



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

TEACHING & LEARNING

2010

**EXPERIENCE
CONNECTIONS**

Not an ordinary man
Feet first into a
new career

In the company
of giants
Up to the challenge

A bright spark in
renewable energy
In the heart of the city

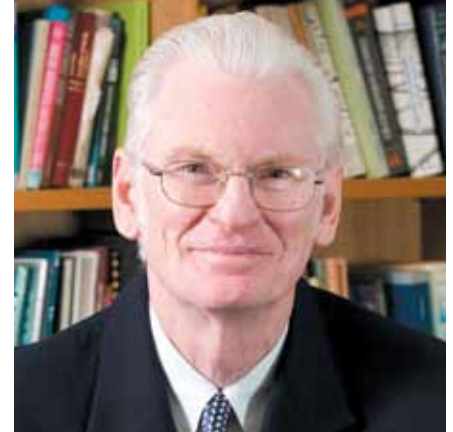
Cover:

Homestay hosts Victoria and Noel Hillier with student He Jiayin. Read their story on page 4.

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A message from
the Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Academic and Global Relations)
and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic)



Teaching & Learning 2010 celebrates great achievements by students and staff. A theme throughout this edition is that of ‘connection’ – to people, culture and place. This reflects the value the University of Newcastle places on fostering genuine connections in our teaching and learning.

Connection to people influences all that we do at the University. It is the people that make the institution the success that it is. *Teaching & Learning* captures many stories of our people and how they connect inside and outside of the University.

To connect with his students, for instance, Dr Kit Messham-Muir went to great lengths – filming his jump from an aeroplane and posting it on YouTube. Read about him and the unique connection he has with his students on page 12. Professor John O’Connor’s work on page 16 highlights the importance of connecting with our communities, particularly young people. The Science and Engineering Challenge, lead by Professor O’Connor, celebrated its 10th anniversary and 100,000th participant in 2010.

Connection to culture is vital in any community. Our international students contribute vibrancy and diversity to the University and to the region – they are an invaluable part of our social fabric. The University’s Homestay program connects

overseas students with local families where they form lasting friendships and learn first-hand about each others’ cultures. Victoria and Noel Hillier, featured on our front cover, opened their home to He Jiayin from China. Read about their connection on page 4.

Our Australian-based students are encouraged to experience cultural connections. Where possible the University paves the way for domestic students to gain part of their education overseas. This enriches the learning experience and offers them and the communities they visit distinctive opportunities. The iLEAD program on page 24 is one example of our students pursuing a connection with other cultures. This story demonstrates the benefits and joy that cultural connections can bring.

The University dedicates significant effort to enhancing the connections of our students with modern society by offering a quality experience, and the best in technology and infrastructure. The new

Exercise Science Building on the Central Coast on page 9 and the high-tech radiopharmacy laboratories on pages 6 and 7 are two examples of latest infrastructure upgrades that connect our students to state-of-the-art facilities and broaden their learning experience.

In this edition of *Teaching & Learning* you can read about advances in our learning environment that connect our students in other ways as well. Peer assisted writing, for instance, on page 13 is an innovative program connecting international research higher degree students to help each other with their writing.

The 2010 edition of *Teaching & Learning* demonstrates the value of connection, and provides a snapshot of the diverse and widespread connections the University promotes across our disciplines and activities. The aim is to offer everyone who connects with the University – students, staff and our communities – an experience that is engaging and rewarding.

Professor Nicholas Saunders
Vice-Chancellor and President

Professor Kevin McConkey
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Academic and Global Relations)

Professor Bill Hogarth
Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Academic)



A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Victoria Hillier could be talking about her own son when she describes international student He 'Brian' Jiayin, who has been living with her, and husband Noel, since August 2008 when he arrived from Shanghai.

"He likes to stay up late and talk with his friends and family on Skype," says Hillier, adding with an affectionate tone, "Brian's not an early riser."

He, who prefers to be called Brian, is completing a Master of Marketing at the City precinct and is one of more than 600 students from 26 countries who are living with Newcastle families as part of the University's successful Homestay program. Most students are from Asia, with others from the Middle East, Europe, the United States, Africa and South America.

The 24-year-old has adjusted to suburban Newcastle after the frenetic pace of Shanghai with relative ease thanks to the support of the Hilliers who are first-time hosts.

"I am very happy here," he says. "It is a different lifestyle but Victoria and Noel are very friendly and welcoming."

The Hilliers were encouraged to join the program by friend and regular host Fay Hardy. "Our children have grown up and left home and because we're located close to the University, we decided to participate," says Victoria.

"Brian has become part of the family and when we go away on weekends, he feeds the cat and looks after things. We trust him completely. Our grandkids adore him."

The couple was also inspired to join Homestay by their daughter Vanessa's fulfilling experience as an exchange student in Norway in 2000.

"Her host family were wonderful and have maintained contact after all this time," says Victoria. "She was treated like one of their daughters."

Homestay hosts, who range from first home buyers with a spare room to empty-nesters and retirees, receive rent and payment for food and internet charges. The program enables students to be involved in the day-to-day routine of Australian life and they gain valuable cultural awareness, as do host families.

Initial Homestay contracts are for four weeks, which is enough time for students to arrive and find their bearings though often the contract is extended. Ten per cent of students stay with their host family for the duration of their degrees.

The former long-term Homestay coordinator, Jenni Scobie, who retired in April 2010, is credited with fostering a model based on a sense of community among hosts and students.

"There really is a family spirit in the program and students are treated like the hosts' cousin, or niece or nephew," says acting coordinator Jessica Coughlan. "We have a number of events throughout the year including dinners and picnics that bring everyone together."

Hosts such as Maria and Milton Ward have participated in the program since its inception and forged strong links with their former students, many of whom are married and have become parents.

"We feel as though we have an extended family because even when the students return home, they stay in contact and keep us informed of what is happening in their lives," says Milton.

"When we were in Japan last year we contacted all our students and were able to meet up in all the various cities we visited. It was a wonderful reunion."

NOT AN ORDINARY MAN

Maybe it was having to wait patiently in the car as a young boy while his father completed seemingly never-ending ward rounds, or possibly the need to shape his own professional identity.

Whatever the reason, Professor Nick Talley, the University's new Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Health, was determined not to follow in his father's significant footsteps and become a gastroenterologist.

And while Talley seemed predestined for a career in medicine given that his grandfather had been an influential respiratory physician in Hungary and his father had carved out a successful career as a clinician, educator and administrator, he always felt the decision was his alone to make.

"My father is a very modest man who put himself through university with no family and no money after fleeing Hungary as a teenager," says Talley, who joined the University in June after eight years in the United States at the esteemed Mayo Clinic in Florida and Minnesota.

"He didn't ever hold me to a standard, or push expectations onto me. I've always considered myself to be very ordinary, and that may not have been a bad thing."

Talley decided to become a doctor in high school and resisted gastroenterology until

late in his training. He is now one of the most cited clinical scientists in the field and his father, who is 86 and still doing medico-legal work, could not be more proud.

"He has always been a great support and once or twice when I've been at a crossroads in my career, he gave me very good advice," says Talley.

"He was able to see the pros and cons and express them."

