NEW HEIGHTS
UQ ARCHITECTURE ON THE WORLD STAGE
The Sun supplies more energy to Earth in one hour than we need in an entire year. So it's little wonder solar power has become such an important area for research across the globe.

To help further this clean energy exploration, The University of Queensland has built Australia's largest flat-panel photovoltaic system and Professor Paul Meredith is putting it to good use. Together with a number of key scientists, their studies are at the forefront of renewable energy research.

Already, new plastic semiconductors have been developed to produce ultra-thin, lightweight and inexpensive solar cells. This type of research is not only improving the viability of solar power, it's also bringing humankind closer to a new era of clean energy.

These advances are made possible through the combination of our world-class facilities and leading researchers. Imagine the difference having access to all of this could make to you.

YOUR UQ. YOUR ADVANTAGE.
MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

A RENEWED FOCUS

When I took up the Vice-Chancellorship late in 2011, I expected challenges and I envisaged reforms to strengthen governance. But what I underestimated, back then, was how satisfying the work would be, and how much positive energy would emanate from enthusiastic colleagues, alumni, students and members of the broader community.

As many readers will know, I became Vice-Chancellor under circumstances that I would never have chosen, following the resignations of my two most senior colleagues. By May 2012, thanks to the focus and commitment of many staff across UQ, I was able to announce that we had a holistic reform program aimed at preventing a replay of the events that prompted the resignations, and at making UQ a better institution.

This Integrity and Accountability Reform Program is now well underway, and by the time I hand over to our new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Høj on October 8, I will be proud of the transformation of significant policies and processes.

By early August we can see far-ranging improvements in many areas, including (but not limited to): student admission; assurance, risk and investigation; complaints handling; prevention and management of conflicts of interest; and leadership ethics. The last is crucial because – although I believe the vast majority of our people have sound ethical radars – universities have elevated duties to act ethically because we receive public, philanthropic and partner investments and we strive to foster global leaders. Sessions run by the St James Ethics Centre for senior staff have been extremely valuable.

I look forward to being part of continuing improvements, when Peter begins and I take up my new role of Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor. My focus will be on collaboratively shaping UQ’s academic agenda – an inspiring remit because it can influence the future of countless individuals and communities. I will work closely with the heads of our six faculties and eight institutes, and reaffirm to them that the senior executive champions their excellence.

In my time as Vice-Chancellor I have welcomed new staff and students from all over the world, congratulated thousands of new graduates on their academic attainment, and met alumni and partners around Australia and in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and the United States. Every encounter has boosted my optimism about the future of UQ and – importantly – about the University’s contributions to a better global future.

I know you will extend to our new Vice-Chancellor the same goodwill and warmth that you have shown me. He will continue the process of advancing UQ, because perpetual improvement is imperative for any trusted institution.

Thank you for your camaraderie in building a global university that exists and excels because of its people.

Professor Debbie Terry

PS: For updates on the reform program implementation, please see the UQ website (www.uq.edu.au/about/integrity-and-accountability-reform-program) or contact me on VCPA@uq.edu.au

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The University of Queensland’s St Lucia campus celebrated its Open Day on Sunday, 5 August with an overall attendance number of 18,003 people including prospective students, parents, and friends of the University.

The campus was buzzing with activity, including lectures, stalls, demonstrations and live music.

One UQ School of Architecture staff member said that he enjoyed the level of interaction from future students. “I really enjoy the interest we get from everyone, as well as the public asking questions about archaeology and the hands-on displays.”

Prospective student Lachlan Campbell said he was surprised at the broad range of options available. “I found information about something I haven’t thought about in ages, like Agricultural Science and then I remembered how much I enjoyed it,” he said. “UQ has always been my first and favourite... I love the architecture, love the atmosphere.”

Sam Ferguson from UQ’s Graduate School also commented on the positive feedback received. “The best thing about working at Open Day is just being reminded about the great opportunities we have here on campus and the advantages of studying at UQ,” Mr Ferguson said.

Tom Achilles, a UQ Young Achiever, said that he was excited for university after experiencing what the St Lucia campus had to offer. “Not only is it a prestigious university but it has such a broad range of programs as well,” he said.

UQ Young Achiever, Naomi Faatuai, attended a languages session during Open Day. “I feel so fortunate to have these opportunities available to me and to be supported by mentors through UQ’s Young Achiever Program as I transition into university.”

UQ Open Day is a great resource for mentors to encourage students to talk to representatives from various Faculties, Schools and Institutes.

One UQ staff member said working at UQ Open Day meant he could enjoy showing off the beautiful campus to prospective students.

UQ Open Day was also held at Ipswich campus on Wednesday, 8 August and Gatton campus on Sunday, 19 August.

http://youruq.com/openday www.facebook.com/uniofqld to join our Facebook page and see photos from the day
Laboratory Technologists in Queensland now have the opportunity to receive higher qualifications in line with other states due to a partnership between The University of Queensland’s Gatton-Vocational Education Centre (UQ G-VEC) and the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Prior to the Queensland Government’s Environmental Scan undertaken in 2008, the highest vocational qualification was a Certificate program for people working in the animal laboratory research sector.

Director of UQ G-VEC Mark Pace said that the Diploma in Animal Technology program has been successful in closing the gap in the level of training in this sector between the states. Training included both theory and practical based workshops to cover the gaps in knowledge and experience.

"By recognising the existing skills of lab technologists in Queensland through the Diploma in Animal Technology we have brought the State into alignment with the national standards in the industry," Mr Pace said.

“So far we have had 75 lab technologists take part in the program which has been an excellent step towards closing the gap in training between the states," he said. Diploma of Animal Technology graduate Debra Laws has worked in the School of Veterinary Science for 22 years.

“I am glad I completed the Diploma and am looking forward to applying the knowledge I have learnt while working with students,” Ms Laws said.

“Completing the program gave me an understanding of how to design a research facility and the important aspects when looking after animals.

“I was really pleased that I was eligible for receiving Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) and that my previous work experience, hard work and training, along with further study, was the equivalent of a Diploma,” she said.

For programs offered by UQ G-VEC please contact the office on (07) 5460 1353.
UQ School of Architecture’s Dr Anupama Kundoo has been invited to construct a major installation at the prestigious 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale. This is a rare privilege and the first time a UQ staff member has been involved in this world renowned event. Commissioned by Biennale Director, David Chipperfield, the exhibition installation is a 1:1 ‘model’ of Kundoo’s highly regarded ‘Wall House’, originally designed and built in Auroville, South India. The original ‘Wall House’ was highly experimental in its innovative use of traditional crafts and technologies in a contemporary architectural context and has a strong sustainability agenda, both in terms of material technologies and social sustainability.

