The University is seeking the involvement of alumni around the world in a new Alumni Council.

The establishment of a Council recognises the enormous talent, expertise and creativity within the alumni community and the identification of a suitable mechanism to channel these to benefit the University and alumni.

The new Council will be charged with developing goals and actions that work to:
- enrich the student experience
- provide career opportunities for students and alumni
- assist in promoting and profiling the University
- develop connections between alumni and the University, and among alumni
- guide programming and policy on alumni-related matters
- encourage a culture of giving back to the University.

Nominations open on 1 July and close on 31 July. Voting commences on 7 August and concludes on 29 August.

For more information about how to nominate and to vote please visit unimelb.edu.au/alumni/alumni-council-elections.

The inaugural Alumni Council will be announced on the alumni website (unimelb.edu.au/alumni) in September.

You can find more information online on the Alumni Council statute at unimelb.edu.au/Statutes/s31.html and the elections at unimelb.edu.au/Statutes/r31r1.html.
WIN TICKETS to Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs at Melbourne Museum

The Alumni Office has 40 tickets to Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs to give away, exclusively for University of Melbourne alumni. To be in the running to win, log-in to the alumni portal or create a new account and register your details at alumni.unimelb.edu.au/tut-tut. Competition closes midnight 31 August, 2011.

For the full program of lectures go to museumvictoria.com.au/tut-lectures

This issue highlights some of the many alumni events, benefits and services. Go to unimelb.edu.au/alumni

your alumni community

In my three years as head of Alumni Relations a lot has changed for us, and I hope for you also. Our program content has expanded, becoming more integrated and focused on providing value to you as important members of the Melbourne community. Very happily, the number of alumni involved in programs increased to over 10 000 locally and internationally in 2010.

We also communicate in new ways. Our e-communications allow you to tailor the digital content you receive, and we are the only University in Australia to give you this choice. (Visit alumni.unimelb.edu.au/apc for more details). Active groups on Facebook (facebook.com/melbourneunialumni) and LinkedIn (go.unimelb.edu.au/4j) bring an even more immediate and highly two-way dimension to alumni connections.

We are mindful of our carbon footprint. If you receive a hard copy of the magazine but would prefer an online version we would be happy to oblige – just forward us your email. This year will also see the formation of a new Alumni Council. This Council will serve as the key forum representing the alumni community. I encourage you to consider nominating alumni colleagues and voting in the August elections. Refer to the inside cover for more details.

This issue again highlights some of the many alumni who continue to better our society both locally and globally. I hope it also provides some insight into how a lot has changed for us, and I hope for you also.

Leonie Boxtel
Director, Alumni Relations

The Alumni and Friends portal puts you at the centre of all you need to make the most of being an alumnus, including exclusive events, benefits and services. Go to unimelb.edu.au/alumni

alumni voices

BOOKS

Quarterly Essay 40: Trivial Pursuit: Leadership and the End of the Reform Era by George Megalogenis (Black Inc. 2010)

In the aftermath of the 2010 election, George Megalogenis (SCom 1984) considers what has happened to politics in Australia.

Making News by Tony Wilson (Pier 9, 2010)

Tony Wilson (BA/LLB 2000) tells a darkly hilarious story about celebrity culture, the media and what really goes on behind the smutty front pages that everyone loves to read.

Nice Work by Jana Wendt (MUP, 2010)

Jana Wendt (BA (Hons) 1997), one of Australia’s most experienced journalists, sets out to discover what drives us in the work we do.

The Participation of States in International Organisations; the Role of Human Rights and Democracy (Cambridge University Press 2011) by Alison Duxbury

Associate Professor Alison Duxbury (LLB 1992, LLM 1996, PhD 2008) examines the role and legitimacy of human rights and democracy as membership criteria for international organisations.

The Constitution of Australia: a Contextual Analysis (Cambridge University Press 2011) by Professor Cheryl Saunders

The Gift

by Joanna Murray-Smith at the MTC Theatre, Summer

Whipped in Joanna Murray-Smith’s (BA 1985) glistening dialogue, her latest play reveals another witty examination of our modern moral confusion. Until 9 July.

Animal Kingdom

Tony Wilson (BA/LLB 2000) tells a darkly hilarious story about celebrity culture, the media and what really goes on behind the smutty front pages that everyone loves to read.

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Abigail is an ordinary woman who spends her days in her relentless pursuit of the truth. One day she encounters a mysterious man who offers her a dance she cannot refuse.

Abigail (BA 1985) and Tony Wilson (BA/LLB 2000) are among the many alumni involved in programs increased to over 10 000 locally and internationally in 2010.

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FILM

Recently released Blame features a creative team bristling with VCA and Music graduates

This psychological drama about a group of young vigilantes seeking revenge for a sexual betrayal is written and directed by Michael Henry (BFT 1998, MFT 2004) and produced by Michael Robinson (BDesign 1996, GDipPro 1997).

The film’s original score is by VCA Music composition graduate Tamil Rogeon (BMusPerf 1997) and stars three VCA acting graduates: Simon Stone (BDesign, 2000), Ashley Zulkerman (BDesign 2006) and Mark Leonard Winter (BDesign 2005). Officially selected for the Melbourne International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival and the Chicago International festival Film, among others.

Animal Kingdom roars at the AFI awards

The dark Melbourne crime thriller by director and VCA alumnus David Michôd (BA 1992, BA(Hons) 1995, GDipFT 1997) won all the major gongs and claimed nine awards including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay at the 2010 AFI awards. Cinematography is by fellow alumnus Adam Arkopaw.

Short film success

VCA Film and TV grad Kasimir Burgess (BFin3Art 2002, GDipFT 2003) has won best short film at this year’s Berlin Film Festival with his film Lily. FTV alumnus Ariel Kleinman won the International Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking at Sundance and Best Screenplay in a Short Film at the AFI awards for Deeper Than Yesterday.

MUSIC

Anna O’Byrne as Christine in Love Never Dies

Anna O’Byrne (MusPerf 2007, BMusPerf(Hons) 2008) landed a coveted role in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s new musical which premiered in Melbourne in May.

Percy Grainger commemoration

Earlier this year, Benjamin Northey (BMus 1999, MMus(MusPerf) 2002) performed at MAdFest in Australia, a special Melbourne Symphony Orchestra performance to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of legendary Australian composer Percy Grainger.
brave new world: the challenging higher education landscape

In 2010, Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis presented the Boyer Lectures on ABC radio. For the first time in the lectures’ 51-year history, higher education was the subject under discussion. In ‘The Republic of Learning: Higher education transforms Australia’, Professor Davis described the vital role of universities in shaping and enriching the nation and some of the challenges ahead.

This year, Professor Davis takes up the Chair of Universities Australia, the peak body representing the sector. We speak with the Vice-Chancellor about the key issues facing universities and what the future might hold in light of recent reviews and the changing higher education landscape.

What are some of the major challenges facing the higher education sector?
The biggest challenges always for universities are the quality of teaching, the student experience, excellence in research, and ensuring the institution is contributing to the broader society.

To make all this happen, we always end up talking about funding. But this must be the means, not the end, for any debate about higher education.

For nearly twenty years, public funding per student has been falling in Australia. Necessity has this has consequences for the quality of student and staff life on campus. At Melbourne we’ve worked hard to offset that funding shortfall through increased international student revenue, administrative reform and cost-cutting. But nobody comes to work at a university because their prime interest in life is how to reduce back-of-house costs. Rather, we’ve accepted and implemented efficiencies so that every available dollar can be where it belongs, in supporting great academic staff in the classroom, in doing world-class research, and providing the best possible campus and student services.

One emerging challenge is the recent fall in international student numbers. This is a trend with many contributing causes: the dollar at its highest level since the 1960s; renewed competition from the United States and United Kingdom; an emerging world class network of universities through Asia; and issues around student visas and perceptions of safety.

This trend highlights just how dependent Australian universities have become on international student revenue. We rely on our international cohort to make up the underfunding of Australian students. Not surprisingly, this is a risky strategy in the long run, and the present decline will draw policy attention to questions of system sustainability.

One welcome development in 2011 is the Higher Education Base Funding Review, due to report in October. The review is examining funding levels required for Australia’s universities to remain internationally competitive.

The federal government has also signalled a major rethink of laws governing universities through a new regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). If the policy works as presented, this agency should prove an important guarantee of continued high standards in Australian tertiary education.

