

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



GRADLIFE  
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# GradLife

Our Heart Lies in Sydney's West

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Front Cover Photo: Katy Ellenberger, Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery 2012

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# A NEW CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY

## WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY. UNLIMITED.

At Open Day 2015, we unveil our new brand identity and positioning for Western Sydney University.

With a bold new vision for our future, this major rebranding effort reaffirms our position as a world-class university with international reach, a reputation for academic excellence, and a track record in delivering research with real impact.

Since our ranking among the top two per cent of universities in the world by the prestigious *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings in 2014, we have continued to strengthen our international profile and standing.

Now, we are emphasising how our unique geographical position in Australia's third largest and fastest growing economy, helps our students, staff and the communities we engage with, tap into a global perspective and unlimited opportunity.

We are demonstrating that we embrace change and that we also drive it. That is because the world has changed, and so, we believe, must learning institutions. In a world that is more fluid than ever before, we understand that knowledge flows between the University and the community.

Our new brand identity is reflected in this edition of *GradLife* and will continue to appear on billboards, television commercials, print advertisements, University publications, around our campuses and across the region and beyond from 30 August this year.

In this edition of *GradLife* we continue the tradition of sharing the success stories of our alumni who have become global citizens, change-makers and leaders in their communities. From Rwandan refugee Noel Zihabamwe, who is using his education to help newly arrived migrants (P18), to teacher David Whetton's campaign to protect children's eyes (P12), a desire to help others is common among many of our graduates.

As part of our alumni, you are part of a strong network of global citizens and our greatest advocates. We encourage you to remain connected to and engaged with our University by sharing your story.



Professor Barney Glover  
Vice-Chancellor and President



Update your details, join chapters and stay connected online at [westernsydney.edu.au/stayconnected](http://westernsydney.edu.au/stayconnected)



# WE ARE WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY. UNLIMITED.

## How our new brand identity is reaffirming our place in Western Sydney and the world.

*Words by: Angelo Kourtis, Vice President (People and Advancement), Bachelor of Arts 1989*

Western Sydney University has rebranded. This is not just a logo change, but a new positioning that affirms our place in Western Sydney and the world.

Our new identity reflects the pride we take in our place, our role in the community, and our growing international reach and reputation as a student-centred and research-led university.

We're building on our already strong reputation for academic excellence and creating a platform for people to better understand and engage with Western Sydney University as a place to study, work, engage or partner with.

Our investment in this major rebranding initiative is underpinned by our belief that in the fast-paced and ever-changing world we operate in, change is necessary.

However, we haven't changed just for the sake of changing. This two-year exercise has been grounded in significant research into the aspirations of our students, including future students and alumni.

We discovered that the things that matter the most to those potential students are the same values and characteristics that are important to the Western Sydney community and our University – hard work, determination, optimism, boldness and creativity.

Our brand values and our bold new identity reflect our belief in a world of unlimited opportunity, where the potential for success is unlimited for those with drive, talent, confidence and ambition.

In working with our creative partners on this journey, we have articulated how we are unlocking the potential of the next generation of global citizens, leaders and change-makers through our pioneering model of co-created learning.

Just as we put our students at the heart of everything we do, we have put our students at the centre of our new brand identity – reflecting our positioning as a truly dynamic place of learning that continues to challenge traditional notions of what a university 'should' be by pushing the boundaries of how knowledge is exchanged.

Similarly, through our new advertising campaign, which tells the success stories of some of our alumni – Melissa Chiu, Deng Thiak Adut and Jay Manley – we demonstrate how we are focused on equipping our graduates to be more than workplace ready. We want to equip our students to not just get jobs, but to create jobs, and through these inspiring alumni we prove it.

Over the next three years, as we roll out our changeover program to broaden our reach and raise our profile, we'll be confidently positioning Western Sydney University for success.