Dr Anupama Kundoo said it was a great honour to be invited to showcase her design at the 13th Venice Biennale.

“The installation of a full-scale model is intended to challenge the exhibition of architecture as artefact; a practice that often overemphasizes the visual component of architecture whilst foregoing the significance of all other sensory perceptions and variables. The idea is to exhibit architecture as a total experience as architecture is meant to be,” Dr Kundoo said.

The unique collaborative project between UQ’s School of Architecture and School of Civil Engineering is ensuring that construction of the Wall House at the world’s most prestigious architectural showcase is realised. UQ Architecture academics Dr Kundoo and Michael Dickson are working in partnership with architecture and engineering staff and students. In Venice, the UQ team is realising the project in association with Indian craftspeople, as well as Italian builders and students from the University of Sydney and the Università Iuav di Venezia.

Mr Dickson said the project was a great collaborative opportunity for the University to be involved in on an international stage.

“The project enables us to further develop our build and design program that showcases the immense potential of students and staff working together to realise a full scale design. It is a project that encapsulates the crossover between teaching and research through design. This is a unique opportunity on the world stage and the sense of achievement and pride will remain with all.
involved for many years to come,” Mr Dickson said.

The diverse team responsible for construction of the “Wall House” reflects the Biennale’s theme “Common Ground.” This direct collaboration of diverse people, who may not even share a common language, reveals the common ground in architectural practice and building construction – between industrial, handcrafted, unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Ideas of ‘Common Ground’ are also explored in other ways throughout the project – in the use of handmade brick, a simple material that crosses culture and time, in the inventive use of traditional crafts and technologies in a contemporary architectural context, in the careful integration of the exhibit into the space of the exhibition and in the visitors’ experiences of the installation itself.

UQ Master of Architecture student Katie Hawgood said participating in the Venice Biennale provided unparalleled insight and experience into architectural practice.

“Whilst extremely challenging at times, the past five weeks have seen my understanding and appreciation for scale, of crafting space and of tectonics and materiality develop immensely. I feel that working alongside craftsmen and professionals as well as students from various academic fields and cultures is equipping me with invaluable life skills for when I graduate and enter the workforce at the end of this year,” Miss Hawgood said.

Established in 1895, the Venice Biennale has since established itself as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world. Since its inception, the Venice Biennale has evolved to reflect changing cultures and landscapes, incorporating its first international Architecture exhibition in 1980. UQ’s installation of the Wall House is on display in Venice, Italy until Saturday, 25 November 2012.

UQ would like to thank Think Brick Australia for supporting the university’s team to attend the 13th Venice Biennale and develop the 1:1 model of Dr Kundoo’s ‘Wall House.’
TIME TO SHINE
AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST ROOFTOP PHOTOVOLTAIC ARRAY CELEBRATES ITS FIRST TWELVE MONTHS IN OPERATION

The University of Queensland has enjoyed 12 months of energy, environmental and financial savings since the installation of Australia’s largest flat-panel rooftop photovoltaic solar system in July 2011.

Geoff Dennis, Deputy Director, Property and Facilities said UQ’s 1.22 megawatt Solar Array has exceeded expectations as an outstanding energy initiative for the University.

“Over 1.7 million kilowatts of energy has been generated in the first year, saving in excess of $220,000 and 1,700 tonnes of CO2,” Mr Dennis said.

The installation of the RedFlow battery in June this year finalised the major infrastructure components of the project.

Mr Adrian Mengede, who is the Senior Electrical Engineer managing the project installation, said the 90 kilowatt RedFlow Battery enables researchers to assess potential power provision in peak times.

“The zinc bromine flow battery is more environmentally friendly than lead-acid batteries,” Mr Mengede said.

More than 500 visitors have toured UQ’s Solar Resource Research Station to learn about how UQ is harnessing solar power, placing the University at the forefront of solar research internationally.

Government, industry groups, visiting university delegations and school and university students have toured the centre and accessed live data on energy generation, with many enjoying the opportunity of a getting up close by viewing the solar panels on a rooftop tour.

Live energy data is available on the UQ Solar Website where real time energy production data, past performance and statistics can be viewed along with current and past weather conditions.

Chris Collins, UQ Energy Manager, said the UQ Solar website has recently been enhanced to introduce more user friendly, logical and intuitive site navigation as well as more information about UQ’s photovoltaic sites.

“The success of this project has encouraged the modification of the photovoltaic display so that it can be used to display building energy consumption in real time on interactive touch signage in the public spaces of UQ buildings,” said Mr Collins.

The project has involved industry partners including Brisbane firm Ingenero, Trina Solar, Brisbane-based RedFlow, Energex and the Queensland Government.

For more information on UQ’s Solar initiatives visit www.uq.edu.au/solarenergy

BIKE BOX OPENS
UQ UNVEILS ITS FLAGSHIP CYCLING FACILITY, THE BIKE BOX

Staff and students are enjoying the benefits of UQ’s new dedicated end-of-trip cycling facility at St Lucia campus.

The state-of-the-art facility provides secure bicycle storage for 90 bicycles and boasts 10 showers, 90 lockers, clothes ironing and drying facilities as well as access to a cycle repair services all for $1 a week.

UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Debbie Terry was one of about 200 people who took part in the recent opening celebrations which included a Ride-To-Uni Day.

Mark Kranz, Manager Transport Systems, Property and Facilities said that the new Bike Box facilities have encouraged more students and staff to ride to uni.

“Cycling is rapidly increasing in popularity,” Mr Kranz said. “It is a trend that UQ is very happy to support, as it is in line with the University’s sustainability objectives and it helps reduce carbon emissions.”

Sustainability is a high priority and UQ’s commitment to sustainability can be seen in its investments in academic programs, energy and solar infrastructure, and in campus biodiversity.

Over 600,000 bike trips are taken to and from UQ annually and the Bike Box provides tangible assistance to the growing number of staff and students who use one of the most sustainable modes of transport to commute to and from the St Lucia campus.

The facility provides new life and purpose to the lower level of the Multi-Level Car Park, which previously housed the flood-damaged UQ Traffic and Parking offices, and provides campus users with an affordable, realistic and sustainable alternative to motorised transport.