What impact has the Bradley and other reviews had on the University of Melbourne?
The 2008 Bradley Review has proved an influential report to government. Among its recommendations was a significant increase in the number of Australians who attend university. Bradley proposed a national goal that would see 40 per cent of Australians aged between twenty-five and thirty-four with a university degree. In particular, the Bradley committee was keen to see improved participation by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds – an ambition shared widely in the community.

At 47,000 students the University is already at full stretch. We need to do our part toward achieving national goals, but like other institutions must think carefully to avoid damaging the student experience on campus.

How do you see the situation being resolved?
One solution may be to create new institutions. Hopefully these will not just be copies of existing universities. An expanding higher education sector is an opportunity to broaden the choices available to students. There will always be strong demand for research-intensive universities, but there are many other sorts of higher learning bodies possible. There is scope for further dual-sector universities that combine excellent vocational education with opportunities to progress into degrees. Community colleges and foundation programs can support students not yet ready for degree study.

So while we face policy challenges, it is a moment also when genuine innovation becomes possible.

How will universities continue to thrive with regard to access, research, and teaching quality?
New institutions, new ways of thinking about education, new modes of delivery – these are essential for expanding diversity. Existing universities, including Melbourne, do an important job providing opportunities in Australian cities and regions. Even so, there are individuals who miss out. To expand participation, we need to think about new forms of education engagement.

In turn, the sector will be better for the competition promoted by different institutional missions. If we are serious about increasing student numbers across the sector, education must reach out to a wider number of potential students.

As for research, the University fared very well in the recent Excellence in Research for Australia. This is very encouraging, but no signal for complacency. Hence, the work of the Research Commission – a vibrant body of senior research leaders examining every aspect of research at the University of Melbourne. The Research Commission will provide strong recommendations for improvements.

In principle, more than 250,000 additional students will need to study on campuses across the country.

The challenge to universities, and for the government, will be the many new places required to meet these national targets. In principle, more than 250,000 additional students will need to study on campuses across the country. This would be the largest expansion of the sector since the 1960s, and require either substantial additional investment in new buildings and staff, or more innovative ways of delivering higher education.

For Melbourne, while the participation and diversity targets are welcome, the thought of squeezing many more students on campus is daunting.

As for teaching and learning, the University of Melbourne continues to provide quality despite challenges. Anyone sitting in university classrooms across the country in the last few years has noticed the pressure on class sizes. Average student-staff ratios have moved from fifteen students to one academic to over twenty to one. To some extent this has been offset by better online resources for students, superb new library and shared study spaces, and much attention to curriculum. But in the final analysis the university experience is about interacting with staff and fellow students, and we must work hard to ensure this is not lost.

Universities don’t feature as an election issue. Does the community care enough about them? Perhaps a genuine appreciation of the sector that, despite budget pressures, the community thinks we are doing OK. There is less understanding perhaps of just how central the university sector has become to our national intellectual and economic life. The onus here, I am sure, is on universities to explain better their role.

In 2011, more than 700,000 Australians are enrolled in higher education courses and the sector employs a significant number of people. Since the late 1980s, over 2 million undergraduate degrees have been awarded in Australia. That’s a lot of people with a personal connection to the sector. I’m sure there is a lot of personal enthusiasm for universities, but as yet this does not translate into political enthusiasm.

While it is easy to put forward a strong argument for a better funding structure for universities, the challenge is in gaining the necessary support when the political world is so focused on budget savings. It is a national tragedy if budget management ends up as a choice between overcrowded classrooms in universities and overcrowded hospitals.

It is the sector’s job to remind government and the community of the importance of higher education. Every dollar spent on higher learning pays dividends to Australia in public discourse, the health of individuals, a workforce capable of facing future challenges, and a stronger economy.
$21 M for pioneering stem cell research
The University has been awarded $21 million from the Australian Research Council to establish Stem Cells Australia (SCA), an initiative that will position Australia as a major world player in stem cell research.

Melbourne’s reputation best in Australia
The University of Melbourne has the best reputation among universities in Australia and is 45th in the world, according to the Times Higher Education first World Reputation Rankings.

Great great grand-daughter of one of the University’s first female graduates studying at Melbourne
Twenty-year-old Sophie Curtis began her Bachelor of Arts degree this year exactly 130 years after her great great grandmother, Lydia Amelia Harris, enrolled in an Arts degree at the University in 1881.

University researcher wins NHMC Australia Fellowship
Professor Ashley Bush from the University and the Mental Health Research Institute has been awarded an Australia Fellowship for his groundbreaking work in the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer’s.

University of Melbourne receives largest bequest in its history
In August 2010 the University became trustee of the AE Rowden White Foundation, and received more than $16 million from the estate of Sir Alfred Edward Rowden White, CMG.

University Square Park at dusk. Photo: Kwanghui Lim.

The Festival of Ideas
A week-long series of lectures on ‘The Pursuit of Identity: Landscape, History and Genetics’ was held at the University in June. Visit the Festival of Ideas website to hear podcasts and view vodcasts featuring many of the key presenters including Thomas Keneally, Gareth Evans and Professor Naomi Chazen.

Offers for undergraduate places to students from disadvantaged backgrounds increase by almost 10%
Through the Access Melbourne programs, more than 1700 disadvantaged students, including those from rural areas and from low socio-economic backgrounds, received first-round offers in 2011.

The first stage of the Baillieu Library’s redevelopment is due to be completed in July. Also look out for the new Faculty of Business and Economics and Melbourne Graduate School of Education Library at 111 Barry St (in the ICT building) scheduled for opening in Semester 2.

First woman to be appointed Dean of Law
Professor Carolyn Evans has taken up the position of Dean of the Melbourne Law School. She is widely regarded as one of the world’s foremost experts on the relationship between law and religion.

Partnership with Zoos Victoria
The University of Melbourne has formally launched its partnership with Zoos Victoria. The partnership will deliver significant benefits in biodiversity conservation, sustainability and veterinary science on matters of global, national and state importance.

2010 – the first Melbourne Model graduates
2010 saw the first graduates of the Melbourne Model. A total of 2033 students completed one of our six New Generation bachelor degrees in Arts, Biomedicine, Commerce, Environments, Music or Science.

University Square Park at dusk. Photo: Kwanghui Lim.

For more information on the Melbourne Model go to: learningandteaching.unimelb.edu.au/curriculum/melbourne_model

Uni updates
University Square Park at dusk. Photo: Kwanghui Lim.

Tell us what interests you in the way of alumni and university news, and we’ll tailor an e-newsletter to suit your preferences.
Visit unimelb.edu.au/alumni/enews

Elizabeth Alexander AM announced as new Chancellor of the University of Melbourne
Ms Elizabeth Alexander AM (BCom 1964) was formally installed as Chancellor in April, succeeding the Hon. Alex Chernov AO QC (BCom 1962, LLB (Hons) 1967).

First person to be appointed to the position of Chancellor of the University of Melbourne
In May 2010 the University announced its intention to appoint its first Chancellor.

Baillieu Library gets first facelift at 50
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home is where the heart is:

In a city of spiralling land values and rent prices, the issue of student housing is one that just won’t go away. But, as Dan Rule discovers, the problem stretches far beyond that of access and affordability.

The problem of student housing

In a city of spiralling land values and rent prices, the issue of student housing is one that just won’t go away. But, as Dan Rule discovers, the problem stretches far beyond that of access and affordability.

Students are more financially stressed and are taking on more part-time work and that is having a direct impact on their ability to engage with their studies.

There is a definite need for affordable housing and it does seem that affordable housing is something that the market cannot produce," says Mr Deutscher.

'there must be some intervention.'

'I think it reflects the national dilemma we face in finding affordable, quality housing,' adds Mr Thomson. 'The standard is that no more than 30 per cent of your income should be devoted toward housing and we find that it is very, very difficult for students to meet that.'

With students spending less time on campus because of the time spent working and travelling, they can become less engaged with University life, explains Mr Thomson. 'We’re finding that students will configure their classes to suit their work or commuting schedule, and sometimes they won’t be studying exactly what they want to study because it doesn’t fit around that,' he says.

