palm fruit, while Mr Brown is hoping to improve efficiency and lower production costs by harnessing energy currently being wasted through steam emissions.

NBPOL Senior Manager Mr Peter Morgan said it was great to have the students asking questions about the way the company did things.

Mr Morgan is himself a UQ engineering graduate and has lived on New Britain with his family for the past 11 years.

“This is our first collaboration with UQ, and we hope that it will be the start of many,” Mr Morgan said.

NBPOL is Papua New Guinea’s largest oil palm plantation and milling operator. Its core activity is the cultivation and processing of palm and kernel oils for sales to both domestic and foreign markets.

INFO ➔ Associate Professor Tony Howes (07) 3365 4262 or tonyh@cheque.uq.edu.au

– SUSAN DOEL

Sustainable resourcing

The new $7.8 million mineral research centre being built at UQ is expected to boost Queensland’s mineral production while cutting the state’s power use.

The Mineral Characterisation Research Facility (MCRF) will develop new processing technologies to increase metal production while reducing the amount of electricity needed for the process.

The centre will be located at the University’s experimental mine at Indocoppoly, which is home to one of Australia’s oldest mining research groups, the Julius Kruttschnitt Mineral Research Centre (JKMRC).

JKMRC Business manager Dr Leith Hayes said the three-storey facility would house research labs and office space for students and mining partners.

The Queensland Government will contribute $6.1 million to build the facility, which is the newest mineral characterisation centre in Australia and first in the state.

Commercial mining partners Xstrata Technology, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, Anglo Platinum, JKTech, Cytec Industries Inc and Metso Corporation together are contributing about $10 million in cash and equipment for research projects.

Queensland’s mining industry was worth $14.3 billion in 2004-05, accounting for about half the state’s exports.

The MCRF aims to increase Queensland mineral exports by $255 million, decrease carbon dioxide emissions from producing electricity for mining by 427,000 tonnes and reap $4.2 million in royalties within the next decade.

Dr Hayes said even small reductions in power use were significant, given mines used about 10 percent of all Queensland’s power.

She said the MCRF’s chemical flotation and mineral grinding techniques would help companies use less energy to recover more metal in a more environmentally friendly way and could be applied to most base metals, coal and gold.

The building has also been designed to be environmentally sustainable and will incorporate several architectural and electrical features to save power.

– MIGUEL HOLLAND
Gypsy soul

Gypsy music – whether playing or studying it – is something that takes up a significant amount of Michael Patterson’s time.

The UQ graduate (pictured), is a violinist with gypsy-style band Doch, and is also about to complete a Master of Philosophy in the area.

“My topic is concerned with the influence of Romanian folk music on the compositions of George Enescu, the most famous Romanian composer,” Mr Patterson said.

Doch is a seven-piece band that formed six years ago and has had considerable success in Australia and New Zealand, performing pieces originating from the Balkan region.

“The music we play comes from transcriptions of old folk music,” Mr Patterson said.

“One member of the band will listen and work out the notes and then teach the rest of us.”

Doch has performed at a several impressive venues and festivals, including the Brisbane Powerhouse, The Festival of Colour in Wanaka, New Zealand, the Woodford Folk Festival and the 2006 Big Day Out concert on the Gold Coast.

Mr Patterson said there had been many highlights over the past six years.

“Performing in Melbourne during the Commonwealth Games, even though it wasn’t at the opening ceremony, was awesome,” he said.

And Doch’s members are as qualified as they are talented – four band members are graduates of the Queensland Conservatorium of Music.

INFO ➔ Doch’s performance calendar can be found on its website, www.doch.com.au

— PENNY ROBINSON

setting the score

UQ MUSICIANS HAVE PAID TRIBUTE TO TWO VERY DIFFERENT COMPOSERS AT THE ANNUAL AUTUMN MUSIC FESTIVAL IN MALENY.

Brahms and Colin Brumby may be worlds apart in the music they’ve produced but the two composers shared centre stage at the Autumn Music Festival earlier this month.

Taking place from April 11-13 in Maleny, the event included five different concerts featuring students and staff from The University of Queensland’s School of Music.