UQ plans to double its outdoor bicycle rack inventory over the next four years and will open additional secure storage facilities for cyclists on campus over the next five years.

For more information on hiring a Bike Box visit www.pf.uq.edu.au/cycling/endoftrip.html
A UQ researcher who is hoping to solve a mystery that affects 50 per cent of Australia’s agricultural land and costs $1.5 billion per year is a step closer after being awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship.

Dr Peter Kopittke, from UQ’s School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, is among 19 UQ recipients of this year’s prestigious fellowships who will receive a total of $14.7 million to undertake nationally important research.

Designed to keep talented mid-career researchers working in Australia, Dr Kopittke was awarded his $702,828 Future Fellowship to investigate why aluminium and other trace metals are toxic to plants growing in acidic soils.

Soil acidity impacts 50 million hectares of the nation’s agricultural land and costs Australia 8.5 times more in lost agricultural production than that caused by dryland salinity.

“Acid soils have many problems that adversely affect crop growth and the most important among these are aluminium toxicity,” Dr Kopittke said.

“This research will address fundamental scientific questions about why trace metals are toxic to plants and reveal the mechanisms by which they inhibit root growth.

“Identification of the mechanisms of Aluminium toxicity will provide the necessary ‘building-blocks’ required to begin developing Aluminium-tolerant cultivars and will provide the key to improving crop yields in degraded soils.

“With 40 per cent of the world’s total arable land affected by soil acidity and given the increasing human population, improving yield on acidic Aluminium-toxic soils is critical in ensuring global food security.”

The high impact of soil acidity has been recognised in the National Research Priority – An Environmentally Sustainable Australia, which specifically mentions soil acidity as a priority.

Typically, soil acidity is managed by the application of lime, however, the high cost of applying lime often prohibits its use in broad-scale agriculture throughout much of Australia.

“It is estimated that the use of lime to manage acid soils is economically viable on only four percent of the total area affected by acidity in Australia,” Dr Kopittke said.

“Therefore, overcoming the problem of soil acidity requires a productivity improvement on these degraded soils by identifying and breeding crops with improved aluminium tolerance.”

Dr Peter Kopittke investigates aluminium toxicity in acid soil.

Valued stakeholders, including representatives from the Queensland Government, other Queensland universities and the local business community descended on Customs House for a recent UQ Forum networking event.

This was a great opportunity for The University of Queensland and the UQ Confucius Institute to strengthen their partnership in research and innovation, enabling the two groups to work together towards desired outcomes.

The Confucius Institute at The University of Queensland was established under an agreement between UQ and the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) in China, and in partnership with Tianjin University, China to promote the learning of Chinese language and culture at UQ.

UQ Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) Dr Anna Ciccarelli said the forum focused on the relationships between Australia and China and, in particular, the Queensland/Chinese Academy of Sciences.

“UQ is delighted to have hosted this forum as it reflects and celebrates the strength of the research relationships between Queensland and China,” Dr Ciccarelli said.

Guest speakers included Professor BAI Chunli, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Hon Ros Bates MP, Minister for Science, IT, Innovation and the Arts.

Professor BAI Chunli, a world-renowned scientist, was awarded an honorary UQ Doctor of Science in 2010 in recognition of his distinguished career and significant achievement in the fields of scanning probe microscopy and nanotechnology, and his major contribution to UQ.

The winners of the Queensland-Chinese Academy of Sciences Biotechnology Projects Fund for 2012 were also announced at the Forum event.

Life sciences researchers at The University of Queensland will translate their discoveries into commercial products faster, thanks to the newly established Queensland Node of the Therapeutic Innovations Australia (TIA).

In July this year, UQ welcomed Graham Perrett MP, Federal Member for Moreton, and Dale Shuttleworth MP, State Member for Ferny Grove, to the official launch of the TIA – QLD Node.

Along with $6.9M from the Federal Government’s $35M Education Investment Fund (EIF) Initiative, the Queensland Government has awarded $2M to the TIA-QLD Node. This co-investment funding will enable four translational projects to be undertaken that will deliver tangible commercial returns within five years.

Stewart Hay, CEO of TIA – lead agent for the Commonwealth Government’s $35M EIF Initiative, commented on the overall strategy of the launch.

“The major strategy embodied in this plan involves aggregating and leveraging existing infrastructure across the nation, improving researcher access, and addressing gaps in infrastructure, rather than establishing a large number of new facilities. In Queensland this will allow the expansion of facilities at The University of Queensland and Griffith University and link them in a coordinated way,” he said.

“This is the first time this coordinated approach has been implemented in Australia and represents a move to a more systematic approach to therapeutic innovation.”

The TIA-QLD node comprises of five collaborators from leading translational research centres, including the UQ Centre for Integrated Preclinical Drug Development, UQ Clinical Trials and Biostatistics Centre, UQ Centre for Clinical Research, UQ Diamantina Institute and Griffith Health Institute.

As part of the TIA-QLD Node, the UQ Centre for Clinical Research (UQCCR) has established the Centre for Clinical Diagnostics (CCD). The CCD has utilised $3M in funding secured from TIA to implement new platform technologies within the facility, including mass spectrometry and protein solution array.

The initial purpose of the CCD is to work in conjunction with UQCCR’s Pre-conception and Early Pregnancy Clinic, recently established by Professor Greg Rice, to deliver tests that can be used at a woman’s first antenatal visit to assess the likelihood that her pregnancy is normal and healthy.

This clinic will expand its focus to consider how pre-conception health and wellbeing can be improved to assist future generations.
Guangdong Committee led the UQ visit which also included High-level officials from Guangdong Province, representatives from the Chinese Embassy in Australia and Brisbane Consulate, Federal and State Government representatives, and members of the Chinese media.

The delegation was given a tour through UQ’s Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) and was briefed on research into needle-free vaccine delivery technology and new energy storage and conversion opportunities.

As a visitor of the Australian Government, Mr Wang’s tour provided an exceptional opportunity to showcase the University’s capability for cutting-edge research, attracting international investment and a move towards commercialisation.

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**Master-Mind of a Thief**

Delving into the mind of an author made for some very interesting discussions at Customs House recently. As a generous champion of the arts, UQ hosted the Vice-Chancellor’s Literary Luncheon, featuring an “in conversation” between UQP author Patti Miller and UQ historian Professor Peter Spearritt from the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics.