*Photo: Chloe Lynch, studying Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Primary)*





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#### LEADING THE WAY

Katy Ellenberger was among the first students to attend the School of Medicine at Western Sydney University and was impressed by the sense of camaraderie. “The uni was doing things differently, and I felt that was something I really wanted to be a part of,” she says.

Now working as a registrar at Nepean Hospital, Ellenberger says some of the best young doctors she meets are fellow graduates from Western Sydney University. “Because (the University) didn’t have all the history and formalities that go with the longstanding, prestigious medical schools, people felt less entitled and wanted to work harder,” she says.



# OUTBACK STAR RETURNS TO THE WEST

**When Doctor Katy Ellenberger starred on ABC's *Outback ER*, she developed respect for reality television stars, received a hearty ribbing from family, and even got some fan mail.**

But the 2012 Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery graduate has no desire to join the likes of reality TV regular Kim Kardashian, describing it as "the most awkward I've ever been in my life."

"It made me more nervous than a cardiac arrest," says Katy, who later received offers from viewers wanting to date her. "I don't know how reality TV stars do it. I was trying so hard to be professional that I was teased mercilessly for sounding so uptight."

The young doctor's television foray came late last year during a five-month posting at Broken Hill Base Hospital.

The weeks in front of the camera proved to be particularly dramatic, and Katy recalls the CT scanner breaking just as a patient went in. "The next scanner was hours away in Mildura, so we had to treat her presumptively," she says. "Being in an outback hospital, I had much more responsibility and it was challenging, but these situations make you realise what you're made of."

Even without the cameras rolling, there's no shortage of drama in the far western NSW mining town. As one of the final outposts before The Red Centre, patients at Broken Hill Base Hospital are a mixed bag of farmers, miners, local indigenous people, artists and passing tourists.

"People would come in after hitting wildlife – motorbike versus emu, car versus kangaroo and grey nomads who'd hit everything and rolled their caravan," Katy says. "There was a lady who brought her kid to the hospital, then came back with a broken hand after she punched a guy in the carpark. We had plenty of stockmen who fell off their motorbikes multiple times, had broken bones and cuts all over them, but only came in when they were floridly infected and couldn't work.

Sometimes in the city, we get people coming in with ingrown toenails, colds and hangovers. There, people with broken bones would say 'she'll be right mate'."

Katy started her career at Concord Hospital and is now completing her physician's training at Nepean Hospital. She plans to specialise in cardiology or respiratory medicine and hopes to eventually return to the outback.

"There's a much greater sense of community (in the outback), and people really appreciate what you can do for them," she says. "Walking through the town, patients will recognise you and say 'hello'. A good thing about Nepean is you get a bit of that regional feel, while still training in a major centre."

**Check out the School of Medicine's leading medicine facilities and courses on offer at [westernsydney.edu.au/medicine](http://westernsydney.edu.au/medicine)**

*Photo: Katy Ellenberger, Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery 2012*

## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: SNAPSHOT

- Western Sydney University has the first and only medical school for Western Sydney.
- 60 per cent of the 620 enrolled students come from Western Sydney.
- Since its inception in 2006, over 373 students have graduated from the School of Medicine. About one in three work in the region.
- With Western Sydney's population expected to increase by almost one million over the next 25 years, the pressure on the region's health services will intensify.

# COOKING UP SUCCESS

## How an education at Western Sydney University, determination and a chance meeting cooked up one of Vietnam's greatest success stories.

Studying in Australia was ground breaking in several ways for Dr Trung Qui Ly. A Bachelor of Hospitality, which he completed at Western Sydney University in 1994, set him up to become one of Vietnam's most successful home grown entrepreneurs. It also made him one of the first Vietnamese nationals to study in a democratic country since the fall of Saigon to communist forces in 1975.

### STARTING OUT

After returning to his homeland, Trung established *Pho24* which was recently valued at \$20 million (AUD). Launched with \$50,000, the western style fast food chain serves a traditional street food, pho noodle soup, in a comfortable restaurant environment. Conceived with Vietnam's growing tourist population in mind, *Pho24* now boasts more than 70 franchise outlets across the Asia-Pacific, including one in Melbourne.