Festival director Robert Harris said the 2008 program was designed to mark both 175 years since Brahms’ birth and Brumby’s 75th birthday.

Dr Brumby was a Reader in Music at UQ for many years and is renowned as one of Australia’s most prolific and versatile composers, creating pieces for choirs, strings and brass.

“Colin has such a concept of beautiful sound, balance and shape that I think people enjoyed his works very much, perhaps to their surprise,” Mr Harris said.

“It was an attempt to use his 75th year to look afresh at his repertoire.”

Features of the festival included Brahms’ String Sextet No.2 in G Major and a performance of Brumby’s Five English Lyrics by the So-la Voce chamber choir.

“We try on the one hand to provide repertoire that audiences already enjoy, so in the course of the weekend they heard certain things like Pachelbel’s Canon and Johann Sebastian Bach’s Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring,” Mr Harris said.

“Such popular fare contrasted with works that perhaps none of the audience had heard before but we think is good music that provokes the imagination.”

Mr Harris, a long-time guest teacher of viola at UQ, said the event was a showcase for soloists including Spiros Rantos and Gwyn Roberts.

“All these ideas kept popping off the page and it struck me that every program this year had a high UQ presence,” he said.

“I think at a time when universities are increasingly conscious of their community responsibility, the sense of outreach, of taking music from the campus to regional centres is so important.”

Prior to the event a free preview performance – part of UQ’s Sunday concert series – proved popular at Customs House.

INFO ➔ Future School of Music recitals are listed at www.uq.edu.au/music

— CAMERON PEGG

PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE

The Australian Legal Philosophy Students’ Association (ALPSA) hosted a lively lecture last month to launch their 2008 program.

Held in Brisbane’s Banco Court, the evening featured discussions on privacy by Justice Patrick Keane, Peter Applegarth SC and Professor Suri Ratnapala and was chaired by Professor Sarah Derrington of UQ’s TC Beirne School of Law.

INFO ➔ For information about future ALPSA events, please contact alpsa2008@gmail.com

ALBINO STUDY

A University of Queensland researcher is seeking volunteers with albinism to complete a survey that will provide the first snapshot of the disease in the country.

Helene Johanson, a PhD student from the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, hopes to clarify the levels of albinism in Australia, for which there are no published statistics.

INFO ➔ To access the short survey, please visit http://research.imb.uq.edu.au/albinism by April 30.
Almost 70 years after it was built, the iconic Story Bridge has inspired a new novel from one of Australia’s rising literary talents.

Labelled “a brave and impressive debut” by David Malouf, Simon Cleary’s The Comfort of Figs is a recent release from the University of Queensland Press.

Mr Cleary grew up in Toowoomba before completing a double degree in Law and Arts (English and Government) at UQ, and after working in community legal centres and Legal Aid Queensland is now serving as the Deputy Telecommunications Ombudsman.

It wasn’t until 2001, when he read the papers of his great-grandfather – an engineer who worked on the bridge – that he began writing the novel.

“It’s very much a work of fiction. It follows a father and son. The father is a worker on the bridge in the late 1930s and the story follows his journey,” Mr Cleary said.

Running for almost 800 metres, the Story Bridge was completed in 1940 and designed by John Bradfield, the man behind the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

It was part of a plan devised by UQ’s Professor Roger Hawken in the 1920s to ease congestion on the Victoria Bridge and divert traffic away from the Brisbane CBD, and is named after John Story, a high-profile public servant who served as the University’s Vice-Chancellor between 1939-1960.

When Yvette Holt talks about her recently released book, Anonymous Premonition, she speaks of it not as a collection of words or stories, but as a beloved child.

The Aboriginal author, a member of the Bidjara Nation (central Queensland), refers to those who had a hand in the book’s production as “midwives and surgeons” in the “birth” of her poetic debut, which was launched at the State Library of Queensland on March 15.

“The collection of 47 poems is finally out there, that in itself is a mixture of excitement and release,” Ms Holt said.

The publication of Anonymous Premonition is the product of Ms Holt winning the 2005 David Unaipon Award, which is open to previously unpublished Indigenous authors and carries a $15,000 prize.

The book deals with themes such as growing up in Inala, resilience, relationships, womanhood and identity through free-form verse.