“Discovering how the author’s personal identity was shaped by her birthplace in Wiradjuri land, Central NSW, resonated with everyone present,” said Vice-Chancellor Professor Debbie Terry, who hosted the event.

“And being able to share stories confirmed the benefits of UQ engaging with Brisbane’s literary community to showcase the wealth of talent available within our midst.”

The Mind of a Thief, about which Miller spoke, is her sixth book and is an evocative and compelling narrative that tells the universal story of reconciliation and the many layers of country that bind us.

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The University of Queensland’s GIVE (Get Into Volunteering Experiences) Program has formed a new partnership with charity group, OzHarvest. Founder of OzHarvest, Ronni Kahn, will be offering insights into the organisation and the role of OzHarvest in the community, while encouraging students to become involved in their newly developed Brisbane operations.

OzHarvest, a charity that distributes excess food from restaurants to people in need, has saved almost 15 million meals nationally and 150,000 meals in Brisbane since the local branch started in September last year.

Ms Kahn believes that students who volunteer will “gain back as much as they give and more” in the rich experiences working with the organisation.

“There are physical roles, but we also understand that the skillset university students come with could be really useful to us,” she said.

Ms Kahn feels that this cause resonates with students because many have struggled financially while pursuing their education.

“Some of these students may have gone through times when they struggled with affording food or know someone who has. They can relate to OzHarvest,” she said.

OzHarvest operates seven days a week and has a range of opportunities available for students including working at and organising events, marketing projects, and on-the-ground operations.

“One person can make a difference and by volunteering, students can see how an idea can turn into something truly great,” she said.

Ms Kahn believes that students will gain a “sense of community” from working with OzHarvest and the local organisations in the Brisbane community who benefit from their services.

“The most exciting thing is that we have become a magnet for magnificent people,” she said.

The Brisbane operation has already saved over 40,000 tonnes of food from being wasted since January and the demand for its services and from companies wanting to donate is growing rapidly.

Currently OzHarvest is working with UQ Business School MBA students as part of the social Economic Engagement Program (SEEP) and will be trialling new and exciting programs in the near future, including rooftop gardens in the CBD and more programs involving the broader Brisbane business community.

For more details on volunteering opportunities visit www.bel.uq.edu.au/OzHarvest
The UQ Union has introduced certified Fairtrade coffee to Darwin’s, Physiol Eatery & Cafe and Pizza Caffé on St Lucia campus.

UQ Union Treasurer Linda Cho said welcoming Fairtrade coffee on campus was an exciting endeavour for the University.

“We want students to be responsible when purchasing products and to be conscious of where their products are coming from and how the simple choice of switching coffee brand can make a difference in people’s lives around the world.

The University of Queensland has a population of approximately 40,000 students. The consumer choices we make on campus matter. By using Fairtrade options, we help reduce poverty and make a real difference to the lives of farmers and communities in the developing world. Every choice matters – and we, as a community of 40,000 consumers, could make a world of difference,” Miss Cho said.

Coffee is big business and remains one of the most valuable primary products in world trade. However, for many of the world’s 25 million coffee farmers, coffee is a labour intensive crop that frequently yields very little financial return.

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing countries.

To find Fairtrade coffee locations download UQ Nav at http://uq.edu.au/uqnav
A NOVEL IDEA

UQP author Jennifer Mills is kicking goals, with some fantastic books for young readers already under her belt. She speaks to us about her latest book The Rest is Weight.

Jennifer Mills, your book The Rest is Weight has earned you the title of 2012 Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Australian Author. Why do you think readers connected so well with your novel?

Actually The Rest is Weight is my new collection of short stories. That title was awarded for Gone, my second novel, which came out last year. The novel follows an ex-prisoner named Frank who is hitchhiking across Australia in search of the place he grew up, and pursued by his past.

It’s a haunting story about memory and justice, set in the rugged outback, with many surprising encounters. I think readers relate to the vulnerability and mystery of the main character – I still worry about him!

What was the inspiration for your book?
The Rest is Weight collects 27 short stories written over the last seven years. The inspiration for them is quite diverse, which is reflected in the settings – Russia, China, Mexico, and various places in Australia. For five of those years I lived in Alice Springs and there is definitely a preoccupation with the experiences of remote Australia in my work, as well as with traveling. I’m interested in the overlap between imagination and reality, so a lot of my stories have a surrealist bent, presenting a world that’s recognisably ours but slightly magical or strange.

Have you been writing for many years?
I have been writing since I was a kid, but only decided to take it seriously in my early twenties. I never considered creative writing as a degree or writing as a career, probably because I was more focused on poetry in my early writing life. Now I’m a full-time writer, which makes me extraordinarily fortunate, financially precarious, and happy most days.

What would your advice be for inspiring authors?
Persistence is the key. Everything you write needs to be rewritten several times, so you have to love the process of working in order to love the work. It takes a long time to learn how to write and you need to be patient, stubborn, and fairly focused. Read as widely as you can. And don’t be too hard on yourself.

What are you reading right now?
A lot of new short stories for Overland, where I’ve just taken on the role of fiction editor. We’re running a competition for emerging writers right now so I’m excited about the entries we’ll be getting from around Australia. The deadline is the end of August – see the website for details: http://overland.org.au/prizes/

Any further thoughts or comments?
I think the short story form is having quite a renaissance in Australia at the moment, with some amazing single-author collections coming out and quite a few smaller presses exploring the possibilities of the digital era. It’s a great time to be a writer and a reader.

To purchase Jennifer Mills’ book The Rest is Weight visit www.uqp.com.au
Starting at university doesn’t have to be overwhelming with Student Services providing various support channels for students across St Lucia, Gatton, Ipswich and Herston campuses.

Andrew Lee, Director of Student Affairs said the University understands how critical it is for students to be able to access the right support.

“We know from our experience working directly with students, and backed up by data on retention rates, that one of the most challenging times for students is when they make the transition into university during arrival and over the first year of their program. This is often exacerbated when students are from different countries, backgrounds, regional Australia, and/or haven’t the support of family and friends who have previously experienced university life.”

Mates@UQ encourages students to engage with other Mates at events and activities held throughout the year.

Aside from fun events and activities, Mates@UQ also provides a great range of sub-programs to help students such as the Language Exchange Program.

The Language Exchange Program has been established to provide authentic speaking opportunities for students who may be enrolled in language courses, are going on exchange or simply have an interest in a foreign language or culture.