Prior to joining the Mayo Clinic, renowned for its patient-centred care and focus on multi-disciplinary teams, Talley held a number of leading positions in New South Wales including Foundation Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney and founding Head of the Division of Medicine at the Nepean Hospital.

He returns to Australia with his wife Cathy and youngest of three sons – the elder boys are students at the University of Sydney – at a time when health is undergoing significant challenges, not least the push for federal reform and the increasing strain on medical student training places.

"The system is in a state of flux right now and there is a lot of change happening," says Talley.

"Observing from a distance, it appears research in hospitals has taken a bit of a backward step. It's not a good sign for the health care system or for patients."

Talley is keen to encourage among students the three shields used by Mayo Clinic – research, education and practice.

"If the system has an interest in only one shield, focusing on practice at the expense of acquiring and applying new knowledge at the bedside, then it is much more challenging to deliver the very best care every single day," he adds.

"And I believe all health professionals should carve out the time to teach because frankly you become better at what you do. If you're not interested in teaching I do wonder if in fact you are putting yourself at a disadvantage as a health professional."

Talley is also determined to promote team work among students across the health disciplines as the key to maximising patient outcomes and providing safe and cost-effective care.



RADIOPHARMACY
LABORATORY IN USE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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INDUSTRY PARTNERS HELPING OUR MOVERS AND SHAKERS

In the not-too-distant past, the University's radiation therapy students had access to just five computers on which to practice treatment planning.

The School of Health Sciences had to run as many as 10 computer lab sessions a week to give each student adequate access to the specialised programs.

Now, thanks to a partnership with Varian Medical Systems, a world leader in radiation therapy products, there are 16 computers featuring \$1.8 million in the latest software. Students not only have more lab time, they are entering the workforce job ready and tech savvy.

"It's brilliant software that enables students to look at each organ in the body and determine its volume and the dosage of radiation it will receive," says program convenor Shane Dempsey.

"Students are learning how to apply the most up-to-date technology and it's why they're regarded as the movers and shakers in the field."

The software is visually spectacular: students construct a three-dimensional body, layering bones and organs as needed using hundreds of de-identified data sets.

NEW RADIOPHARMACY LAB THE ENVY OF ALL

The most recent high-tech addition to the School of Health Sciences is the \$1.5 million radiopharmacy laboratory, the largest facility of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere and, possibly, the world.

The impressive laboratory provides 13 work stations for the University's nuclear medicine students to prepare and dispense radiopharmaceuticals, which are used to diagnose and treat diseases. Hospitals, even large ones, often have just two stations.

As well as the fully integrated student-instructor work stations and dose calibrator systems, the laboratory features a 3D PET scanner, video facilities for online learning, centrifuges and a biological cabinet.

"This laboratory is a significant investment in teaching infrastructure, providing students with the latest technology used in the workplace, and promoting integrated learning," says the Head of School, Professor Darren Rivett.

The University has been teaching the Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science (Nuclear Medicine) degree program since

1991 and it is the only undergraduate degree of its kind in New South Wales. Graduates are in high demand and the entire 2009 cohort obtained jobs.

Prior to the opening of the laboratory in July 2009, the only hands-on experience available to students was through their clinical placements and it often wasn't until their final year that they were able to use radiopharmaceuticals.

"You learn through practice," says medical radiation science lecturer Daphne James.

"Every station we have is as it would be in a hospital department and students can learn without the pressure of dealing with real patient doses.

"A spillage or a mistake in making up an injection can be very stressful because radioactive pharmaceuticals are a very expensive resource. When students go out on clinical practice now, they're much more confident because of the lab time they get on campus."

One of the key reasons second-year student Kristen Trachsel, of Michigan, chose to study here rather than at an American university was the amount of practical experience in the program.

"At home you do three to four years of classes and then a one-year internship, whereas in my first year I was already in a hospital on placement," says Trachsel.

The new laboratory is the icing on the cake in terms of optimising learning opportunities.

"Just today I was drawing up doses while on clinical placement at Brisbane's Wesley Hospital and the staff were going to show me how to do it, but I'd already done it many times at University.

"You're able to build your confidence in the lab, which is more high-tech than most of the ones I've used in hospitals during my placements.

"Everyone's heard about our lab and they're very envious!"

The partnership with Varian Medical Systems is just one of a handful of important strategic links with industry leaders that set the University's medical radiation sciences students apart.

"We work closely with the clinical sector," says Varian Medical Systems managing director Chris Cowley, "so it makes sense to us to also work with the University where the next generation of clinicians are being trained."

Students can move into the workplace with ease having worked closely with the software that is widely used throughout the health sector.

This approach also benefits diagnostic radiography students who run simulations in the school's state-of-the-art imaging suite that replicates a hospital set-up and includes five x-ray units thanks to a partnership with Phillips.

"We have three students working together as a team," says Dempsey. "One is the patient, one is the radiographer and another is the peer assessor.

"We can put more students through here as 'patients' than many large hospitals can process in their department because of the number of units we have."

A long-term partnership with Fuji also means the students use a sophisticated digital imaging processing system, which has superseded film and enables students to export images to their personal folders where they can then use image manipulation software to complete the task.

"The partnerships have been absolutely vital to the development of our programs," says Dempsey. "The University, with the assistance of industry, has invested heavily in technology to make teaching and learning as strong as they can be and our students are the winners."



FEET FIRST INTO A NEW CAREER

When former club professional squash player and coach Darren Barclay was given a pair of poorly designed sport shoes, they not only damaged his feet but changed the direction of his life.

Although “debilitating and depressing” injuries resulted in intensive podiatry treatment, within weeks he was back in form.

“After seeing the podiatrist, it no longer took me 20 minutes to get moving in the morning,” recalls Barclay, who was competing and coaching in Montreal, Canada, at the time. “I’ve always had an interest in biomechanics so I started to see that podiatry was the profession for me.”

When Barclay discovered that the only podiatry course in Canada was at a French-speaking university, he decided to return to Australia to study. After some research he learnt that in New South Wales there is only one podiatrist per 100,000 people. Barclay was reassured that he would gain employment after graduation.

“I was keen on the University of Newcastle’s Central Coast campus because it offered a three-year degree instead of four,” the 34-year-old says, adding with a smile, “and the beaches were also appealing.”

Barclay relocated to the Central Coast in 2007 and in February 2010 was one of 38 students in the first cohort of Bachelor of Podiatry graduates.

He is now working full-time in Queensland at the Townsville Podiatry Centre, which specialises in sport injuries and biomechanics. On a busy day he can see up to 20 clients.

Barclay attributes the ease with which he handles a hectic schedule to the clinical experience he had as an undergraduate.

“The degree offered me a broad range of experience and I made the most of it, especially during clinical placements,” he says.

The University’s podiatry students complete 1,000 hours of supervised practice during the degree, which includes sessions in the campus’ community-based clinic.

“We aim to give students as much practical training as possible,” says podiatry program convenor Dr Vivienne Chuter. “The community clinic is extremely popular with local residents who receive discounted appointments and the students are able to develop a rapport with clients.”

The program has proven particularly appealing to mature-age students and there is strong demand for places given that only one other New South Wales university offers the degree. Students come from Sydney, Canberra and Newcastle, as well as the Central Coast.