But the issue extends beyond that of access and affordability. In their award-winning 2009 report ‘Transnational and Temporary: students, community and place-making in central Melbourne,’ the University of Melbourne’s Professor Ruth Fincher (BA (Hons) 1973) (Geography), Professor Paul Carter (DLitt 1997) (Urban Design), Associate Professor Paolo Tombesi (Architecture), Dr Kate Shaw (PhD 2005) (Architecture) and Andrew Martel (PhD Candidate in Architecture) framed the problem as a complex amalgam of access, poor architectural and urban design of many existing student housing facilities, flawed administrative practices and a lack of cogent policy directives at both a university and local governmental level. Put simply, it described a broken system, where international students are channelled into overpriced, privately owned student housing developments and their experiences of university and Melbourne life are increasingly isolated from their local counterparts.

'The first problem is that there’s just not enough housing for students in the city,’ says Dr Kate Shaw, an ARC Research Fellow with the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. ‘The second problem is that the provision of this particular kind of housing is such that most local students just don’t want to live in it. It’s too small, it’s too high-density and it’s too expensive; far more expensive than a room in a share house.’

As Dr Shaw goes on to explain, the majority of existing student apartment complexes effectively exacerbate the sense of separation international students already experience. ‘International students tend to be separated from local students in all sorts of ways, which are the shortage of beds for students, and in particular, the shortage of affordable beds,’ he offers.

‘Students are more financially stressed and are taking on more part-time work and that is having a direct impact on their ability to engage with their studies.’

According to Roger Deutscher, Manager of Student Housing and Financial Aid, the University has seen increases in the number of students applying for housing grants. Meanwhile, students who once successfully rented on the private market in the inner northern suburbs of Carlton, Fitzroy and Brunswick, have been pushed much further out.

Trumped up headlines and inflated reportage may be the stuff of newspaper sales as opposed to hard fact, but Melbourne’s student housing market has endured enough bad press in recent years to convince even the sceptics that something was amiss. Claims of unscrupulous landlords, inflated rent prices and exploitative practices have plagued a sector that houses almost 50 per cent of the OED’s 80,000-plus residential population, many of whom are international students.

According to Garry Thomson (BA (Hons) 1981, MA 1985), Director of Wellbeing Services at the University, a range of market conditions has converged to create a student-housing situation that he openly describes as ‘grim’.

'I think there’s a broad crisis in affordable housing for students, and the University of Melbourne is in an unenviable position,’ he says.

“We’re in a prime location within an inner city environment and that brings with it the pressure of affordable housing and the return that landlords expect to get on their properties.”

Roger Deutscher (BAgrSc 1981), Manager of Student Housing and Financial Aid, agrees. He’s seeing a far greater proportion of students under financial strain. There are some facts that are beyond dispute, which are the shortage of beds for students, and in particular, the shortage of affordable beds,” he offers.

‘Students are more financially stressed and are taking on more part-time work and that is having a direct impact on their ability to engage with their studies.’

According to Mr Deutscher, 70 per cent of University of Melbourne students are undertaking part-time work at an average of fifteen hours per week and the University has seen increases in the number of students applying for housing grants. Meanwhile, students who once successfully rented on the private market in the inner northern suburbs of Carlton, Fitzroy and Brunswick, have been pushed much further out.

‘There is a definite need for affordable housing and it does seem that affordable housing is something that the market cannot produce,’ says Mr Deutscher.

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As Dr Shaw goes on to explain, the majority of existing student apartment complexes effectively exacerbate the sense of separation international students already experience. ‘International students tend to be separated from local students in all sorts
of subtle ways and funnelled into these discrete, often nationality-specific social circles, in terms of institutional practices of the universities and social organisations, and clubs and societies on campus.’

Dr Shaw’s team drew on the detailed architectural analysis of thirty-one student-housing buildings in central Melbourne housing approximately 10,000 students from the University of Melbourne and RMIT. The analysis found that the majority of the buildings were poorly designed, overly expensive and lacked communal space and other points for interaction.

The report described the university sector’s administrative approach toward international students and housing as one based on efficiency rather than student experience. It seems a curious oversight, especially considering the sheer scope of education as an export industry. In 2008 alone, international students contributed $41.4 billion to the Australian economy via fees and onshore spending, making education our third-largest export behind entertainment expenses – food, clothing, all those things.’

Students, he points out, have the potential to become advocates for the University.

‘If their experience is good enough, they will,’ he continues. ‘But a student who is frustrated, or having to commute for long distances, or isolated because their accommodation doesn’t meet their needs, is obviously not going to be in a position to enjoy or embrace what they’re doing here in the teaching environment. These things are all interconnected.’

Dr David O’Brien (BPD 1988, BArch (Hons) 1991, PhD 2006), a Senior Lecturer with the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, has worked on various low-cost modular housing and building projects in outback Indigenous communities, including 2010’s ‘media box’ project, which converted shipping containers into interactive study hubs in remote communities. He sees great potential for positive modular solutions in the student housing market and cites Melbourne architect Nonda Katsalidis (BArch 1975) and Unitised Building’s the Nicholson apartment complex in East Coburg as the leading local example of modular housing.

‘All of the modules are made and fitted out in a factory and then they’re trucked in and craned up and locked into place,’ he explains. ‘In a lot of ways they’re just fancy shipping containers. I think there’s a lot of value in that kind of development.’

Indeed, constructing apartment modules in a factory setting greatly increases the potential for customisation, which is exactly what student housing projects require.

‘Sure, it’s always going to be cheaper to build an apartment block where every floor is the same, but the reality is if some of the apartments were three or four bedroom apartments and they were well designed, then they might actually become attractive to different types of groups,’ he continues. ‘Maybe it could be attractive to a family, or a share house arrangement. That way you’re not just going to have an apartment block only filled with students from, say, China or wherever.’

He puts an emphasis on the ‘peripheral space’ – the informal areas that adjoin the building and interface with public space. ‘People often only really think about how it fits into the community; they’re not building with that social network, that social connection in mind.’

He points to the Micasa 8 student housing building in Swanston Street – which has its laundromat in the foyer – as a simple, yet effective example of creating a collective space.

‘By putting something as, in some ways, mundane as a laundromat in that entranceway, you’re creating a space where there are very different kinds of interactions,’ he argues. ‘It’s a space for people to have those accidental interactions and for just bumping into people.’

James Luxton (BPD 1997, BArch 2001, BPC 2001) of locally based architecture and urban design practice Hayball, was the project architect for Micasa 8. For him, the project was about honouring in functional space as opposed to creating contrived common areas.

‘The laundry is a space which every student uses sometime during the week and therefore is a space that provides a real opportunity to interact with many other students,’ he says. ‘You can’t engineer that interaction, but you can only try and create a context for it.’

But the implementation of smart design and development can’t happen within a vacuum. As Mr Thomson puts it, ‘astute, far-thinking developers’ may be prepared to go down such a path, but a policy framework is needed to ensure it.

Indeed, from the Transnational and Temporary report’s list of recommendations – which included the provision of a suite of affordable housing alternatives built on public transport routes away from the CBD, and the implementation of various architectural and urban design requirements – the preparation and implementation of a clear student housing policy and framework was at the top.
following are some of the highlights from the university’s alumni events calendar. we look forward to your participation in these upcoming lectures, tours, exhibitions and reunions in australia and around the globe.

melbourne alumni conversation with linda beilharz
(bteach (sec) 1981 pgdipedst 1985)

thursday 18 august, 6 p.m.
café italia, 56 – 66 university st, carlton

join fellow alumni in the contemporary surrounds of one of the lygon precinct’s finest restaurants for a fascinating conversation led by the first australian woman to reach both the north and south poles on foot.

hosted by the melbourne graduate school of education.

cost: $25 for alumni, $35 for other guests

for more information or to register go to: alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/educationconversation2011 or call +61 3 8344 1746

melbourne leadership series

october

malaysia, singapore and melbourne

the melbourne leadership series is a dynamic forum in melbourne and across asia, which provides opportunities for recent graduates to glean valuable advice from senior alumni and make useful connections to further their careers.

unimelb.edu.au/alumni/leadershipseries

engineering’s 150th anniversary gala dinner

friday 28 october

ngv, great hall

join other engineering alumni for this black-tie event in the majestic surrounds of the ngv’s great hall. the centrepiece of the 150th celebrations, the dinner will combine luxury cuisine, specialty beverages and entertainment.