For those who may be considering moving out of home or need to move closer to the University, Student Services can assist in finding accommodation, as well as providing rental advice.

Don’t think you’re alone, accommodation advice is one of the most commonly asked questions and can be the most important to ensure your studies aren’t affected.

STUDENT SERVICES CAN ASSIST IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Careers and graduate employment www.uq.edu.au/student-services/careers
- Counseling www.uq.edu.au/student-services/Counselling
- Disability or medical condition www.uq.edu.au/student-services/accessibility
- International support www.uq.edu.au/student-services/international-student-support
- Learning www.uq.edu.au/student-services/Learning
- Mentoring@UQ www.uq.edu.au/student-services/UQ+Mentors, and

Student Services at UQ is here to enhance your university experience. Please let us know if you need further assistance in any of the above areas.

www.uq.edu.au/student-services
A n exhibition of Aboriginal paintings from the desert regions of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory is on display at the UQ Art Museum. Desert Country is an Art Gallery of South Australia travelling exhibition and features 57 works by 56 Aboriginal artists. UQ Art Museum Director Dr Campbell Gray said the exhibition reveals the development of Australia’s internationally acclaimed desert painting movement.

“The Art Gallery of South Australia took an early lead in collecting Aboriginal art, when, in 1939, it became the first public institution in the nation to acquire the work of Albert Namatjira,” Dr Gray said.

“Desert Country portrays the rich diversity of styles that have evolved across this vast region since the early 1970s, and at the same time makes clear the vital role painting plays in connecting people with country and with their ancestral stories,” Dr Gray said.

Among the highlights is the profoundly powerful collaborative work by Pitjantjatjara artists Kunmanara Queama and Hilda Moodoo, Destruction I, which depicts the mushroom cloud of the Maralinga atomic tests of the 1950s that forced their people to evacuate their lands.

The exhibition’s curator Nici Cumpston is the Art Gallery of South Australia’s first Curator of Indigenous Art and a descendant of the Barkindji people.

“Desert Country allows us into an ancient existence, and to witness history through the contemporary art of the oldest living culture in the world,” Ms Cumpston said.

“Taking the time to learn the stories behind the paintings is one of the ways that enables us all to understand this culture and to enhance our respect for it,” she said.

Many of the works of art were produced in Aboriginal-owned, community-based art centres, and are a key source of income for those communities.

“Men were at first the main artists in most communities with women working alongside them, but from the early 1990s women started painting in their own right,” Ms Cumpston said.

The Desert Country exhibition, catalogue and national tour are made possible thanks to the substantial sponsorship by Australian energy company, Santos, the Principal Partner of the Art Gallery of South Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection.

This exhibition is supported by the Contemporary Touring Initiative through Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Government and state and territory governments. The exhibition continues until 21 October 2012.

For more information visit http://artmuseum.uq.edu.au
UQ Gatton comes alive with Walkway Markets every month, transforming the campus into a retailer’s paradise with an array of stalls on offer to staff, students and members of the local Gatton community.

The markets have many regular stallholders including Jean and Bill Nicholls from Elizabeth Jean Jewellery, who will be back again in October with their new product Charm Scarves.

Jean Nicholls said her creative inspiration behind the unique scarves came as a result of her sister buying something similar on a recent trip to Europe.

“The scarves were very popular with our customers who came past our stall at the markets last month,” Mrs Nicholls said.

Jean and Bill Nicholls have been taking part in the Gatton Markets for the last six years and thoroughly enjoy the social side of being stallholders.

“There is something very fulfilling about working hard to design an item and then being able to personally sell it to the customer.

“We’re really big on customer service and providing the best quality product with good value for money. We want people to come back,” she said.

“The markets always have a lovely atmosphere and UQ staff and students are always very friendly,” she said.

Gatton’s Campus Director, Janelle Zahmel, encourages members of the community to come along and support the stallholders.

“We have made this a regular event and it is definitely one of the highlights on our Campus social calendar,” Ms Zahmel said.

“If you come along also make sure you take part in some games as we run egg and spoon, three legged and wheel barrow races which will provide some good entertainment,” she said.

There are a huge range of products on sale including Greek food, eggs, fruit, vegetables, olives, snow cones, edible bouquets, plants, crafts, creams, spreads, embroidery, jewellery, sunglasses and clothing.

The next UQ Gatton Walkway Market is on October 18 and is supported by the Lockyer Valley Regional Council and runs from 10am to 2pm in the Central Walkway in front of the Dining Hall (Building 8125).

For information on being a stallholder at the upcoming Gatton Markets please contact Erin Pearl on (07) 5460 1229 or e.pearl@uq.edu.au
University of Queensland students and alumni have shone at the London 2012 Summer Olympic Games, performing in a manner that encapsulates everything we value in our sportsmen and women – humility, dedication, passion, integrity, and the desire to compete fiercely, but fairly.

The Games kicked off with gusto for alumna Melanie Schlanger who picked up gold as part of the Australian Women’s 4x100m Freestyle Relay team. Ms Schlanger, a Clem Jones Sporting Scholarship holder from 2007 until 2009, anchored the team to a remarkable victory over their traditional rivals, the USA. Her success continued in the 4x100m Medley Relay and 4x200m Freestyle Relay where she picked up two silver medals. Another medal came agonisingly close when she finished fourth in the 100m Freestyle final.

Despite his diminutive height, Masters of Physiotherapy student Josh Jefferis stood tall, qualifying for the Men’s Individual All Around gymnastics final. Josh finished in 19th place but the personal best effort left him and his supporters extremely proud.

2011 scholarship holder Mitchell Watt, or ‘Mega Watt’ as he is known, took flight in the Men’s Long Jump. The pressure on Mitch was immense given his world title and Australian record breaking jumps of the year before. Living up to the hype, the UQ star flew higher and longer than all but one of his competitors in the final, finishing the event with an Olympic silver medal, an inspiring achievement.

2003 Development Scholarship holder Alana Boyd also gave an outstanding performance at the Games, qualifying for the Women’s Pole Vault final, where she finished equal 10th. Two other UQ students, Bianca Hammett and Jane Moran, competed with the Australian Synchronised Swimming and Water Polo teams respectively.

For more information on UQ Sport visit www.uqsport.com.au
Dr Angus, you and four other researchers from The University of Queensland have identified a way to visually map and analyse conversational behaviour in medical consultations, a technique known as Discursis. What was the inspiration for this research?