“The ageing population and the increase in chronic disease means that podiatrists are desperately needed throughout Australia,” says Chuter. “The degree is also recognised overseas so it’s ideal for graduates who want to work and travel.”

All of this year’s graduates have been employed and are scattered throughout the country in both the public and private sectors.

Ultimately, Barclay hopes to be his own boss. “It’s definitely my goal and ideally I’d have a team of five or so podiatrists working with me,” he says. “At the moment though, I’m making the most of the professional development opportunities that are coming my way.”

ON YOUR MARK

When it is completed in mid 2011, the Central Coast campus' \$6.3 million Exercise Science Building will turn heads.



Suspended two storeys above the ground as part of the state-of-the-art biomechanics laboratory will be a running track.

"It's never been done before," says exercise and sport science program convenor Dr Xanne Janse de Jonge of the elevated track. "Usually the biomechanics lab would be on the ground floor but the architects have created a striking design.

"When we're doing lab tests, participants will start outside on the elevated track and will literally run through the lab out the door."

While the track is bound to be a talking point, it is what will be on the inside that is going to have the greatest benefit for the students, as well as the University's reputation for teaching and research in sport science.

The facility will house three laboratories featuring new technology, including camera systems for recording movement, three general purpose classrooms and specialist spaces for research and group work.

The aim is to open the new resistance training laboratory for use among staff and students on campus.

Ultimately the plan also includes a community-based exercise clinic modelled on the clinics successfully hosted by the podiatry and oral health programs.

"This is something that we aim to introduce, but it will take time," says Janse de Jonge. "We're just excited that we'll have the space and facilities to implement ideas and expose the students to a range of learning experiences."

The building's design will use environmentally sustainable elements such as solar passive construction, sustainable building materials, natural ventilation and rainwater tanks.

The new facility received \$4.1 million from the Australian Government's Capital Development Pool and Better Universities Renewal Fund with the balance funded by the University.

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Director Professor Stephen Crump says that the new facility will boost the national

reputation of the exercise and sport science program while injecting up to \$4 million into the local economy in direct construction costs.

"Sport science is an emerging area and we want to be able to provide our students with opportunities to develop research," he says.

"The facilities will enhance the learning experience for students and bolster our work in this exciting area."

At present, students head off-campus to access facilities as there is strong demand among the program's 180 participants for the use of available equipment.

The Central Coast's successful soccer team, the Mariners, have been an invaluable resource and have provided students with great learning opportunities.

"Not having enough laboratory space has hampered research for students, but this is about to change," says Janse de Jonge.

MOTHER DOCTOR WRITER IN ANY ORDER

No-one is more surprised than Karen Hitchcock about how her life has turned out.



Photo: Ben Adams

In the not-too-distant past she was studying English literature at La Trobe University “one subject a semester, nothing too taxing” and working in a TAB to support herself. “I never handed in an essay that I didn’t have five extensions for,” she says, only half-jokingly. “Then I decided to get serious after feeling directionless.”

Fast forward 12 years and the wiry, quietly-spoken doctor is finishing her physician training at the John Hunter Hospital, has completed a PhD in English (creative writing) at the University of Newcastle, is married, and a mother to five-year-old twin girls Ida and Yve.

Last, but definitely not least, Hitchcock is the author of a critically and commercially successful collection of short stories. Publisher Picador was so impressed with her manuscript for *Little White Slips* that they offered her a two-book deal, which is almost unheard of for a first-time author.

Little White Slips has subsequently won the Arts Queensland Steele Rudd Award and was short-listed in April 2010 for both the New South Wales Premier’s Literary Award for New Writing and the Dobbie Encouragement Award.

Hitchcock is now immersed in writing her debut novel and there is every possibility it will also be published in the United

Kingdom. “I can’t believe it,” says the 38-year-old, sincerely astounded at the unexpected twists and turns that have led her to this point. “I have moments where I’ll be thinking about my childhood in the paddocks of Deer Park (in western Melbourne) and then I’ll realise, oh my god, I’m a doctor, a mother, a writer.

“I’ve been really, really lucky.”

Hitchcock moved to Newcastle in 1998 to study medicine, her bag packed with “Melbourne garb made of black wool” and has thrived on combining her medical and writing careers; each passion informing the other.

“As a physician it’s your job to listen to people’s stories,” she says. “That’s what I like so much about internal medicine.”

Medicine has a strong influence on the settings and themes of her fiction. In the opening story in her collection, *Drinking When We Are Not Thirsty*, the protagonist Jessica is studying for her specialist physician exams and is on the verge of a stress-induced implosion.

Her husband and child are neglected as she becomes obsessed with the idea of escaping into the arms of an Irish registrar. While the dalliance is fiction, Hitchcock drew on her own experience to convey the intense anxiety that consumes many doctors in training.

“The year I sat my physician’s exam was hideous for my family,” she recalls. “I knew it was going to be hell. I did nothing but study. I couldn’t fail because I couldn’t put them through it again.

“Just after I finished the clinical exam, one of my girls – they were two at the time – said to me, ‘Mummy, you don’t play’, and I thought, thank god she said it now when I’m almost finished and can start playing. It would have been terrible to hear that if I was only halfway through.”

Hitchcock credits the University with giving her the opportunity to pursue both medicine and writing. In 2002 while in the fifth year of her medical degree, instead of travelling to developing countries for a three-month elective like many of her fellow students, Hitchcock joined the creative writing course in the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Helen Garner, who is now a friend and part-time neighbour, was then writer-in-residence and guided Hitchcock.

“I completed my first real story, which had a beginning, middle and end, and read it to the class and everyone laughed and loved it,” Hitchcock recalls. “It was the moment for me. I’d never been so happy in my life.”

What do Ida and Yve make of her dual careers? “If you ask what I do, they say, ‘Mummy is a doctor and an author’. They understand that each is just as important.”

IN THE COMPANY OF GIANTS

Andrew Howells' three-and-half-year-old daughter Milly believes the University is where people go to draw elephants.



And that's exactly what Howells, who is completing a PhD in Design and Natural History Illustration, does. However the significance of his research is far-reaching and has implications for international elephant conservation.

The 33-year-old is collaborating with scientists at the Fort Worth Zoo in Texas, University of Sydney, Washington State University and Feld Entertainment on the development of a computer-based body condition scoring program for captive Asian elephants.

The scoring program is part of a multi-faceted research project investigating the effects of nutrition and exercise on reproductive success. Howells is developing images that will contribute to the fieldwork process required to successfully assess and catalogue the body condition score.

Due to their lengthy 22-month gestation and the fact that only about 50 per cent of calves are born alive, it is essential to ensure elephants are in the best possible physical condition to reproduce.

Delivering a calf is a volatile process and the miraculous birth in March of 116 kilogram Pathi Harn at Taronga Zoo after a nine-day labour demonstrated how unpredictable the process can be,

shocking even the experts who had declared the male calf dead two days earlier.

"A good outcome is essential to the ongoing survival of the species," says Howells, who has spent the past two years drawing Taronga Zoo's Asian elephants from every possible angle.

In September 2009 he also had the opportunity to team up with researchers at Fort Worth Zoo in Texas as part of a three-week study trip, which was supported by the University's School of Design, Communication and Information Technology.

Howells observed a condition assessment on the resident herd and drew the animals at close range.