contact khandis marinko for more information: kmarinko@unimelb.edu.au or visit eng.unimelb.edu.au/mse150/events.html

alumni tours of the potter
casts and copies: ancient and classical reproductions

wednesday 14 september, 6 p.m.

the ian potter museum of art, swanston st, parkville

join dr andrew jamieson (ba (hon)1988, ma 1993, phd 2006), spencer-pappas grant curator and lecturer, for this tour of rare artefacts sourced from renowned international museums. the exhibition includes significant plaster casts of near eastern, egyptian, greek and roman originals that date from the 4th millennium bce to the 2nd century ce.

cost: free for alumni and friends

alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/pottersept2011 or call +61 3 8344 1746

dorcas mcclean prize finals

sunday 25 september, 3.30 p.m.

melba hall, university of melbourne

thrill to the sounds of the finalists for australia’s richest prize for violinists performing concerti with a full symphony orchestra. the winner will be awarded the dorcas mcclean travelling scholarship.

for more information on the dorcas mcclean go to vcam.unimelb.edu.au/ dorcas_mcclean or call +61 3 8344 7657

graduate study week

monday 10 october – friday 14 october

parkville campus, university of melbourne

a series of information evenings, seminars and expos will run during this week to highlight the university of melbourne’s prestigious graduate schools and our many graduate study options. for more information on these and other events visit: futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/explore/events

national gallery of victoria’s 150th anniversary and school of art reunion

the vca school of art is hosting a series of events alongside its founding institution which culminate in a school of art alumni reunion in november. visit vca.unimelb.edu.au/art150 to find out more and update your details so we can keep in touch.
Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

(United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization)

The worth of water: questions of food security

Escalating prices and the effect of natural disasters on primary producers have focused attention on food production and distribution systems like never before. Alumna Maryrose Cuskelly investigates how the University of Melbourne is engaging with the ‘wicked’ problem of food security and finds efficient water use is a major focus.

The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicts that the global demand for food, feed and fibre will nearly double by 2050. By then, it’s expected that Earth’s population will have increased from around 7 billion to almost 9 billion. Considering that 1 billion people already live in chronic hunger, it is easy to become despondent about the prospects of feeding the world now, let alone with another 2 billion people.

Population is just one of the factors that impact food security. Global food systems intersect with poverty, urban planning, water management, pollution, and preserving wilderness, and fluctuate in response to trade agreements, policy and governance, and international relations. Extreme weather events, as Australians have witnessed with recent floods and cyclones, and civil and global unrest, as conflict in the Middle East has shown, can also wreak havoc on the production and distribution of food. The changing climate is also having an impact on agricultural systems.

For Professor Snow Barlow of the Melbourne School of Land and Environment (MSLE) the evidence of climate change is unequivocal and our agricultural systems must adapt or suffer: ‘It’s clear that southern Australia is as badly affected or worse affected than most countries in the world.’ In Victoria, for example, he cites evidence of changes to the seasonality and patterns of rainfall. Winter rain has decreased over the last fifteen years, he says, with falls in summer tending to stay the same or increase slightly. Traditional farming practices, in some instances, are producing declining outputs as a result.

Improving efficiency in irrigation

One of the areas of expertise of Professor Iven Mareels, Dean of the Melbourne School of Engineering, is large-scale irrigation. ‘Ninety per cent of all the river basins on Earth are managed by people. More than 70 per cent of all the water we use is used for food production.’

The key to coping with this change in the weather and maintaining food production, according to Professor Barlow, is for Australia to transform its farming strategies to take advantage of the new weather systems, and to mitigate less favourable conditions.

An expert on the adaptation of primary industries to climate change and climate change policies, Professor Barlow is also Deputy Director of the Farms, Rivers, Markets (FRM) project that will develop new methods to efficiently manage surface and groundwater resources for both agriculture and the environment.

The University of Melbourne’s Dookie campus, which plays a major role in MSLE’s research and teaching in sustainable food production and includes a working commercial farm, will be used to identify and test these new methods. Other project partners include the Melbourne School of Engineering and the Department of Primary Industries.

To our advantage, while Australia has a ‘third world climate change problem’, as he puts it, it also has a first world agriculture system and scientific research base. Because of these factors, Professor Barlow says, the world is closely observing our response to the changing climate and its effect on agriculture.

While the work being done at Dookie, for instance, is informed and determined by the climate, weather and area-specific conditions of southern Australia, much of the research, such as that being conducted under the FRM project, will be applicable to other geographical regions.

With urbanisation disturbing the water cycle and threatening waterways worldwide, many cities are considering stormwater as an alternate water resource. Professor Tim Fletcher explains in his lecture, ‘Urban stormwater: Public nuisance or precious resource?’ on 21 September. Visit land-environment.unimelb.edu.au/events
Water, irrigation and agriculture: some facts

- Seventy per cent of the globe’s fresh water reserves is used for irrigation. A similar statistic applies to water use in Australia.
- Irrigated agriculture produces about 50 per cent of world food production on approximately 25 per cent of the globe’s arable land.
- Most irrigation systems operate at less than 50 per cent efficiency.
- Global water demand currently matches the amount of fresh water available. Based on current predictions, with growing global populations and increased demand for food, by 2030 the world’s water use will exceed the amount of water available by 40 per cent. The developing world is particularly vulnerable to water shortages.
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- Most irrigation systems operate at less than 50 per cent efficiency.
- Global water demand currently matches the amount of fresh water available. Based on current predictions, with growing global populations and increased demand for food, by 2030 the world’s water use will exceed the amount of water available by 40 per cent. The developing world is particularly vulnerable to water shortages.

Farmers, Professor Mareels says, often overestimate the water they require – relying on the appearance of their crops rather than the amount of moisture in the soil to time watering. ‘They oversupply the land, they get drainage issues and they typically waste about half of the water they receive.’

Professor Mareels’ interest is in helping farmers take the guesswork out of the timing and amount of water use. This advice, when coupled with lining channels to cut wastage and the use of moisture sensors in the soil, can increase the efficiency of water use to about 70 per cent. If such measures were implemented across Australia, says Professor Mareels, we would be able to increase our agricultural output to feed double the current population of Australia and to restore almost the full natural flow of our rivers.

Economy in water management is one of the major factors that will help ensure continuing food security in Australia, Professor Barlow says. ‘Even with less water – which we will have in southern Australia – we can maintain our food production, if we use it a lot more efficiently.’ This counsel extends to city dwellers. ‘We need urban targets as well as rural targets in water use.’

Somewhat perversely, the world actually produces more than enough food for its current population. Rising prices, however, can make it difficult for those on low incomes to afford nutritious food. In February this year, the FAO Food Price Index rose for the eighth consecutive month and was at its highest since its inception in 1990. Factors such as the increase in demand for biofuel (around 25 per cent of the US maize crop and 40 per cent of the EU canola harvest goes towards the production of ethanol or biodiesel) and the rising demand for animal protein put pressure on food prices. So too, does the trend of investors treating food as another commodity ripe for speculation and investment.

Three pillars of food security

Professor Jon Barnett (BPD 1990), a political and economic geographer in the Department of Research Management and Geography, characterises food security as resting on three broad pillars: food production and transport systems; food prices and incomes; and public health, sanitation and energy systems. In his opinion, the University is strong in research and expertise in the first and third of these pillars.

‘In terms of food production systems – plant biology, agronomy, farm management, agricultural economics – the University has a broad range of expertise and we’re certainly one of the leading universities in Australia, if not the leading university in these aspects of food production systems. … We’re obviously very strong in public health and in medicine. … We have some capability with respect to the prices of food and the ability of people to buy food, but the University could certainly benefit from having more of the development economists and economic geographers who study these issues.’

These researchers investigate questions of labour markets, livelihoods and the factors that affect food prices in developing nations. He cites strong interest in subjects such as ‘Famine in the Modern World’ and ‘Food for a Healthy Planet’ as grounds for the University offering more options to students interested in the causes of poverty and hunger, and in development in general.

As for the prospect of the globe being able to feed an extra 2 billion people, for Professor Barnett, it is less a question of technology and more a question of policy, good governance and stability.

‘This [future food security] is really a problem of human systems, such as the interactions between the global economy and its effects on food prices, production and distribution, and the way different countries and national governments go about their processes of managing their economies, food systems, and social services, in ways that provide jobs, control food prices, and ensure people have access to clean water, energy, healthcare and education.