As part of the ARC Thinking Systems project we were interested in understanding what we termed “conceptual navigation”. The idea behind conceptual navigation is that, much like physical navigation, conversation moves participants past a series of landmarks. However, in the case of conversation these landmarks are not physical artefacts but rather are abstract collections of thoughts or words.

What were your objectives when creating Discursis?

We wanted to develop a technique that could mine a conversation transcript for the major conceptual landmarks, map these landmarks in a conceptual space, and then visually describe how conversation participants navigate the conceptual space.

Can you please explain (in simple terms) how Discursis works?

Discursis takes a conversation transcript and generates statistics on the frequency of word use, specifically looking for instances where the same groups of words are used together.

The word use patterns of the input text are used to define a set of key concepts and these key concepts are used to tag all of the turns (utterances) in the conversation according to how strongly the text contained in each turn implies the key concepts.

For example, analysis of a doctor/patient conversation where a patient has lung problems might extract ‘lung’ as a key concept, if the patient then talks about coughing and shortness of breath there is a high likelihood that the concept ‘lung’ will be one of the concepts used to tag this turn.

Has this visualisation measurement technique already been implemented?

Yes, Eckmann, Kamphorst & Ruelle established the recurrence plotting technique back in 1987 and since then it has been used to visually and numerically assess a variety of data including heart rhythms, neural spikes, weather patterns, and a host of other non-linear systems. We proposed the conceptual recurrence plotting model in 2010 and since then we have presented it to computer scientists, linguists, social psychologists, mathematicians and cognitive neuroscientists where it has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

How can you see this changing the medical world?

The majority of doctors that I have met are interested in improving their communication skills; however, most report that there are currently no easy ways of self-assessing such skills. Currently Discursis only works with text transcripts, but once speech-to-text technology improves I could see doctors employing Discursis in their consultation suites to record and assess communication with their patients.

Is this the only technique of its kind currently available?

Discursis is an example of a visual text analytic technique, quite a mouthful I admit! This field is growing very fast and there are many different approaches being developed to reveal the complex stories that are hidden in text data. As far as we are aware though there are no other approaches that allow practitioners to visualise short, medium and long term conceptual coherence in conversation as effectively as Discursis.
UniQuest’s Consulting and Research forum, Experts Exchange, focuses on profitable industry engagement. Hear what the experts say about public and private research funding options and learn how to move your research program forward.

Experts Exchange aims to help academics maximise commercial opportunities for their expertise and learn from their colleagues’ experiences. Researchers share how they have achieved outcomes and recognition beyond journal publications: this year’s panel discussion will consider how private funding sources can move research projects towards ARC grant success, as well as how to move them past unsuccessful ARC applications. With a better understanding of the distinctions between public and private funding options, academic staff will see how complementary these pathways can be throughout their research careers.

“Collaborating with Janssen means we can tap into their scientific expertise, which will add another dimension to our clinical research... and to the knowledge we can impart to students working with us.”

Professor Ranjeny Thomas, UQ Diamantina Institute

• Learn how engagement through consulting and contract research helps move your research into the community
• Discover how a leading medical researcher applied his research through commercialising related software and training products
• Consider reasons to move your research forward via private funding options such as industry grants
• Determine the factors that make research programs better suited to either private or public funding

Now in its fifth year, Experts Exchange has helped more than 400 UQ researchers and academics form new connections with their peers and work effectively with external parties. “UniQuest is proud to help UQ researchers to experience satisfaction and success from their engagement activities,” said David Henderson, UniQuest Managing Director. “Experts Exchange is a valuable opportunity for academics to network together to generate ideas and contacts for future collaboration.”

“Commercial projects allow me to examine data that is unique and investigate something that hasn’t been done before. They give me ideas for other research subjects which I can turn into an ARC grant application.”

Professor Flavio Menezes, Head of School of Economics (Experts Exchange 2011)
Over 300 geography students from more than 20 schools participated in the annual Careers Day in July, which included six topic streams in areas from carbon management to sustainable urban planning.

“The day was designed to give students a taste of how critical geography and geography related fields are to the future of our planet,” said Professor James Shulmeister from The School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management.

“Geography graduates are ideally positioned to help us tackle issues such as population growth, climate change and loss of biodiversity.”

"In an increasingly globalised world Australia has a key role to play in creating world class graduates who are able to contribute to the discussion on sustainable development.”

Students were able to talk face-to-face with university lecturers and find out exactly what graduate positions in the field would entail, as well as learn some practical skills and knowledge to take home from the day.

Lectures and workshops were designed with students’ career options in mind, demonstrating the diversity of work that studies in Geography can lead them to.

Students in the Geography helps predict the future workshop took core samples at UQ Lakes and examined how the 1974 and recent flood events presented in the sample, and how this can help inform future predictions on natural events and disasters, essential for city planning.

“The lecturer who looked after us for the day was fantastic. It was so interesting to learn about soil and mud samples, and the trips the lecturer had been on,” said one student.

“Definitely a workshop I would recommend to others.”

Other workshops were based around building sustainable cities, from both town planning and population growth and movement perspectives.

The students experienced first-hand how technology is used to collect and analyse data while investigating the various issues facing the world and how these can be resolved through geography and sound management.

“It was wonderful to see such a large number of students genuinely interested in making a difference and finding solutions to some of the key issues facing our world today,” Professor Shulmeister said.

Materials from the day are available online at www.gpem.uq.edu.au/geogday-resources

Students investigating sediment changes as a result of Brisbane’s major floods.
When UQ PhD student Ryan Stafford made the decision to enter Three Minute Thesis (3MT)™ last year, he had no idea that it would lead to some of the brightest businesspeople in Brisbane seeking his advice.

Developed by UQ in 2008 and now held around the world in countries including Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand and Hong Kong, 3MT challenges students to communicate their research to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes.

The runner-up and People’s Choice winner of the 2011 3MT UQ Final, Mr Stafford said the opportunities that opened up to him after competing last September were invaluable.

“The winners were asked to speak at the UQ industry engagement dinner, which brings together leaders in business and industry together with the UQ community to celebrate their achievements throughout the year,” Mr Stafford said.

“Because of our 3MT experience, we were able to communicate our complex research ideas in ways that everyone in the room could understand, and that is a skill that resonates with people.

“After I spoke, the state government invited me to speak at a Brisbane business leaders’ innovation meeting. They wanted to use the 3MT talk as a way to illustrate how complex ideas can be communicated in a way everyone can understand. This is something business leaders were really struggling with.