"It's important for keepers to be able to assess the health of the animals, but until now they've only had photographic images to use as a guide," says Howells, "and they can be unreliable because of the variables such as the type of camera used, available light and elevation."

Howells, a University of Newcastle fine arts graduate, is merging the tradition of drawing with digital media to create a visual reference guide using a grading scale of one to nine, from emaciated to overweight.

Each of the nine indexed body condition illustrations is supported by six illustrated perspectives of the elephant so observers can gauge how much fat and muscle condition there is.

"Like people, elephants carry weight in different places," says Howells.

"The idea behind developing illustrated references for undertaking body condition scoring is to create a generic elephant that demonstrates all nine indexed body conditions."

While body condition scoring is used widely for thoroughbred cattle and horses, few resources exist for exotic captive animals.

There has been a lot of interest in Howells' painstaking project, which cleverly merges art and science, from overseas zoos and the International Elephant Foundation. Its application could assist with the care of other captive animals, but for now Howells is focused on his gentle giants.

"Elephants are fascinating animals," says Howells. "If I can help with their conservation then all the hard work has been worthwhile."

Milly will be proud.



“
The sublime is about awe,
fear and delight in the face
of nature ”

TAKING THE PLUNGE

As a first-year art history student, Dr Kit Messham-Muir would sit at the back of lectures with his Walkman on.

“I thought I was an undiscovered genius so I didn't feel art history was important,” he says with a laugh. “Now that I'm teaching first year, I know where the most cynical students are coming from and will go to great lengths to keep their interest.”

It was Messham-Muir's determination to engage fine art students in a lecture about 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime that inspired him to take a dramatic leap out of a plane. The skydive was a birthday gift from his wife and coincided with the start of the 2010 academic year.

“I'd been planning my lectures and was trying to come up with a contemporary example of the sublime and there it was,” he recalls. “When I saw the present, I sucked in my breath and thought, right, now you've got what you're looking for and you're going to have to go through with it.”

He filmed the “frightening, exhilarating” skydive, edited the footage, posted it on YouTube for his students and used it in lectures.

“The sublime is about awe, fear and delight in the face of nature,” says Messham-Muir, of the School of Drama, Fine Art and Music. “Burke wrote about how nature's vastness impacts on our senses to the extent that we're overwhelmed and unable to act. I wanted to convey this to students in a way they'd understand.”

It's not the first time Messham-Muir has surprised students with his antics. Half way through a lecture in surrealism earlier in the year, he changed into his pyjamas to demonstrate the influence of dreams on artists' work.

And while his approach may appear gimmicky, Messham-Muir is adamant it is all about helping students connect with the content. “I approach teaching empathically,” he says. “It doesn't seem that long ago that I was a student wanting my lecturers to communicate in a way that was on my level.”

Messham-Muir's creativity and effort earned him the Early Career Award in the 2009 Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Teaching Excellence. The recognition from his peers and students thrilled the academic who has been at the University for almost three years.

“It was an occasion for me to take stock,” he says. “It also came after I completed a Graduate Certificate in the Practice of Tertiary Teaching last year, which transformed my attitude to my own teaching and made me rethink.”

The certificate, which is offered through the Centre for Teaching and Learning, increased Messham-Muir's workload but he can't recommend it highly enough.

“I thought I was an okay teacher, but it reminded me that you can always gain new skills and push yourself.”

Messham-Muir was one of eight academics to be honoured for outstanding contributions to student learning through the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Teaching Excellence in 2009.

Other award winners were Newcastle Business School's Brendan Boyle and Anthony Morrison; School of Psychology's Rowena Cooper; School of Education's Melissa Coote and Tracey Kelty; School of Drama, Fine Art and Music's Dr Philip Matthias; and School of Biomedical Science and Pharmacy's Josephine Smith.

THE CIRCLE OF TRUST

Writing clear sentences seems like a straightforward skill, but for international student Palanuch Kongka it is anything but.

"In Thai we don't use full stops," she says. "It's been very hard for me to recognise the pattern of English sentences. I always think in Thai first and then I write in English."

Completing a PhD in accounting is itself a challenge, even more so with English as your second language, but a new Faculty of Business and Law initiative is helping Kongka and other international research students across the Faculty improve their writing.

The Peer Assisted Writing Circles involve fellow research higher degree student facilitators who guide small groups of international students through any obstacles.

Students attend fortnightly, informal meetings and bring along examples of their work for their peers to evaluate and offer suggestions for improvement. The model is built on trust and encouragement.

"The writing process is probably the biggest obstacle for most research students," says Christiaan McComb who is completing a PhD and has been a writing circle facilitator since April 2010.

"There's a lot of self-doubt when it comes to completing a thesis and it can be a very isolating experience, even more so for international students for whom English is a second language."

For Kaelo Molefhe, a third-year PhD student from Botswana, the circle has provided much-needed support. "Writing is a difficult endeavour and while I can write two pages with no problem, sustaining that over 20 pages is a big challenge."

The Faculty of Business and Law has helped create three circles as a trial in 2010 and involved the Centre for Teaching and Learning in the training of facilitators.

"We're taking baby steps," says Deputy Head of Faculty Professor Jim Psaros, "but if the model works, there's no reason why it can't be extended to other faculties."

"There's a lot of optimism and goodwill. I'm sure the circle will help students become better writers."

SHARING STREET SMARTS

Until he was asked to participate in the University's Legal Centre initiative, Nathan Reilly had never contemplated how confusing even our most basic laws could be for international students.

"There's a lot we take for granted, such as calling 000 rather than 911," says Reilly, one of a group of fourth-year students who presented seminars on Australian crime, tenancy and employment laws to international students in 2009.

"It's been refreshing to concentrate on basic criminal law and see how helpful the information is for students who are trying to adapt to a new country."

Drawing on Street Law, a United States program that enables university law students to advise teenagers about their rights and responsibilities, the Legal Centre has implemented the seminars as a way of nipping any potential problems in the bud.

"We often see the students at the end of their stay when the problem is much more difficult to address because they're about to return home," says Legal Centre director Shaun McCarthy.

"These seminars are really important because we can get information to students at an early stage and can address any problems before they become more complicated."

"The students get information about their rights, which is empowering and it also enables the law students to see the impact they can have and how they can help."

"It's an opportunity for students to present information that is engaging, informative and topical."

The international students have responded to the seminars, which are a part of their orientation schedule, with enthusiasm and appreciation, and are comfortable enough in the company of their fellow student presenters to ask questions.

Some have opened up about awkward predicaments they are in and problems they are having in the workplace and with their rental arrangements.

Reilly's participation has inspired him to consider working in a community legal centre after graduation. "Doing the seminars, I could see that my knowledge and advice can be really important to clients and can have an impact on their lives."

"It's rewarding knowing that you can help."

ALTC AWARDS

An innovative program that has transformed the attitude of nursing students towards caring for older patients is one of six University programs recognised in 2010 with a Citation from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.



L-R: Johanna Macneil, Michael Ondaatje, Josephine Smith, Kevin McConkey (Deputy Vice-Chancellor –Academic and Global Relations), Yolanda Surjan, Sharyn Hunter.
Photo: Photocall Image Management. Absent Brendon Murphy

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations) Professor Kevin McConkey says the ALTC Citations are among the most competitive higher education awards in Australia. "They are awarded to staff whose passion and commitment have made a significant contribution to the quality of student learning over time.