‘We see in countries where there is some degree of economic growth and good governance that rates of malnutrition fall. That’s certainly happened in those countries in Africa where political systems have been reasonably stable. If you look at rates of malnutrition in east Asia, they’ve fallen massively because of stable governments and good growth.’

Integration of food price and nutrition

As Professor Rick Roush, Dean of MSLE, sees it, for Australia, one of the biggest food security issues now is the ‘Integration of price and nutrition for low-income Australians’. Essentially, he says, the challenge for agriculture is to increase efficiency so that more food is produced with fewer resources – water being one of these. With the vast majority of the world’s arable land already in production, producing more food isn’t simply about increasing the acreage available for cultivation or pasture. ‘If anything,’ he explains, we are losing some of it to urbanisation, erosion, and desertification. ‘The amount of arable land we have is actually shrinking. So we’re left with either intensifying production or carving out more rainbreak.’

It is technology, he believes, such as that being developed and trialled in the FRM project, that will drive the innovations which will allow us to keep food prices down in the present and to increase food production in the future.

In Australia, our modern, and largely urban perspective on food means we tend to view technology with suspicion – witness the Coles’ hormone-free beef campaign earlier this year. Many of us prefer to picture tidy herds of lovingly tended goats and smallholdings of heirloom vegetables as food production models rather than intensive broadacre farms. Some might baulk at dairy cows wearing pedometers that monitor their movement or resist the reality of satellite tracking systems allowing farmers to plant crops at a carefully calibrated distance from last year’s seed to ensure the most efficient fertiliser use. Yet such measures
If we’re going to feed the world in 2050,’ says Professor David Aughton, ‘we’re going to need a lot more investment in food production research at all levels.’ Careers in this area will span many sectors including policy, sociology, economy, and engineering, he believes. ‘There will be a lot more jobs in this area, because there will be a lot more investment in this area. There has to be.’

Alumni working for a food-secure future

David Aughton (BSc 1978)

David Aughton is Executive Director of Rubicon Water, a leading engineering and technology company providing specialised products and services to manage water more efficiently.

He offers a good news/bad news summation of global water use [see boxed text on page 16]. On one hand, the water is huge; on the other hand, the possibilities for increased agricultural productivity with more careful management of the globe’s water are enormous.

He believes Australia should assume some of the responsibility for ensuring global food security given the resources we have available. With greater efficiency in water use, he maintains, we can do this and meet both Australia’s agricultural and environmental water needs.

Rubicon Water has a longstanding research partnership with the School of Engineering and Professor Mareels. ‘We’ve been running collaborative projects for almost fourteen years,’ David explains. ‘We’ve been funding a number of programs and we’ll continue to fund programs in postdoctoral and postgraduate research.’

Syed Ali (MDevSt 2003)

Syed Ali has worked in the development sector since 1994, shortly after completing his bachelor’s degree at Tufts University in the US. He returned to study in 2003 and completed his Masters in Development Studies at the University of Melbourne.

Syed has worked for several years in poverty alleviation and rural development in Pakistan, where around half the population of 187 million face food insecurity, and food production is still recovering from the devastating 2010 floods.

He is currently undertaking fieldwork in that country for his PhD under the co-supervision of Dr Violeta Schubert, in the School of Social and Political Science. His thesis focuses on the impact of state and international donor policies on the landless poor in rural Pakistan.

‘I hope that my PhD work will enable me to further understand and demonstrate the influence that particular types of policy-making have on the lives of poor rural masses in my country.’

In Pakistan, Syed says, government agricultural policies ignore the needs of smaller and landless farmers and place an emphasis on agricultural exports. The mismanagement of the existing food supply and the hoarding and illegal smuggling of food items also undermines food distribution systems.

Tim McChedl (BEngSc/BCom 2000)

Tim McChedl is Yield Prophet Co-ordinator with the Birchip Cropping Group (BCG), a not-for-profit agricultural research organisation led by farmers in the Wimmera Mallee region of Victoria. Yield Prophet is an online crop production model designed to present grain growers and consultants with real-time information about their crops. It generates crop simulations, assisting farmers to make decisions to maximise production.

BCG aims to improve the prosperity of rural and farming communities, Tim explains. Prosperous farmers, he says, can help to ensure that there is adequate food for Australians in the future as well as contributing to the food security of our trading partners around the world.

Some things change and some things stay the same, as alumna Michelle Bennett found out looking back on Engineering at Melbourne.

Changes have been numerous over those 150 years. The School was established just after the gold rush, when Melbourne was one of the richest cities in the world. Student numbers have gone up and down – at one point, in 1947, some classes had to be held outdoors because of severe overcrowding – and curriculums and qualifications have changed with the times, from the first Certificate of Engineering awarded in 1866 to the current, new-wave Master of Engineering.

The first computers came along in the 1960s and the School later played a key role in the dot-com boom.

Today most communication with students is done via email. Fees have variously been increased, abolished and re-introduced under a deferred payment scheme, and fee-paying international students now make up a large proportion of enrolments.

Thankfully some things never change: milestones are to be celebrated, and the main event for the Melbourne School of Engineering’s 150th anniversary is a gala dinner to be held in the NGV’s Great Hall on 28 October 2011.

We hope to see you at the 150th anniversary celebrations. Visit eng.unimelb.edu.au/MSE150/ for a full list of events.
Well, what are you waiting for? Mathematics is the language of an engineer.

Of course, it’s people who provide the creativity and depth to any institution, and Engineering is no exception, having seen some remarkable people move through its ranks. The following stories of two alumni and one current student provide insights not only into personal experiences but also how the University and the School have changed and adapted over the years.

Sir Archibald Glenn – the centenarian

As one of the oldest living Engineering alumni, a Knight of the Realm (of the Order of the British Empire), and an engineering leader at ICI/Orica for many years, Sir Archibald Glenn (BE 1933) is a well-known Australian figure.

Born in 1911 in Sale, Gippsland, Sir Archie grew up on a dairy farm, and in 1927 enrolled at Scotch College, where he excelled. Upon being awarded a prize in mathematics by another famous engineering alumnus, Sir John Monash, Sir Archie said that he hadn’t decided on a career, to which Sir John replied: ‘Well, what are you waiting for? Mathematics is the language of an engineer.’

Sir Archie began studying engineering at the University of Melbourne in 1930. Sir Archie recalls having to work out the stresses in a seven-storey steel-frame building, and working with 10-figure logarithmic tables to solve equations with 17 unknowns. ‘I remember working over all the University holidays on this sort of thing. Today they do it with a computer.’

Drawing was a big part of the course at that time – the slide rule featured heavily and drawings were meticulously composed, with every rivet and bolt drawn in precisely. A big difference between studying in Sir Archie’s day and now is that Sir Archie had no formal training in finance or economics, and any management experience came later on the job.

He completed his degree in 1933 and a few years later joined ICI where he stayed for twenty-six years, starting in the drawing office, rising from Maintenance Engineer (exponents), to Chief Engineer, to Technical Director, then to Managing Director. He moved from the technical side of engineering, studying at Harvard and travelling to London, to master the management side. Later, Sir Archie was the director of Westpac Bank or seventeen years, joined the Council to set up Monash University and was the founding Vice-Chancellor of La Trobe University.

Asked if he would encourage students to study engineering, Sir Archie said he certainly would. And what would he expect them to be good at? ‘I think they have to have a feeling for humanity.’

Jan McDonald – ‘the girl’

Being joined by another woman in her third and fourth years of studying engineering at the University of Melbourne was ‘a great relief’, says Jan McDonald (BE 1972), who, for the first two years of her course, was the only woman enrolled. Though not the first woman in this position, ‘no more than a handful had gone before me’, she says.

Notwithstanding the challenges Jan faced being the sole female, she graduated in 1972 with a Bachelor of Engineering majoring in Electrical Engineering. While everybody knew her name, she was generally known as ‘the girl’.

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Jan believes the course gave her valuable skills. ‘I was the only woman enrolled. Though not the first woman in this position, ‘no more than a handful had gone before me’, she says.

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Things were much the same on the academic staff front at the time. In Jan’s entire time studying at Melbourne, the only women who taught her were two tutors and two demonstrators. As she points out, ‘this would be almost impossible to imagine today’.