Prominent Indigenous author and academic Dr Anita Heiss, who launched the collection, has described the work as “poetic activism”, a description Ms Holt embraces wholeheartedly.

“It is a painful reminder that for every six Aboriginal women, only one will live beyond their 65th birthday – can you imagine how that harrowing statistic impacts on my life and the life of my people? So of course, why wouldn’t I politicise my poetry to educate others?” Ms Holt said.

“I would encourage other writers to express themselves as poetic activists in whatever area brings about positive change.”

Ms Holt already has a second manuscript of poems underway and has recently begun writing a compilation of short autobiographical stories, which she also hopes to have published.

As well as writing, Ms Holt lectures on Aboriginal women’s studies at UQ and works as a researcher for the Black Words subset of AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource.

Anonymous Premonition is available now at the UQ Bookstore and independent bookstores throughout Brisbane.

GIVEAWAY

To celebrate the launch of Anonymous Premonition and The Comfort of Figs, UQP is giving away five copies of each title to UQ News readers. To enter, simply email your contact details and preferred book to communications@uq.edu.au with “UQP giveaway” in the subject line.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND BOOKSHOP
CURRENT BESTSELLERS

1. PEOPLE OF THE BOOK - Brooks, G HARPER COLLINS (PB) $32.99 Fiction
2. A FRACTION OF THE WHOLE - Toltz, S PENGUIN (PB) $35.00 Australian Fiction
3. CONSUMING INNOCENCE - Brooks, K UQP (PB) $34.95 Media Studies
4. COMFORT OF FIGS - Cleary, S UQP (PB) $32.95 Australian Fiction
5. GALLOP - Seder, R MACMILLAN (HB) $19.95 Children’s
6. REVOLVING DAYS - Malouf, D UQP (PB) $26.95 Poetry
7. IRRESISTIBLE INHERITANCE OF WILBERFORCE - Torday, P ORION (PB) $32.99 Fiction
8. AMERICAN JOURNEYS - Watson, D RANDOM (HB) $49.95 Travel Biography
9. ANATOMY OF WINGS - Foxlee, K UQP (PB) $32.95 Australian Fiction
10. SORROWS OF AN AMERICAN - Hustvedt, S ADS (PB) $32.99 Fiction
In an unprecedented performance, The University of Queensland Boat Club (UQBC) picked up nine gold, six silver and five bronze medals at the 2008 Australian Rowing Championships.

Racing against bigger crews, the club placed second overall at the event, which took place at the Sydney International Regatta Centre from March 3-9.

The standout performer of the meet was UQBC’s Jared Bidwell, who was crowned National Champion in the Under 23 single scull, double scull and quad scull.

The Queensland Academy of Sports scholarship holder was overjoyed with his haul of three gold medals after missing much of the season due to illness.

“It felt really good to come back and perform well, particularly in the single scull, to just leave everything out on the water.”

AIS scholarship holder Sally Kehoe also rowed to victory in the Open Women’s eight and took silver in the Open Women’s coxless quad and bronze in the coxless pairs.

The club’s younger rowers featured prominently, with the Under 19 men’s squad victorious in the coxless pair, coxed pair, coxed quad and coxed eight events.

Another notable performer was 17-year-old Heather McNeil, who picked up bronze in the Under 23 women’s lightweight quad scull despite being one of the youngest rowers in the field.

Ms McNeil was recently awarded a 2008 Clem Jones scholarship from the University worth $5000 a year for three years.

UQBC rowers are now preparing for the all-important Olympic trials in Sydney this month.

– STEPHEN DANCKERT

Olympic ambition

UQ athletes are building towards the Beijing Olympics, with several already securing spots on the Australian team.

Pole vaulter and Business Management graduate Alana Boyd jumped an A qualifying 4.45 metres at the recent Australian Athletics Championships to achieve automatic selection, following in the footsteps of her parents (and coaches) Ray and Denise.

“Having Mum and Dad’s experience of competing at the highest level and knowing exactly what it takes to get there has helped me immensely,” Ms Boyd said.

National 1500m champion Mitch Kealey ran a B standard time to win his event and will wait to see if it’s enough when selectors name their final team shortly.