"This year we've added more disciplines to an impressive tally, proof that quality teaching is in every corner of the University."

The University has received 28 citations in the past five years from fields as wide-ranging as dietetics, film studies, law and academic integrity. Winners received their citations at a presentation ceremony at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in August.

The Faculty of Health's

Sharyn Hunter: recognised for transforming the attitude of nursing students towards older people. Students can be reluctant to work with this section of the community because of misinformed stereotypes, causing a service gap in the continuum of health care. Hunter asks students to reflect on thoughts they might have about older people and then works with them to replace these with more positive views. Using her clinical background, Hunter talks to students about real older people and presents them with authentic clinical situations. Her program has been incorporated into national registered nurses training.

The Faculty of Education and Arts'

Michael Ondaatje: recognised for creating an engaging teaching environment and embedding innovative resources into nearly-developed American history courses. Australian tertiary students are aware of America's status as an international superpower, but their knowledge of United States society is usually only surface deep. Blending film, music and digital materials with traditional sources, Ondaatje provides students with some larger frames in which to contextualise the information they source about the United States from music, movies, television and the internet.

Faculty of Business and Law's

Johanna Macneil: recognised for successfully integrating problem-based learning into graduate human resource management courses, thereby enhancing student engagement, professional knowledge, and an appreciation for plural perspectives. In particular, Macneil employs problem-based learning and its principles in the introductory course for the Master of Human Resource Management in order to provide new students with a firm learning foundation. Macneil taps into the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, value systems, ages, life experiences and socio-economic status among her students, using that diversity as a resource to develop individual students and their appreciation of plural perspectives.

Faculty of Business and Law's

Brendon Murphy: recognised for embedding assessment items into the criminal law component of the Bachelor of Laws that develop core lawyering skills, and providing support to students in the transitional years of legal education. Assessment items include exercises that develop professional writing, research and application in problem-based hypotheticals, based upon content and materials that reflect the realities of the criminal law. Murphy supports students by encouraging the development of independent learning practices.

Faculty of Health's Josephine Smith:

recognised for responding to the needs of speech pathology students by developing innovative and effective teaching resources to support and enhance learning in head and neck anatomy. Learning anatomy can be daunting for students due to numerous Latin names and the use of cadavers. Smith asks students to create head and neck models using plasticine and string so they can learn the correct names and understand the movements of the mouth and jaw.

Faculty of Health's Yolanda Surjan:

recognised for developing a new course for first year health science students to assist with their transition to tertiary study. Surjan introduced significant modifications in the past three years that centre on relieving the anxiety commencing students feel as a result of their new environment and the need to find the information they require. Surjan created a clear framework through the provision of a School of Health Sciences Orientation Pack and immediate responses to student enquiries.



UP TO THE CHALLENGE

Science couldn't ask for a more fervent advocate than physicist Professor John O'Connor.

For the past 35 years he has committed himself to science outreach in an effort to reverse the four-decade decline in participation in the field, particularly in teaching.

"For my whole academic career I've been told that Australia produces more physicists than it needs, but that's not the case," says O'Connor, with just a hint of frustration.

"We've had to import skilled people from overseas. It's very worrying for our future given that science has an impact on all areas of our lives."

But O'Connor isn't one to sit back and complain. The Head of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences is a man of action, and his commitment to raising the profile of science has been acknowledged with two national honours.

In December 2009 he was presented with the Outstanding Service to Physics Award from the Australian Institute of Physics in recognition of his service to physics covering research, teaching, outreach and professional activities.

He has also been elected as a Fellow of the prestigious Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering for his leadership in science and engineering outreach through innovative school programs, including the University's successful Science and Engineering Challenge, which he helped expand.

Last year, 20,000 students from more than 600 Australian schools took part and, in 2010, the Challenge welcomed its 100,000th student.

O'Connor realised early in his academic career that it was essential to inspire high school students and get them thinking about how science could open up exciting professional opportunities.

"The fundamental goal of the Challenge is to alter student perception about how a science or engineering career works," says O'Connor, whose own area of expertise is surface science, which entails studying the properties of the first few atomic layers of solids.

"They think that scientists are nerds who work on their own and do uninteresting things with data.

"Through the Challenge they learn that to be a scientist or engineer you need to have creativity, innovation, problem-solving skills and team work.

"When the students arrive for the Challenge they're not that enthusiastic but once they're in teams and focused on their activity, you need a cattle prod to get them to go to lunch," he laughs.

O'Connor has that enviable knack of being able to explain complex concepts for the non-scientific community. It's all part of his open-minded approach to promoting the value of science.

"People are interested in science and it's important to encourage this because young people won't be as enthusiastic if they don't feel they have the support of the community," he says.

And even though he has been teaching for more than three decades, O'Connor still gets a kick from seeing young people make new discoveries.

"I think it is that moment when something clicks for them and they realise something fresh – it's nice to be part of it."



ABILITY AND ENTHUSIASM

If you were looking for 15-year-old David Ferris last summer you wouldn't have found him at the beach or skate park.

Instead, the teenager was immersed in a demanding 10-week work placement at the Australia Research Council Centre for Complex Dynamic Systems and Control (CDSC) as part of the University of Newcastle Industry Scholarship Scheme (UNISS).

Ferris worked with a five-person team headed by world-renowned Laureate Professor Graham Goodwin to complete a virtual laboratory for controlled systems design that focused on wind turbines.

The long-term plan is to distribute the completed laboratory as a teaching tool to other universities throughout the world.

Given the complexity, cost and danger of working on an actual turbine, the team worked together to create a way for students to simulate changing weather conditions and wind patterns.

Even though Ferris raced through high school in half the time and found the first year of his combined electrical engineering and mathematics degree reasonably easy, the CDSC project was particularly challenging.

"It isn't just about pointing the turbine into the direction of the wind, it's about getting

the average wind speed and working out the maximum power you can extract safely," says Ferris, who is now 16 and in second year.

"There are lots of interconnecting control systems and I hadn't actually studied control systems before so it was overwhelming at first."

During the placement Ferris wrote a significant amount of software and had to learn how to program at an expert level. There's no doubt that he relished the opportunity to extend himself and advance his knowledge.

When he describes the details of the simulated experiments, his enthusiasm is evident in his bright-eyed expression and animated gestures.

He is just as animated when discussing mathematics and, tongue-in-cheek, his *A Beautiful Mind* ability to see patterns and solutions as easily as seeing words on a page.

"Logic is a huge part of mathematics and I can grasp the concepts," says Ferris.

"It's not about sitting there and going through the multiplication table in your head. It's about problem-solving."

And while Ferris has ability far beyond his years, most of his friends are from school and are only a couple of years older. He isn't at all perturbed by studying and working alongside people who are his parents' age.

"I've never really wanted to hang out with people my own age," he says without a hint of awkwardness. "I didn't feel like a kid when I was young, but I don't think I missed out on very much to be honest."

Ferris is passionate about video games and science fiction but has little time for music, sport, or Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series which his 13-year-old sister Rachael – who is also being accelerated through high school – paid him to read because she was convinced he'd fall under the spell of the teenage vampire love story. He didn't, though he enjoyed Meyer's science fiction offering *The Host*.