Another thing that’s difficult to imagine is that computers were not central to Jan’s study; her exposure to them consisted mainly of three assignments that were ‘detached from the main emphasis of our course work’. Now, of course, it’s all CAD/CAM, MATLAB, robotics and the like, and the set squares, compasses, drawing boards, protractors and blueprints of Jan’s day are a thing of the past.

Although she didn’t go on to work as an engineer (her first job out of University was at the Parliamentary Library in Canberra and her current position is Rare Books Librarian at the State Library of Victoria) Jan believes the course gave her valuable skills. Principles underpinning those skills include the need to see a problem in context, and, central to what engineering is all about, the ability to problem solve, which is ‘something I have tried to carry with me all my working life’, she says.

Jan is a regular donor to the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering – ‘I got a lot out of engineering … and I just want to give something back’, she says – and, having visited the Engineering Faculty several times recently, is ‘impressed by how much more realistic and interesting the teaching of engineering has become’. While she’d likely be pleased to know that 22 per cent of the 2011 intake for Master of Engineering students is female she’d certainly be gratified that the school is providing targeted scholarships and implementing other initiatives to increase female participation to 33 per cent.

Rowan Habel – the Model Melbourne student

Taking a gap year between high school and first-year uni was a good move for Rowan Habel. He was initially accepted into Medicine at Melbourne, but, after twelve months of thinking time, realised that Biomedical Engineering – a field that spans the gap between technology, medicine and biology – would much better suit his skills and personal attributes.

Rowan began his Bachelor of Biomedicine in 2008. Previously he would have completed a four-year Bachelor of Engineering, but under the Melbourne Model (MM) his undergraduate degree involved three years of study, of which he’s just completed, followed by the two-year professional Master of Engineering he’s currently enrolled in. This means that, for an extra year of study, he’s graduated with a Masters in Biomedicine. As he points out ‘there are a lot of jobs overseas … where [employers] basically won’t accept anything less than a masters degree, so it makes us more competitive on an international level’.

At first, Rowan intended to work in the prosthetics industry. Now he’s more interested in ‘the electrical side of things’ and plans to work as a clinical engineer designing devices such as modified pacemakers for patients on a case-by-case basis. As he says, ‘every year I’ve been studying … my understanding of Biomedical Engineering has changed’. He likens this to the opportunity that the MM’s ‘breadth subjects’ offer students: ‘You can go out on a limb, try something a bit different … and if you like it you can change your mind about what you’re doing.’

The future looks bright for Rowan. He’s already had a six-month research job in MCRI’s gait lab at the Royal Children’s Hospital, which he obtained through the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), and he was recently awarded a $10,000 merit scholarship.

Rowan Habel.

Jan McDonald. Photo: Mia Maley McDonald.

1. Under the Melbourne Model there are 6 ‘New Generation’ undergraduate degrees offering 67 major fields of study. The other 5 are Bachelor of Arts, Commerce, Environments, Music and Science.

2. Most professional qualifications are offered at masters level under the Melbourne Model.

3. Breadth subjects are ones students are required to take from outside the core disciplines of their degrees.
The first question I ask,' he says, when considering every organisation has its seasons. It goes through various challenges and triumphs and … along that journey, different leadership styles may be required. There may be a time – you can’t describe it any other way – for just brutal courage. You grit the teeth, the decision is made and through you go. There’ll be other times when frankly, nothing’s going to work unless the approach is overwhelmingly collegiate. And, obviously, mixes of everything in between.’

Since being named Australian of the Year, McKeon describes the requests for interviews as an ‘inundation’, but it’s a flood he’s happy to wade through if the end result is raising the profile of the work done by the not-for-profit sector. It’s a ‘soft’ message, he acknowledges, but one he hopes will result in organisations like Volunteering Australia and Good Company busily fielding calls from people wanting to contribute.

McKeon rejects the notion that his job is to shame business into accepting responsibility for contributing to the not-for-profit sector. ‘I just think it’s plain commonsense and ultimately, rather than commonplace. We’ve got a long, long way to go before we emulate what’s happening in the United States.’ He paraphrases Andrew Carnegie, industrialist and co-founder of Carnegie Mellon University, ‘The man who dies rich, dies a disgrace.’

Growing up with a much older stepsister who had an intellectual disability had a huge influence on his view of the world. ‘It was plain she was going to live a different life to other people,’ he says. ‘At a young age, I kept asking myself, “Why?” There’s no answer. The real question is not why, but what do you do?’

McKeon also hopes to use his personal networks to increase wealthy Australians’ interest in philanthropy. ‘It [philanthropy] is exceptional, rather than commonplace. We’ve got a long, long way to go before we emulate what’s happening in the United States.’ He paraphrases Andrew Carnegie, industrialist and co-founder of Carnegie Mellon University, ‘The man who dies rich, dies a disgrace.’

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positive social change – students leading the way

What began as a task to interview student ‘leaders’ advancing social change in between churning out assignments, became an education into a new form of philanthropic leadership gaining momentum among Melbourne’s students. By alumna Katherine Loftus.

If you were to attend Melbourne Uni today, you might find yourself sitting next to a former biochemist in your economics lecture, or attending a tute on constitutional law with an architect. The University in 2011, according to many of the students interviewed for this article, is akin to a large consultancy, so diverse are the ages, backgrounds and skills of its students.

The potential for collaboration and engagement across disciplines is one of the values that underpins the Melbourne Model, which recognises many leadership, volunteer and engagement programs on graduate testamurs. From within this dynamic and outward-looking environment, young leaders are emerging and are applying their knowledge of business and industry to social causes. Focused and strategic, business savvy, resourceful and gregarious, they are taking advantage of the potential for collaboration across the University, with some outstanding results.

Ifong Chen (Fine Arts, 2010)
Who

Ifong Chen (Fine Arts, 2010) is a visual artist, curator and art educator. She has worked as a professional artist, and has been involved in community-based and social enterprise projects.

Who Tom Wilson (BA (Media & Comm), 2011) and Anny Ma (BCom, LLB, 2011)
What

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is a student-led organisation about 42 000 members strong, and spread across forty countries. SIFE aims to strengthen communities and create socially responsible leaders by getting the business world onboard to lend professional advice and support to its grassroots initiatives.

With a philosophy founded in principles of community engagement, knowledge transfer and sustainability, SIFE projects are designed to empower individuals to use their own talents to advance social change.

A couple of years ago we actually helped set up a public transport system within a local community [in Ghana]. We had a tro-tro [a vehicle similar to a mini-bus] donated to us from a company that didn’t need it anymore, and we were able to create a couple of jobs just by being able to transport people around.’ Anny

Why

I think from the outside there’s a perception that the University does things solely for the University and stays in the ivory tower.

I worked in a warehouse in Sunshine West – a really working-class job – and I was the unpopular dude because I was a university student. I think SIFE helps you can get in between the negative space that exists in some parts of the community.’ Tom

Who Liz Brumby (BCom, BA (Media & Comm), 2011) and Ben Vaughan (BSc, 2007)
What

Crepes a la Carte is a social enterprise established with the help of a $500 000 DREAMLARGE Knowledge Transfer (KT) grant and is committed to leading by example through demonstrating environmentally and socially responsible business practices.

Crepers Ben and Liz ran a volunteer program over the summer holidays to get students involved in setting up the business, and now employ current students via the Careers Centre.

Why

‘Here in Melbourne we have a lot of opportunities, and it’s important to remember that while we have access to this fantastic education, it’s not where it begins and ends.

There are other things we can be doing.’ Liz

Who Fernando Tamayo (BCom 2010)
What

WarmWorld is a social enterprise led by a group of young Peruvians, which aims to ‘end weather-related illness, once and for all.’

By redirecting the average annual US$10 million spent in Peru on charity campaigns and inefficient heating in the lead-up to el frajé – a combination of extreme low temperatures, frost and hail that lasts about six months – WarmWorld will provide low-cost insulation and heating for houses in rural communities in the south of the country.

Warmer homes reduce weather-related illness and death, thus increasing work and school attendance, which has economic benefits.

Why

I went to Melbourne Uni with the idea to study management and finance, then return to Peru or the US and work as an investment banker.

All that changed when I was invited to a Business and Economics leadership forum to hear Hugh Evans speak. He told us there were 1.4 billion [the number of people living in poverty] reasons why we should end poverty.