In the pool, Melanie Schlanger has earned spots in both the 4x100m and 4x200m freestyle relay squads.

Another inclusion of the 42-member Dolphins team is Leith Brodie (200m Individual Medley), who is in the second year of an International Hotel and Tourism Management degree.

Other UQ hopefuls include triathlete and Master of Applied Laws student Annabel Luxford and Olympian and Commonwealth games weightlifter Amanda Phillips.

Fellow UQ students and alumni are vying for Olympic places in a range of sports before the final Australian Olympic team is announced in June.

Clean sweep at nationals

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The Queensland Academy of Sports scholarship holder was overjoyed with his haul of three gold medals after missing much of the season due to illness.

“I am obviously really happy with the way I rowed, I couldn’t have asked for much more,” Mr Bidwell said.

– ELENA LESLIE

Former surf life saver Michelle Steele traded sand for the snow when introduced to the winter sport of skeleton in 2004, and since then she hasn’t looked back.

The University of Queensland student from Bundaberg was discovered through the Australian Institute of Sport talent identification program and is currently ranked 10th in the world for her event.

Ms Steele has recently finished her fourth season after returning from Germany where she competed in the Federation of International Bobsleigh and Toboggan (FIBT) World Championships.

She now has her sights set firmly on the 2010 Winter Olympics in Canada, where she aims to improve on her 13th placing at the 2006 Turino Winter Olympic Games.

“I’m training hard to qualify and be a strong contender for the games in Vancouver,” she said.

Although she loves competing, Ms Steele said the excitement of travel wore off at times.

“I miss going to the beach and the sun, it gets hectic when you train, race and travel living out of a suitcase and not having enough time to unpack it,” she said.

“I love coming back home and seeing my family and friends.”

As well as her rigorous training schedule, Ms Steele is in her fourth and final year of an Occupational Therapy degree with her studies supported by a UQ SPORT scholarship.

– STEPHEN DANCKERT

FORMER SURF LIFE SAVER

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– ELENA LESLIE

FORMER SURF LIFE SAVER
Pat on back for top coach

UQ Athletics Club Head Coach Pat Clohessy AM has a good reason to celebrate this year.

Mr Clohessy is about to celebrate his tenth year in the position and was recently recognised by Athletics Australia for his outstanding contributions spanning more than 30 years.

“It was a very happy moment for me, but although I am proud of my work, I also think it could have gone to many others who have also contributed a great deal,” he said.

Beginning his career in Victoria in school athletics, Mr Clohessy is primarily a distance running coach and has since worked across the country at clubs and institutes up to Olympic level.

Athletes he has mentored include world marathon champion Rob De Castella, Commonwealth Games medallist and Australian one-mile record holder Krishna Stanton and national distance record holder Simon Doyle.

Prior to joining The University of Queensland, Mr Clohessy held the position of distance coach at the Australian Institute of Sport.

Since moving to Brisbane to take the top job in 1998, Mr Clohessy has led the UQ athletics team to nine consecutive victories at the annual University Games.

Mr Clohessy is full of praise for his colleagues and said he wouldn’t be where he is without them, especially assistant coaches Eric Brown and Tom Brandt.

“You can’t achieve the results that I have without great support,” he said.

“I’ve been aided at the UQ Athletics Club by such excellent facilities, great coaches and a steady stream of talent every single year.”

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As well as his Athletics Australia Merit award, Mr Clohessy is a life member of Melbourne’s Glengarry Athletics Club and the ACT Cross Country Club, a member of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame and is also a recipient of the Order of Australia.

He is happily married to wife Moira who is a music teacher and has a daughter Maria who is a UQ Business/Economics graduate.

– STEPHEN DANCKERT

GENERAL CLASSIFIEDS

ACCOMMODATION WANTED: Visiting academic and family looking for a fully-furnished, three-bedroom rental unit or house in either St Lucia or Indooroopilly for August 2008 to June 2009. Contact: Shannon02@eastlink.ca

TO RENT: Toowong: Ideal location, spacious two-bedroom, fully-furnished unit on 10th floor overlooking river. Available June through December 2008. $500/wk. Contact: Don (07) 3676 1676 or donb@hms.uq.edu.au

HOUSE WANTED TO BUY: Four-bedroom house close to St Lucia and surrounding suburbs preferred. Recently transferred to UQ (two young children); must be securely fenced, double lockable garages and not in need of any renovations to $1 million. Finance approved and ready to buy. Replies treated in strictest confidence. Enquiries to The Advertiser, PO Box 6316, St Lucia, 4067.