When asked about life beyond his five-year degree, Ferris doesn't yet have any specific plans. "I'm good at what I'm doing, so I'm just going to get better at it."

A BRIGHT SPARK IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

As the world starts paying greater attention to the benefits of wind power, electrical engineering student Chris Rowe is doing his bit to advance the technology that drives this valuable source of renewable energy.

"I'm only interested in the renewable energy field – it's where I feel electrical engineering can make a real difference and it's an expanding industry," the 24-year-old says.

His creativity and commitment were applauded on the international stage in December 2009 when he won a global wind energy competition in Denmark.

The Winnovation Challenge, which was sponsored by Vestas, a leading manufacturer of wind turbines, involved 40 student finalists from around the world who each presented an innovative proposal for the production of more cost-effective wind energy. The students then competed in two days of engineering and business team challenges.

Rowe gave a presentation on his ambitious idea of mounting a wind turbine on a skyscraper to produce energy, further maximising energy production by using the turbine to also draw water up the building. The water would flow down through another turbine to create more energy.

"It was really competitive and there were so many great proposals," he says. "In one of the challenges we had an hour to look at ways to reuse the fibreglass blades of turbines, which have a 25-year life span.

"I was paired up with a business student so we explored the eco-tourism market and we proposed using the blades to build catamarans."

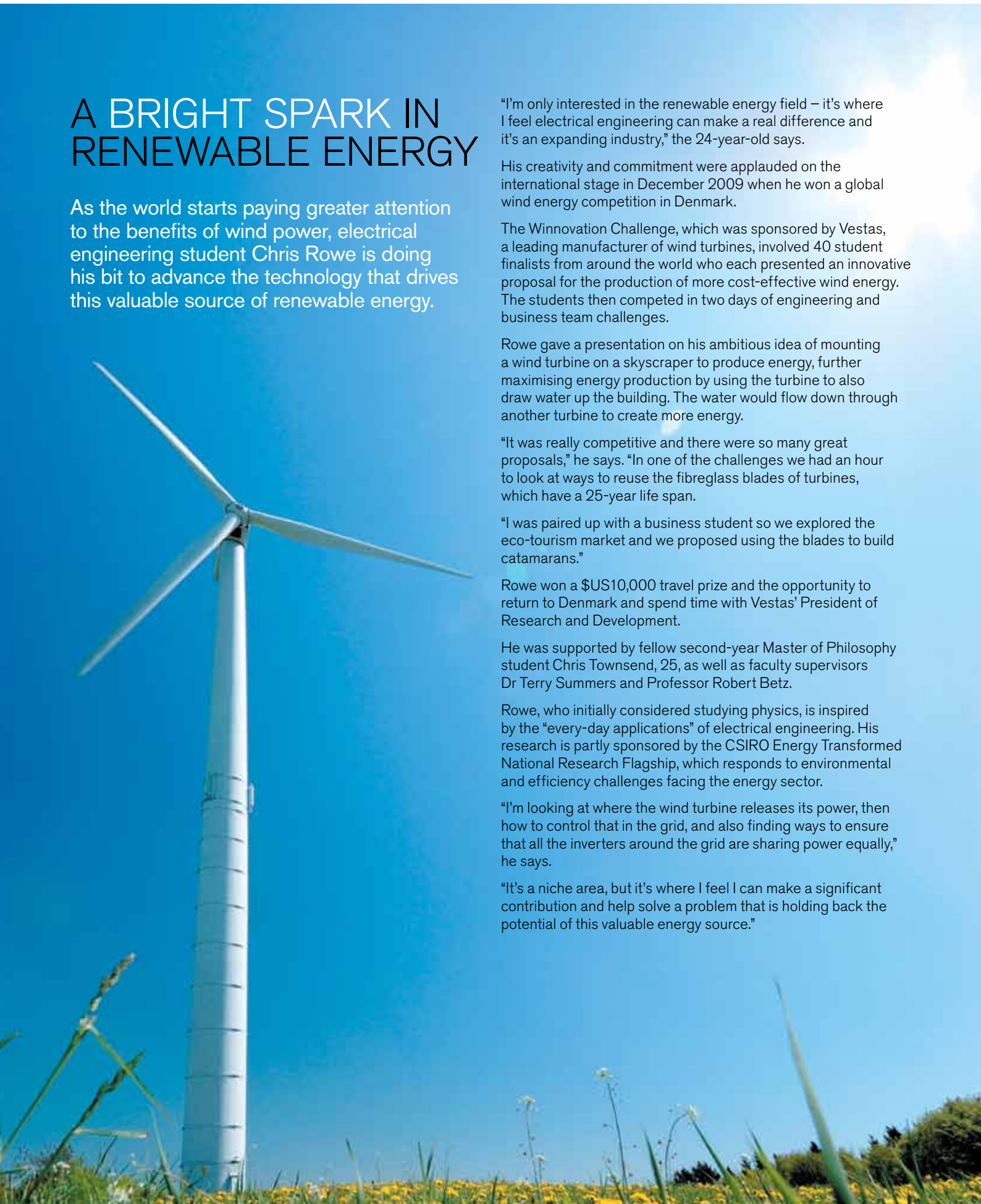
Rowe won a \$US10,000 travel prize and the opportunity to return to Denmark and spend time with Vestas' President of Research and Development.

He was supported by fellow second-year Master of Philosophy student Chris Townsend, 25, as well as faculty supervisors Dr Terry Summers and Professor Robert Betz.

Rowe, who initially considered studying physics, is inspired by the "every-day applications" of electrical engineering. His research is partly sponsored by the CSIRO Energy Transformed National Research Flagship, which responds to environmental and efficiency challenges facing the energy sector.

"I'm looking at where the wind turbine releases its power, then how to control that in the grid, and also finding ways to ensure that all the inverters around the grid are sharing power equally," he says.

"It's a niche area, but it's where I feel I can make a significant contribution and help solve a problem that is holding back the potential of this valuable energy source."



“

I know I can't dance forever so I wanted to get my degree because it gives me more options ”

GREAT PERFORMANCE



When Jessica Prince walked onto the *So You Think You Can Dance* stage in late March 2010, there was barely a dry eye in the crowded studio.

Having reached the top eight of the popular televised dance competition, the much-loved ballroom dancer and final-year mathematics student tearfully announced she was withdrawing because of injury.

The 22-year-old had been told by doctors two days earlier that the risk of further damage to her pelvis and lower back was too great.

"I cried a lot and ate chocolate," recalls Prince, who is now able to smile about the most heartbreaking decision of her life. "It was the worst luck and I was devastated. I'd been prepared to dance on because I'd managed to push through the pain all that week, but ultimately it was too dangerous."

For weeks, the top 20 dancers had endured a gruelling regimen that included daily 10-hour rehearsal sessions, even on weekends. Prince lost five kilograms; she simply couldn't eat enough to keep up with the extreme level of activity.

Most dancers were carrying minor injuries but Prince's was far more serious. Every time she raised one of her legs while dancing, her damaged pelvis would compress the nerves in her back, triggering spasms.