I was so inspired I decided to change my major to Economics, which led me on my path to microfinance, and then social enterprise.”

Who Anny Ma (BCom, LLB, 2011) and Ben Vaughan (BSc, 2007)

Interested in finding out more about these and other University of Melbourne students working in social enterprise? Visit the online magazine at mag.alumni.edu.au
March 2011 saw the opening of the Austin campus of the Melbourne Brain Centre, which will improve diagnosis and treatment of people living with a brain disorder. Alumna Lui Th Pham spoke with a patient benefitting from this collaborative venture, and researcher and clinician Professor Ingrid Scheffer.

When Dannielle Goodwin consulted Professor Ingrid Scheffer (PhD 1996), a University of Melbourne researcher based at the new Melbourne Brain Centre, about her seizures, she did not know that she would soon become central to a landmark medical study. Dannielle suffered her first seizure at six months of age and her childhood was plagued by uncontrolled seizures and social isolation. Her learning also slowed a little after developing normally over the first few years of her life. She refers to this period as ‘the dark times’, which took their toll on her parents and identical twin sister, Prue, as well as herself. She went on to experience a wide range of seizure types into adult life; from brief head nods to violent flexion of the limbs. The latter is often difficult to control and requires emergency treatment.

Professor Scheffer first saw Dannielle when she was nineteen and diagnosed her with Dravet syndrome, a relatively rare and severe form of epilepsy beginning in infancy. Her diagnosis was confirmed when she found the causative gene mutation behind Dannielle’s condition.

Dravet syndrome is not normally inherited from a parent. As in Dannielle’s case, it is generally caused by a mutation that occurs in the early stages of the embryo’s development. This mutation had not occurred in her identical twin and this last factor was what set Dannielle’s case apart.

‘Usually if Dravet syndrome is present [in a twin], it’s found in both identical twins,’ explains Professor Scheffer. ‘In more than 70 per cent of affected children, it is due to a mutation in the gene SCN1A that encodes a sodium channel sub-unit. This sub-unit makes a gateway into the cell through which sodium ions pass. In the case of Dannielle, the gene mutation occurred after the process of twinning, where the fertilised zygote splits into two separate embryos that become the identical twins.’

To date, through Professor Scheffer’s care, Dannielle has been able to keep the seizures at bay. In the meantime, her case will be central to Dravet syndrome research undertaken at the Melbourne Brain Centre, Austin site. The Melbourne Brain Centre, the largest neuroscience organisation of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, opened in March this year and is a first-time collaboration between the University of Melbourne, the Florey Neuroscience Institute, the Mental Health Research Institute, Austin Health and Melbourne Health. The two main sites, one at the Austin Hospital in Heidelberg and the other on the University campus in Parkville, will house over 700 neuroscience researchers.

The University of Melbourne’s Professor Trevor Kjelpaypal (MB BS 1962, PhD 1993) is one of the three directors of the Centre.

Our collective vision is to help reveal the causes behind a wide range of brain disorders that affect one in five Australians. Life threatening neurological illnesses such as stroke and epilepsy, neurodegenerative conditions including multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and the broad range of mental health issues facing the community,” he says. ‘The Melbourne Brain Centre will be at the forefront of research with multidisciplinary teams, drawing on their collective skills and experience.’

The Centre will act as a magnet for brain researchers from Australia, and around the world, supporting them in their work to find cures across all neurological disease.

Diagnosis and treatment will be improved with collaborations between neuroscientists and neurologists that the new Centre will facilitate. World-class imaging equipment will offer access to patients’ brains like never before, making interventions and treatment possible to alleviate conditions like Dravet syndrome.

In terms of the impact on individual lives, Professor Scheffer says: ‘When a child has Dravet syndrome, it is often extremely debilitating. They can have up to one hundred seizures a day and are in the hospital every month. It is very difficult for parents.’

Professor Scheffer offers her medical insight. ‘When she’s having a warning, there’s a discharge from her temporal lobe, resulting in the feeling of dread and other symptoms. The seizure then progresses to cause loss of awareness followed by headache, drowsiness and tiredness after her seizures.’

The relationship between Ingrid Scheffer and Dannielle Goodwin has been beneficial for both doctor and patient. In 2007, Professor Scheffer led a team to identify 70 per cent of Dravet syndrome sufferers as having a sodium channel gene mutation, and recognising that it could become a diagnostic test in the correct clinical setting. ‘What’s unique about Dravet syndrome is that it is the main form of epilepsy for which a gene test is currently available,’ says Professor Scheffer. Her research team has also published articles about Dravet syndrome in a number of journals.

The benefits of research that the Melbourne Brain Centre will facilitate are clear for patients like Dannielle, who, because of her diagnosis, was able to receive genetic counselling and the assurance that her children won’t suffer a similar fate. ‘I would like some more awareness of Dravet syndrome,’ she says. ‘Some parents don’t even know that their children have Dravet syndrome and they are unaware that there’s a test for it.’

Professor Scheffer is a current member of the Florey team at the University of Melbourne and at the new Melbourne Brain Centre that officially launched its Heidelberg site on 21 March this year.
MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

POSTCARD FROM OXFORD

After graduating in 2009, I spent six months in Zomba, Malawi where I worked for the World Bank on a research project analysing the impact of schooling and income on the risk of HIV infection among young women in Malawi.

My role was to manage a team of local staff responsible for collecting survey data that is being used to assess the effect of cash transfers to families of schoolgirls. I loved my job and life in Zomba, especially being able to hike up the Zomba plateau on weekends and eat avocados every day.

Currently, I am at the University of Oxford studying for an MPhil in Economics and I am hoping to stay on for the PhD program. I intend to research micro-economic issues in developing countries so as to contribute to the design and evaluation of effective poverty alleviation policies.

Oxford is a fun place to be a student. Among 15,000 students from twenty-eight different countries.

Over our summer break, I will spend three months working in Bangladesh with a professor from Yale University on a collaborative project with the Bangladesh National Board of Revenue. The project aims to evaluate different ways to increase the woefully small tax base in Bangladesh and decrease tax evasion.

Lucie Moore (BSc 2008, BCom(Hons) 2009) lucie.moore@economics.ox.ac.uk

Lucie Moore was the recipient of the 2010/11 Wilfred Prest Travelling Fellowship, made possible through the generous gift of Mrs Marjorie Prest in memory of her late husband Wilfred Prest, C.B.E., who was the Truby Williams Professor of Economics at the University of Melbourne from 1946 until his retirement in 1972.

POSTCARD FROM MELBOURNE

Based at the University of Melbourne, KereKere is a coffee vendor that lets customers decide how its profits are distributed: to the owner, to cultural projects, or to environmental or social charities. The idea for KereKere came out of an assignment for my Bachelor of Social Work degree at the University of Melbourne. After working as a social worker, I decided that starting a business with its roots in social justice was the way I wanted to make a contribution to my community. The challenge over the past four years has been finding the right balance between being profitable and sustainable as a business, and making that positive contribution.

I’d love to see KereKere kiosks sprouting up at other locations over the next few years.

James Murphy (BA/BSW 2005) james.murphy@kerekere.org

www.kerekere.org

Take the plunge and learn a new language. Alumni are entitled to 10% off a range of Chinese courses at the Confucius Institute. Visit www.confuciusinstitute.unimelb.edu.au

POSTCARD FROM MANILA

Studying in the multicultural environment in Melbourne definitely widened my view of the world. After completing my Masters in Public Policy and Management, I have worked in Canberra, Tokyo, and Manila, with extensive trips to Pacific islands and South-East Asian countries. I have been engaged with the international development work and I am currently a Project Formulation Advisor in the Japan International Cooperation Agency Philippines office.

My work is to establish a better transportation system in Manila and also in the regional Philippines. I heard the tragic news of the 9.0M earthquake that hit Japan on 11 March on the way back from a project-monitoring trip to the regional Philippines.

All the images of devastation in Japan made me feel helpless, being away from my country. However, when I heard that the Philippines, along with other developing countries, had announced its emergency assistance to Japan, I thought our work in the Philippines was rewarded in an unexpected way.