“It was a fantastic opportunity to network with industry and business leaders, and as a result of doing that presentation, I was invited to work with the government directly to help develop new innovation strategies for business leaders.”

UQ will host two Three Minute Thesis finals in 2012, the first being the UQ Final on Tuesday, 18 September at the ICTE Auditorium, which will be followed by the Trans-Tasman Final on Thursday, 11 October.

The Trans-Tasman Final will involve winners from dozens of tertiary institutions from Australia and New Zealand – with special guests from the South Pacific and Hong Kong – who will compete at the Queensland Brain Institute Auditorium on UQ’s St Lucia campus.

Mr Stafford said 3MT was not just for research higher degree students who already had an aptitude for public speaking, but for everyone who wanted to learn an invaluable skill they would need for their future careers.

“Through 3MT I learned effective communication, and it forced me to look at presentations and my research ideas in a way that I would not have looked at previously.”
The University of Queensland Indigenous student community has formed a 16-person team to compete at the 17th National Indigenous Tertiary Education Student Games (NITESG). The games are being hosted by James Cook University in Cairns from 23 to 28 September this year.

Emily Montgomery, a third-year UQ Bachelor of Business student and a descendant of the Budjiti tribe of South-West Queensland, is one of 16 UQ Indigenous Australian students who will be taking part in the games.

“Students will participate in the four core sports of basketball, beach volleyball, netball and touch football with each student competing in at least three of the four sports,” Ms Montgomery said.

A traditional Indigenous Australian game is also played every year. The overall winner of the Games will be determined by total aggregate scores, based on wins and losses, across all four sports.

As a part of preparation the students have entered a netball team in the UQ social competition and, over the past few weeks, have been undertaking training sessions on each of the sports.

The NITESG began as a joint-class project between 13 students enrolled in a Diploma of Aboriginal Studies (Community Recreation) at the then Wollotuka School for Aboriginal Studies, the University of Newcastle, in 1996. The first NITESG was attended by around 30 students, and has since grown to host hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from universities Australia-wide.

The UQ team is represented by male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who descend from more than 10 different language groups and tribes from Queensland and interstate.

Sport and cultural festivals across Australia play an important role in contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life.

In a lot of ways they are a continuation of social gatherings that have taken place across this land for thousands of years as tribes and clan groups travelled vast distances to meet and share in culture.

“The games are a chance for us to mix with other Indigenous tertiary students through sport,” Ms Montgomery said.

The UQ team has secured sponsorship through 4 Sure Fitness and Queensland Gas Company.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBBIE RECKENBERG, EMILY MONTGOMERY, DYLAN NICHOLLS AND ANITA WILLIAMS ARE READY TO COMPETE AT THE 17TH ANNUAL NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TERTIARY EDUCATION STUDENT GAMES (NITESG).
While studying medicine may be a challenging endeavour, the team from Supporting Women in Medicine (SWIM), including President Ashley Jenkins and Academic Vice-President Jacquie Lovatt Stern, are ensuring that first-year students are well-placed to thrive.

The student society, which hosts academic, career and social initiatives for students, recently received a UQ Sponsorship Grant from the Office of Undergraduate Education to support women to learn, network and maintain life-work balance while studying medicine and health sciences.

Ms Lovatt Stern, explains that while membership is open to all genders, there is a focus on the particular challenges that young women face throughout their studies and career in medicine and the health sciences.

“Although much progress has been made, women still have barriers to their careers in medicine.

“SWIM strives to provide opportunities for our members to meet and interact with positive female role models, and students are encouraged to ask questions about how to achieve work-life balance within this demanding profession,” Ms Lovatt Stern said.

The student society will use their UQ Sponsorship Grant to provide practical academic support to first-year students by offering unique tutorial sessions facilitated by medical experts and second-year students aimed at assisting first-years with preparing for their end of year clinical examinations.

The sessions represent an invaluable opportunity for students to ask questions, build relationships and access equipment, in a relaxed and personalised environment away from the anonymity of large classes.

“SWIM’s clinical examination tutorials provide students with time to hone their skills in an atmosphere where they are free to ask questions and discuss the specifics of physical examination.

“Students receive a lecture from a specialist in the field and afterwards get to practise the skills in small groups with an upper year tutor,” Ms Stern said.

UQ Sponsorship Grants are available to UQ student clubs, societies and associations to support student-led activities that enhance student engagement, leadership skills and professional development.

Acting Director of the Office of Undergraduate Education Dr Jessica Gallagher said that the UQ Sponsorship Grant scheme supports student leadership and initiative.

Applications to undergrad@uq.edu.au between early March and late October each year. Find out more, www.uq.edu.au/undergraduate/sponsorship-grant
UQ NEWS READER SURVEY

To help us understand how we can continue to improve UQ News, we invite you to participate in this research.

Please return the completed survey (no stamp required) to:
UQ News Reader Survey (820)
Office of Marketing & Communications
Reply Paid 6469
ST LUCIA QLD 4067
by COB Friday 12 October 2012 and go into the draw to win one of five $50 Co-Op Bookshop vouchers.*

Thank you for your time and assistance in helping us shape the future of UQ News.

1 I am a: (tick all that apply)
☐ UQ staff member
☐ UQ student
☐ UQ alumnus
☐ Member of the local community

2 How are you currently receiving important information and news about what is happening at UQ? (tick all that apply)
☐ UQ Update (the weekly staff email)
☐ UQ News (the quarterly magazine)
☐ Contact (the six-monthly alumni magazine)
☐ UQ News TV
☐ Social media sites (Yammer, Facebook and Twitter)
☐ Face-to-face communication from your manager
☐ Word of mouth, eg. from your peers and colleagues

3 For you personally, what are the best ways to receive important information and news about what is happening at UQ? (tick all that apply)
☐ UQ Update (the weekly staff email)
☐ UQ News (the quarterly magazine)
☐ Contact (the six-monthly alumni magazine)
☐ UQ News TV
☐ Social media sites (Yammer, Facebook and Twitter)
☐ Face-to-face communication from your manager
☐ Word of mouth, eg. from your peers and colleagues

4 How often do you read UQ News? (tick one)
☐ Every quarter
☐ 1-2 times a year
☐ Never

5 On a scale of 1-5, please indicate how strongly you agree, or disagree with the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I look forward to reading UQ News</th>
<th>5 Strongly agree</th>
<th>4 Slightly agree</th>
<th>3 Neutral</th>
<th>2 Slightly disagree</th>
<th>1 Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>The articles in UQ News are interesting</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The articles in UQ News are relevant</td>
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* Terms and Conditions for the competition are available from the Office of Marketing and Communications on 07 3346 7886 or at http://uq.edu.au/news/survey/termsandconditions.html