"We were told that our training was more demanding than that of an Olympic athlete," says Prince, who began ballroom dancing at 17 after a childhood spent in ballet classes. "Usually when you are rehearsing you dance for a maximum of five hours a day with weekends off.

"The pressure was immense and it was both mentally and physically exhausting."

Her university studies were put on hold for first semester but she has enjoyed returning to campus and her other great love. "I've always enjoyed maths," she says. "I like having the two distinct interests and couldn't imagine giving up either."

Being pragmatic, Prince has always wanted to have a back-up plan given the fickle nature of the dance industry. "You can be in demand one week and then the work dries up. I know I can't dance forever so I wanted to get my degree because it gives me more options."

Majoring in finance, Prince is considering a career in banking or as an actuary after completing her degree at the end of the year, but at the moment she is making the most of the exposure she gained from *So You Think You Can Dance*.

"The show gives you a substantial foot in the door," she says. "Before I was just another dancer, but I've managed to boost my profile and I'm doing everything I can to take advantage of that."

Prince has also had to adjust to the attention of fans as she's going about her normal routine as a student and born-and-bred Newcastle resident.

"It's overwhelming at times to realise how much impact the show has," she says. "People see me out and about and say hello, which is nice. It's also rewarding when you receive emails from young dancers saying how much you inspire them."

CAPTURING OUR WILD COLONIAL BOYS

They were the rural gangsters and 'ladies' men' who could have stepped straight from the pages of a Hollywood movie script with names such as Captain Thunderbolt and Yellow Billy.



During a 20-year blitz these bandits defied authority, terrorising towns the length of the Great Dividing Range, but as Australian history lecturer Dr Susan West discovered while researching her PhD, New South Wales bushrangers were often rebels *with a cause*.

"Most were the children of convicts and belonged to the rural working class, but were still being treated like convicts," says West, who spent hundreds of hours poring over legal and government documents at the State Records Office to create a database of 422 bushrangers who operated between 1860 and 1880.

"There was a confusing, rudimentary class system and the authorities and the free population didn't quite know how to regard the native born, who were struggling to get access to affordable land.

"By the mid-1860s, the majority of the population was native-born and yet it's the British-born running the show in terms of law enforcement and land ownership.

"There was a nationalistic mood and the whole colony was in a state of flux."

West's research was published in 2010 by Australian Scholarly Publishing. The book, *Bushranging and the Policing of Rural Banditry in New South Wales, 1860-1880*, explores the motivation and treatment of bushrangers and has received positive reviews from scholarly and mainstream publications.

The colourful details of many of the bushrangers intrigued West, who has some sympathy for the bandits because of the harsh and inconsistent punishment they received when captured, including lengthy prison terms and death by hanging.

While Hollywood might play up the glamour, the life of crime didn't last long for most bushrangers who often struggled to simply find enough food and clothing.

It was not a lucrative occupation, though Frank Gardiner and his gang, which included the infamous Ben Hall, stole about \$3 million in gold and cash when they executed their Eugowra heist in 1862.

Captain Thunderbolt, aka Frederick Ward, managed to stay on the run for seven years and is the longest-lasting bushranger. He is also the only one known to have travelled with his family, mainly his part-Aboriginal companion Mary Ann Bugg whose descendents claim taught him his bush survival skills.

Newspapers of the day were filled with details of the bushrangers' exploits and their crimes inspired copycats, particularly among directionless, young men.

"If you were good with a horse and had nothing much to do, bushranging seemed like an exciting adventure," says West. "People did support them when they were on the run, and there's no doubt that women were attracted to the power and supposed glamour that surrounded them."

West argues that a bigger, better-equipped police force and the introduction of a reward system led to the demise of bushranging, though not their influence over our past.

"It was a wild generation, and there was a lot to rebel against," she concludes.

NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION

Rebecca Amery doesn't do things by halves. Three years ago when planning to study speech pathology, she didn't hesitate to pack her bags and relocate from Darwin to Newcastle.

"My brother was in New South Wales and after considering Sydney I was attracted to the University of Newcastle because of the lifestyle and the reputation of the course," she says.

On campus, Amery has immersed herself in student life, balancing study and leadership roles with the Newcastle University Student Association (NUSA).

Come November 2010, the 21-year-old will be off on another adventure, swapping the leafy surrounds of the Callaghan campus for Vietnam where she will focus on her Honours project and complete a work placement.

Amery will spend eight months in Vietnam as a recipient of the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award, a new

scholarship providing opportunities for students to gain up to two years' international experience and build professional networks in Asia.

The Award provides financial assistance of up to \$60,000 towards travel, tuition and internship contributions.

"I travelled to Vietnam in November 2009 for a three-week additional experience placement and it was really rewarding," says Amery, who visited health facilities in Ho Chi Minh City and Hoi An. "Speech pathology is an emerging discipline there and I could see so many opportunities to contribute and learn."

As well as furthering her Honours research into the development of intercultural competence in speech

pathology students, she will work on a practical project with the Trinh Foundation Australia in Hue before travelling to Ho Chi Minh City to complete an internship as part of the Award.

"I think language will be a challenge, but I'm going to do some intensive study early next year and work really hard to overcome any cultural differences as well," says Amery.

"I'm sure I'm going to meet interesting people.

"Who knows? I might enjoy it so much I could stay on," she adds with a laugh, though it wouldn't be at all surprising.

A GENTLE TOUCH

In a simple hospital ward in north Thailand, third-year nursing student Gunilla Haydon watched a group of 12 women in labour and was struck by the silence.

Each woman was lying on a bed and being supported by a nurse who massaged her back and applied heat packs. There was no medication, noise or fuss.

"The Thai nurses were studying non-pharmacological pain relief for women in labour and they showed us how to use massage to help them through the discomfort," Haydon recalls of her life-changing, two-week educational trip.

"When the women were ready to give birth, they were taken into a room for privacy. The nurses had time just to focus on one patient at a time. There was no rushing about.

"I came away with a more open-minded view of patient care. Thai nurses take a holistic approach and learn about natural therapies as part of their studies.

We saw this in practice in aged care and the rehabilitation of stroke patients as well."

The cultural exchange was organised by the Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery, Associate Professor Pamela Van der Riet, for second and third-year students enrolled in the complementary health elective and was subsidised by the University.

"It's a very full-on two weeks," says Van der Riet, "but the students get to see a different health care system that doesn't have the same resources and it helps expand their perspective."

One occupational therapy student and 11 nursing students stayed in the ancient city of Lampang, south of Chiang Mai, where they visited various health care facilities and spent eight intensive days learning Thai massage.



The experience has motivated Haydon to pursue postgraduate study in 2010 and she hopes to research how humour can affect patient recovery and shape the relationship between nurse and patient.

"Going to Thailand has encouraged me to think outside the square and to view nursing differently," says the mature-age student at the University's Port Macquarie campus.

"Nurses can do anything!"



IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

Master of Business student Ali Mahdizadeh is accustomed to the hustle and bustle of a big city having been raised in the Iranian capital Tehran with its population of 16 million.

So when it came to expanding his skills to boost his role in his family's medium-sized manufacturing company, Mahdizadeh searched for an overseas university to complete a Master of Business.

He considered the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia, but was attracted to the University of Newcastle's program in the heart of Sydney's CBD.