Living in the Philippines, I sadly see the huge gap between the rich and the poor. While some wealthy people afford to commute by helicopter (!), the children from poor families are begging on the streets. We don’t know how much we can do for this country through our development assistance. Seeing even a little difference in people’s lives is the great reward to our work. And gratefully, we saw many Filipinos donating for disaster-affected people in Japan. Helping each other is a reality in my life here at the moment.

Sachie Terasaki (BA/MPPM 2003) terasaki.sachie@jica.go.jp
POSTCARD FROM SPITSBERGEN, NORWAY

Last September I received an invitation from my friend Dr Cary Fowler, the Executive Director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust based in Rome to join him at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault on the island of Spitsbergen, Norway, in February this year.

‘Oh, and by the way,’ he added, ‘can you bring some Australian seeds with you?’

He was being mischievous. For various reasons Australian seeds had never been deposited in the Vault. The challenge was on!

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a safe back-up storage for the seeds of the world’s food crops, in case their home germplasm bank is damaged, destroyed, or fails for any number of reasons. It is constructed inside a mountain 1000 kilometres from the North Pole.

We left for Norway on 11 February, travelling via London, Oslo, and Tromso, finally arriving in Svalbard.

It was late winter so the sun had not yet appeared, although on 15 February the sun’s rays just touch the mountain top in front of the vault – twilight to daylight but still no sun! Wonderful scenery, wild, isolated, all white and so cold, down to –25 during our stay.

A mountain 1000 kilometres from the North Pole.

As we approached Spitsbergen, Norway, in February this year.

My team of five incredibly energetic and willing sled-pulling huskies.

I was thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge gained through my university education. I joined the organisation as part of the Telstra Next Generation Leaders’ Program and have been fortunate enough to work on high-profile technical projects.

One of the best things about my job is that work never follows me home. This means I have enough time to devote to my passion – Bollywood singing.

Over the years friends and family have suggested that I sing for wider audiences. Unfortunately, that plan always remained on the backburner. As a young boy, sports took precedence. As a teenager, rebelling took precedence. And as an international student at the University of Melbourne, finding a job took precedence.

I can say with absolute certainty that Melbourne presents. Bollywood enthusiasts with a plethora of opportunities to showcase their talent. I started off by volunteering to sing at community events, but after a few months of exposure, I am being invited (and paid) to sing at commercial events. I am also working with a local record label and expect to release my first Bollywood single later this year.

I still volunteer at community events and actively promote a free Bollywood event held every month for anyone who’s kept their passion for Bollywood singing on the backburner.

As I see it, the glamour associated with the performing arts is definitely exciting, but at this stage, my Telstra career takes precedence.

Sandee Mahadevan (MBusIT 2007)
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Contact Sandeep if you would like more information on Melbourne’s Bollywood scene.

POSTCARD FROM MELBOURNE

It’s hard to maintain your lofty position as a leader when the 24-hour media cycle broadcasts your every word to a surly and disrespectful audience. What’s worse, they tweet their insubordination back at you.


A leader is a dealer in hope.

Napoleon Bonaparte

All right, all right. I’ll admit it. Napoleon didn’t actually say that. What he said was ‘a leader is a dealer in hope’. It’s just that I googled ‘leadership’, saw the quote, and couldn’t resist tampering with it. If I wouldn’t have happened in Napoleon’s day, back then, a leader’s words were revered. The mob knew its place.

To dissent or disobey was to die with death.

Nowadays – in Australia at least – a free press, working democracy and separation of powers means leaders have to cope with a snide, confident populace. We’ve been reared by our parents and Oprah Winfrey that we are all special, talented individuals. They might be in charge, but we know best. So when chip, chatter and chip away at our leaders. Then, eventually, we toss them on the scrapheap, which usually leads to us liking them a fraction more.

I should have stayed away from the Napoleon quote.

This is my chance to compose something great about leadership – something to rival Goethe’s ‘Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move the hearts of men’. Or Harry S. Truman’s ‘What makes leadership is the ability to get people to do what they don’t want to do and like it’. I need an inspirational epithet, damn it. Something to put on the bottom of a soft-focus Nike poster depicting a wedge-tailed eagle.

Despite a year on Twitter, and 2545 tweets, I am totally bereft of 140 characters that would have gathered up the marshes of Grozny. Whereas Napoleon could kick back, craft a perfect paragraph, sculpt it, refine it, and then hover over the shoulders of the only newspaper editor in Paris as he set to work on the copperplates.

Modern leaders have to look good and be good twenty hours a day. If they make a mistake, the press sees it. The press doesn’t see it, the public lends a hand with ubiquitous cameras phones. Modern leaders have to look good and be good twenty hours a day.

And because the media relies on political mistakes to fill the endless hours of content, our leaders converge upon a perfect storm of blandness.

The volume of the heckling has increased too. If a leader dares to appear on a show like Q & A, it’s not just about answering the questions and dodging the occasional flying shoe. The feedback is flowing in at a rate of 20,000 messages per minute.

Napoleon had it so much easier. To borrow another of his quotes: ‘I am the state. I alone am here the representative of the people. Even if I had done wrong you should not have reproached me in public. People wash their dirty linen at home. France has more need of me, than I of France.’

What an arrogant twerp. What a pompous lunatic.

Given the sort of man we’re talking about, is it wrong that I tried to edit his Wikipedia entry to formally change ‘hope’ to ‘dope’? Isn’t that tiny act of rebellion, even if directed only at his legacy, symbolic of the courage of the people who eventually overturned him?

Wikipedia didn’t think so. ‘Please stop adding nonsense to Wikiquote. It is considered vandalism. If you want to experiment, please use the sandbox.’

I’m so ashamed.

Tony Wilson is the author of two satirical novels, Making News and Players. www.tonywilson.com.au Twitter: @byTonyWilson. He also works as a speaker and emcee.
Philanthropic thoughts from a small island

Philanthropy derives from the ancient Greek philos (love) and anthropos (mankind) — the love of mankind.

I have been honoured over the last twenty-one years to meet many generous benefactors who are true philanthropists, motivated by an unselfish concern for the greater good. Many have been alumni who, through giving back to their University, wish to enable current students to experience what they benefited from when they were students. A high proportion of donors have not, I hasten, had any formal link with the University. Their support derives from their generous commitment to excellence and their desire to make a difference to peoples’ lives.

I have spent the last ten years working at the University of Oxford, most recently spearheading The ‘Oxford Thinking’ Campaign. This was the first major fundraising campaign Oxford has to build its future in a world of unprecedented change. The challenge is great. The opportunity to build a fully funded endowment of £1.25 billion is remarkable. We should be close to the University again.

Some interesting trends in UK philanthropy have emerged over the past decade. More people are giving during their lifetime, and are taking a strong interest in understanding the impact of their gifts. Private wealth is increasing and the self-made wealthy (75 per cent of the Sunday Times Rich List) are more inclined to give to others than to retain their wealth solely for their children. Information about non-profit organisations and the use of funds has become more available and donors are often innovative in how they give to leverage results.1

In a recent survey of giving to universities in the UK, figures indicate that more than £600 million in new income was given by over 185 000 donors in 2009/10. This figure represented an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year. The number of donors to higher education in the UK has doubled in the last five years. The focus in the UK by government and universities on the need for increased philanthropic support to higher education is beginning to deliver results. A cultural shift toward philanthropic support to universities in the UK is starting to take place. This is due, in no small part, to the increased investment in professional advancement activity in the tertiary education sector, as the need for new income streams and the desire for increased involvement from alumni and friends has become clear. British universities have become better at communicating their mission, impact and desire for external engagement. Furthermore, the British government has provided strong backing for the importance of increased participation in alumni giving through the creation of matched giving programs.

I feel privileged and grateful for the chance to be close to the University again.

Intellectual engagement as a quid pro quo is a huge motivation. Most of us in business don’t get that often.

As I prepare myself for the transition of joining the University of Melbourne as Vice Principal for Advancement, in the midst of pondering packing cases and the reversal in seasons, I am energised by the opportunity to build support for Australian higher education. It will be exciting to play my part in connecting those who wish to make a difference now, and in the future, through supporting the remarkable work of the University.

Sue Cunningham
Vice Principal (Advancement)
University of Melbourne
If such [water management] measures were implemented across Australia, says Professor Iven Mareels, we would be able to increase our agricultural output to feed double the current population of Australia and to restore almost the full natural flow of our rivers.

The worth of water: questions of food security p.16