CIVIL CELEBRANT: UQ alumna available for weddings and christenings/naming of children. Contact Lynda Flower 0488 101 266.


SEMINARS

• **Thursday, May 1**
  Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies Seminar – “Is negotiation the solution for international conflict?”. Frank Pletsch, University of Heidelberg (12-1.30pm, Don Cambruthers Room, Level 5, Dorothy Hill PSE Library, Hawken Building 50). Information: acpacs@uq.edu.au

• **Wednesday, May 7**
  Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies Seminar – “Forced Migration: Finding global solutions”. Colin Kennard, Adjunct Professor ACPACS (12-1.30pm, Don Cambruthers Room, Level 5, Dorothy Hill PSE Library, Hawken Building 50). Information: acpacs@uq.edu.au

• **Saturday, May 17**
  The Rotary Centre for International Studies will hold the annual Paul Harris Seminar (9am - 5pm) showcasing the achievements of UQ’s Rotary World Peace Fellows. Information: c.pomery@uq.edu.au

COMMUNITY EVENTS

• **Sunday, May 25**
  Rotary Fun Run. Walkers and runners can compete as individuals, for their workplaces or as family groups. Major beneficiary Wesley Hospital Choices Program. General entries close at 5pm on May 23. Information: www.rotaryfunrun.com.au

Library hours are available at [www.library.uq.edu.au](http://www.library.uq.edu.au)
A GROUNDBREAKING VIDEO INSTALLATION SCREENING AT THE UQ ART MUSEUM IS A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME IN AN AMBITIOUS 2008 PROGRAM.

Created by Russian group AES+F, Last Riot was shown to popular and critical acclaim at last year’s Venice Biennale and has since been shown at some of the world’s most famous galleries.

Museum Director Nick Mitzevich said the work was a confronting and innovative choice that set the tone for future exhibitions.

“One of the areas the Museum is exploring is the moving image and what better way to start the UQ program than with one of the most celebrated video works of recent times,” he said.

Projected across three large screens, the 19-minute video is set in a changing virtual landscape where planes and trains crash and missiles threaten destruction.

With the help of CGI wizardry, the artists have transformed human models into “avatars” – depicting them in combat with one another in a 3-D world at war with itself.

“The artists use animation, digital technology and photography and meld them all together. In a sense it’s a performance, it is like a huge living painting and is often reminiscent of Renaissance painter Caravaggio and tableaux from the time,” Mr Mitzevich said.

“The work looks a like a video game, CG animation movie, fashion shoot and music video rolled into one and the result is totally compelling.”

Operating on a continuous loop and featuring music by Wagner, Mr Mitzevich said Last Riot promised a complete sensory experience.

“You’re surrounded by the artwork because the screens are concave, you’re also surrounded by sound so it’s quite an intense environment and that adds to the drama.

“The video is ambitious and, while it gives a very bleak view of the world, it’s accomplished in such a theatrical manner that it leaves you feeling uplifted.”

AES+F formed in 1987 and is named after the beginning of the artists’ surnames: Tatiana Arzamasova, Lev Evzovich, Evgeny Svyatsky and Vladimir Fridkes.

Their work focuses on photography, computer and video-based art, along with the use of traditional media such as drawing, painting and sculpture.

The UQ Art Museum is the only venue on Australia’s east coast to stage Last Riot, with the exhibition complementing the University’s Russian language and cultural studies program, which is unique in Queensland.

The official opening took place on March 28, with attendees including Elena Kozhina, Cultural Attaché of the Russian Embassy, and Irina Bruk, Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation to Brisbane.

INFO ➔ Kindly supported by Moscow’s Triumph Gallery and Dr Dick Quan, Last Riot is on show until May 11 from 10am-4pm, Tuesday to Sunday, with parking free on weekends.

– CAMERON PEGG