"I needed more knowledge about business management and the content of the University of Newcastle course was very up to date and relevant," he says.

"Also, my sister was living in Sydney and she told me how nice it was, how green it was compared to Tehran."

Mahdizadeh arrived in Australia with his wife and three-year-old daughter in August 2009 and belongs to the University's first cohort of students in Sydney.

The purpose-built facility was officially opened in October 2009 by Vice-Chancellor Professor Nick Saunders.

"The Sydney location has been welcomed by international students who want to live in Sydney but also study at our University," he says.

"The location and facilities are very appealing, and adds to our campuses in Newcastle, the Central Coast, Port Macquarie and our presences in Singapore and Hong Kong."

The University occupies two floors of a Bathurst Street building and includes wireless internet, library, computer laboratory, study areas, lecture theatres and on-site teaching and learning support.

Mahdizadeh has enjoyed the convenient location, close to public transport, cafés, cinemas and shops. "We are right on the doorstep of Chinatown, Darling Harbour and Town Hall. There is a lot of choice for things to do beyond the campus."

A large percentage of the 150 students are from China, but there are also students from Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Italy and Australia.

Sydney director Hock-Thye Chan says there is "huge potential" to increase student numbers, particularly domestic students who work in the city and are keen to update their qualifications.

"The central location and the programs that are available are very appealing," he says. "We attract a lot of interest from people walking by and there's definitely recognition of the University's strong reputation."

Mahdizadeh returned to Tehran after his final exams in early May and while he was happy to be home, he hopes to apply for residency and return to Australia in the future.

"Australia is a good country and I think it would be beneficial for my daughter to live here again," he says. "She is speaking some English now and I would like her to have the opportunity to learn more."

For now though, he will continue to help oversee his family's three factories albeit with more knowledge and awareness.



ON A WING AND A PRAYER

After four rotations in Haiti as a United Nations contractor, pilot Porang Montaseri (on left) knew well the struggle of locals to survive against the odds.

Nothing could have prepared him though for the widespread devastation that dominated his fifth stint in January 2010.

Six days after arriving from his Canadian home, the University of Newcastle GradSchool.com masters student was driving in Port-au-Prince with two colleagues when their car shunted forward.

"We thought we'd been hit by another car, so we quickly pulled over," recalls Montaseri. "Within seconds there was thick dust filling the sky. It looked like a sand storm. We knew something really, really bad had happened."

Returning to their damaged compound, the trio used walkie talkies to communicate with other UN staff because the devastating earthquake had crippled all telecommunications.

Montaseri was placed on stand-by and within hours he was picked up by helicopter – all roads were closed – and delivered to the airport where he began the first of many, often heartbreaking flights between Port-au-Prince and the neighbouring Dominican Republic capital Santo Domingo, as well as Miami in the United States.

He flew out injured UN personnel and the families of dead workers and returned with emergency supplies and additional UN support staff.

He worked 14 to 17 hour shifts for 11 days before being forced to stop for three days because of occupational health and safety regulations. His rotation lasted four months.

"Honestly, when you are put in a situation like that you get extra strength from somewhere," says Montaseri, who has been working on contract for the UN since 2001. "You don't think about anything else other than how to help. The Haitian people didn't have much to start with, and what little they had they lost.

"The saddest part for me was evacuating the wives and children of the UN workers who were killed. I didn't lose anyone close to me, but it was very hard seeing families overwhelmed by grief."

In the midst of his gruelling schedule, Montaseri received an email from GradSchool's Jodie Davis offering assistance.

In the final year of his Master of Aviation Management, Montaseri welcomed the support. Remarkably, he did not miss an assignment deadline.

"I would wake up at four o'clock in the morning and study before my flights," he says. "It was the only time I had and it was hard, but once I start something I like to finish it."

The flexible nature of the part-time masters program, as well as its online format, has enabled Montaseri to juggle his transient, demanding job with his studies. He will complete his degree in August 2010.

Since 2000, GradSchool has been offering graduate students in Australia and across the world access to more than 450 online University of Newcastle postgraduate courses across 60 degree programs.

"I saw an ad for the Master of Aviation Management in *Flight Safety Australia* magazine during a UN flight from Dili to Darwin," Montaseri says. "It has a very solid program with a good reputation. I've really enjoyed studying even though it's been challenging because of my work circumstances. While I wasn't sitting in a lecture theatre, the course still encourages you to participate."

At the time of publication and after a well-earned break, Montaseri was awaiting his next rotation.

"It could be Haiti again or East Timor, the Ivory Coast, Liberia or Afghanistan," he says matter-of-factly. "I'm not sure where I'll go, but I can't imagine doing anything else."

LEAD THE WAY

When education student Pam Connell travelled to Rwanda last June for her three-month practicum, she not only taught 10 hours a day but ended up assisting in the overhaul of the country's education structure.



"I completed my prac at Sonrise Boarding School in the north west of Rwanda and planned to stay on for another three months over the University summer break," recalls Connell.

"I volunteered in the Ministry of Education, which was in the midst of rolling out a new national English program so that it could become the language of face-to-face education.

"I drew on my experience at the University of Newcastle and, working with locals and an English as a Second Language coordinator from Canada, I helped design a curriculum as well as train teachers in learner-centred methodology."

It wasn't until Connell returned home in January that she could take in the depth of her experience in Rwanda.

She has no doubt that her trip was enhanced by the insight she had gained through the University's innovative International Leadership Experience And Development program, iLEAD.

Established in 2009, the program provides opportunities for students from any course and background to gain knowledge and leadership in an international context.

More than 1,000 students are enrolled in iLEAD and participate in skill-building seminars as well as attend the International Leaders Series lectures. They gain international experience through study exchange, volunteering, internship or other relevant activity.

The University provides assistance with travel expenses and the sky is the limit in terms of international destinations with students venturing to a broad range of countries including Honduras, Vietnam, South Africa, Nepal, Thailand, Japan, Costa Rica, India, France and the United States.

"The program is primarily designed to internationalise the experience of our students and encourage them to gain an international perspective and global competencies," says iLEAD manager Gerry Lee, of the International Office.

"For students who are already motivated, iLEAD gives them a flexible structure and assists with career development."

The program can be completed in a year or over the duration of a degree.

Guest speakers have included the founder of Contiki Tours John Anderson, Oxfam executive director Andrew Hewett, world champion surfer Layne Beachley, and filmmaker Khoa Do.

Seminar topics include understanding the global financial crisis, community engagement, emotional intelligence and leadership, and principles and opportunities in volunteering.

Participants are also encouraged to volunteer locally and many have been involved on campus with Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and the University's Community Connections program, which aims to assist international students and their families to build friendships with people from the local community.

"The program gives your degree more grunt, but also strengthens your awareness of other cultures and the issues affecting them," says Connell, who is now in fourth year and plans to return to Rwanda in late October.

"Before I went to Africa, I attended iLEAD seminars and what I learnt helped me understand where we fit into the global context, which was a huge help while I was in Rwanda.

"It's due to iLEAD that I'm now going on to complete a masters and use my overseas experience as part of my research.

"It's opened the door to much more than ever I thought possible."

The University of Newcastle

For more information about the articles in this publication please visit www.newcastle.edu.au/teaching-and-learning

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not driving **2,241** km

OR



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