– The survey is also available to complete online. Please visit http://uq.edu.au/news/survey or scan the QR Code at right to access the survey through your smartphone or tablet device.

continued overleaf
6 We are interested to know what type of content you like. For each of the following, please indicate if you would like to read more, or less of the following:

More of Less of

- Comments from the Vice-Chancellor
- UQ’s history and traditions
- The University’s strategic direction
- UQ’s research
- Faculty updates
- Institute updates
- UQ’s awards and achievements
- Upcoming events
- Visiting speakers
- Student achievements
- Student profiles
- Issues facing higher education
- Letters to the Editor
- Lifestyle stories

7 How would you like to read UQ News? (tick all that apply)
- In print
- Online
- As an app

The next series of questions relate to this current edition of UQ News.

8 Where did you get this edition of UQ News? (tick one)
- On campus, in a UQ News box
- In the UQ Library
- In a staff room
- In a student space
- In a common space (like the refectory)
- It was delivered to my home

9 How much time did you spend reading this edition of UQ News? (tick one)
- More than 45 minutes
- Between 30 and 45 minutes
- Between 15 and 30 minutes
- Between 5 and 15 minutes
- Less than 5 minutes

10 How many other people will read the copy of UQ News you picked up? (tick one)
- Just me
- 1 other person
- 2-4 other people
- 5-10 other people
- More than 10 people

11 On a scale of 1-5, please rate the following aspects about this edition of UQ News:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>5 Excellent</th>
<th>4 Good</th>
<th>3 Neutral</th>
<th>2 Poor</th>
<th>1 Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>The cover</td>
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<td>The content</td>
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<td>The writing</td>
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<td>The ease of reading</td>
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</table>

We’re interested in your opinion of UQ News overall.

12 UQ News is an excellent source of news about what is happening at UQ. (tick one)
- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

13 UQ News helps me feel more engaged with the UQ community. (tick one)
- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

14 Can you make any further suggestions to help us improve UQ News? (This could relate to distribution, content, or design/layout.)

Please include your contact details below:

Name: ____________________________
Contact number: __________________

If you wish to enter the draw, your details will not be matched to your responses, and will be used for competition purposes only.

For information on UQ’s privacy policy visit www.uq.edu.au/rti//index.html?page=42772
Indulge yourself in the culinary delights of Chinese cooking classes featuring six distinguished chefs from across Australia including special guest chefs Poh Ling Yeow, Master Chef Finalist and Host of ABC’s Poh’s Kitchen and Dan Hong, guest on Master Chef and Executive Chef of Mr Wong, Ms G’s and El Loco.

Supported by The University of Queensland, the Confucius Institute at UQ and the Australia Chinese General Chamber of Business, the cooking classes will take place from 13 September to 8 November 2012 at UQ’s St Lucia Campus Alumni Court. The classes will take you on an epicurean journey from how to make the famous Shanghai Chinese dumpling to the art of pastry making for red bean pancakes. Other well regarded Brisbane Chinese Chefs including Jimmy Chung, Head Chef at Super Bowl restaurant; Danny Liu, Head Chef at Manor Restaurant and K. Chen Chong, Head Chef at Old Town Kitchen will also be sharing their tips and tricks on how to make sumptuous Asian food at home during their classes.

With only 40 places available for each class, you don’t want to miss out. Tickets for UQ staff, students and Alumni are $110 each and $130 each for the general public. Classes go for approximately one and a half hours.

In addition members of the UQ Community are welcome to come to a general public viewing area to watch our celebrity chefs and participants in action. This is a free initiative.

To make a booking or express your interest to attend the audience viewing area for any of the cooking classes email the Confucius Institute at UQ info@confucius.uq.edu.au.

For more information visit www.uq.edu.au/confucius under the events section.

Celebrity chef Poh Ling Yeow will be hosting a mystery box cooking class on 20 September

Dan Hong is ready to tantalise our taste buds at his cooking class to be held at UQ on 25 October showcasing infused modern Chinese cuisine
When I enrolled at The University of Queensland, I never expected that my university experience would include an internship with the US Congress. Around campus I had noticed posters advertising the prestigious Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Program and without any expectation of being selected I submitted an application. I thought it might enhance my study of law and political science. Before long, I received confirmation that my application had been accepted and I began preparations for the intensive ten-week internship on Capitol Hill.

I was both deeply humbled and tremendously excited. Each year, the program offers a handful of Australian students to work as an intern in a range of US congressional offices and gain a unique insight into the US political system. It gave me a fascinating and unique opportunity to experience first-hand how laws are made and debated in one of the world’s most lively and influential political domains.

Before leaving for the United States, I had completed a few courses on United States foreign policy and international relations. While the courses were interesting, they hardly compared with the experience of witnessing foreign policy being made before your eyes.

I interned with Congressman Robert B. Aderholt, the Republican representative for Alabama’s 4th congressional district. Congressman Aderholt really took me under his wing, and I cannot speak more highly of the opportunities that he and the members of his office afforded me. His generosity allowed me truly to immerse myself in American politics and culture.

I was able to visit the United Nations, attend the State of the Union address, travel to Alabama with my Congressman, attend briefings on Capitol Hill, and I even had an impromptu meeting with the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden.

As participation in the program is unpaid, I was thrilled to be awarded a UQ Advantage Grant from the Office of Undergraduate Education to assist with my travel expenses.

Participating in the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Program has been the highlight of my university life, and receiving a UQ Advantage Grant was a tremendous help. I recommend anyone and everyone to get involved in the internship and foreign exchange programmes. They not only expose you to a magnificent array of cultural differences, they also give you a worldly perspective that is otherwise hard to achieve.

Dr Jessica Gallagher, Acting Director of the Office of Undergraduate Education said that the University is committed to providing opportunities for students to develop social and professional networks, to experience another culture and to challenge themselves intellectually.

“We encourage students to apply for a UQ Advantage Grant to assist with the costs of their involvement in activities such as conferences, internships, language study, research or volunteering programs,” Dr Gallagher said.

UQ Advantage Grant applications are open for travel between December and March.

www.uq.edu.au/undergraduate/advantage-grant