Trung comes from a family of successful restaurateurs, but was left impoverished and displaced in the fallout from the Vietnam War. At the age of 23, while working as a receptionist in a Ho Chi Minh City hotel, he met an Australian Vietnam War veteran who had returned as a businessman. The men struck up a friendship and seeing Trung's potential, the veteran offered to sponsor his education in Australia. "Vietnam was a place with a lot of memories for him, and he hoped to do something to heal the past," Trung says. "He believed that giving this opportunity to a young person like me, I could come back and make a contribution."

### EMBRACING EDUCATION

The veteran's kindness wasn't wasted on Trung, who relished every opportunity to learn on his first journey outside his homeland. "It was an overwhelming culture shock," he says. "My eyes were open to everything – not just what I learnt in class, but also the environment and the people. Studying at the University gave me the confidence and methodology to approach and solve business problems."

After his studies, Trung returned home to build his empire. He sold *Pho24* two years ago and moved to Australia, settling in Sydney with his family. His eldest son has started university, while his daughter is completing high school. "For the first time I have the luxury to spend more time with my family," Trung says.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Ever appreciative of his university education, Trung regularly returns to Western Sydney University to share his story in the hope that it will help and inspire students. He is also working on a concept for a new restaurant business, with plans to be revealed next year.

Getting here has been a long journey, driven by hard work and passion. Reflecting on how his life may have panned out if he didn't meet his Australian sponsor, Trung says: "I may have reached this point through a different direction, but I think I'd still be here because I had a dream".

**If you would like to come back on campus as a volunteer to share your story with current students visit [westernsydney.edu.au/alumnivolunteers](http://westernsydney.edu.au/alumnivolunteers)**

*Photo: Trung Qui Ly, Bachelor of Hospitality 1994*

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY: FAST FACTS

- Western Sydney University has more than 18,957 international alumni.
- The top source countries for international students at the University include China, Vietnam, India, Nepal
- Popular courses among international students include Business, Information and Communication Technology, Health Science, Nursing

### DR TRUNG QUI LY

**"My eyes were open to everything – not just what I learnt in class, but also the environment and the people. Studying at the University gave me the confidence and methodology to approach and solve business problems."**





# FROM WESTERN SYDNEY TO THE WORLD

**Gaynor Reid lives in Singapore and travels the globe for work, but remains proud of her Western Sydney origins.**

Recently appointed Vice-President of Communications for international hotel group, Accor Hotels, Gaynor says her Western Sydney roots and education at Western Sydney University have shaped her. "I truly believe that being from Western Sydney is something to be proud of," says the former Castle Hill resident. She recalls the excitement of being among the first students when the University was officially founded in 1989 and says she is still close to a firm group of these 'pioneer students': "Being part of a new institution allowed us to be more creative in our outlook and there was a strong sense of pride in showing what we graduates from Western Sydney could achieve."

Gaynor says her Western Sydney upbringing still shines through in her "can do attitude and desire to prove to people that no matter where you come from, you can achieve your dreams if you work hard".

Hard work is certainly part of life for Gaynor, who graduated from Western Sydney University with a Bachelor of Arts (Applied Communication Studies) in 1992. After launching her career in journalism, she switched to PR and worked for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games. Born in South Africa to Scottish parents before moving to Australia, Gaynor grew up travelling and saw working in the travel industry as a natural move.

Her latest role at Accor involves managing communications for a group of over 3,800 hotels across 92 countries, with an average of one new hotel opening every two days. "Our rate of development becomes a challenge in itself," she says. "Along with the challenges come plenty of perks, including hot air ballooning over the Loire Valley, partying with celebrities, staying in beautiful hotels around the world and cooking with Michelin-starred chefs. "I'm basically being paid to do the kinds of things that many people would pay big money to do," Gaynor says. "I can't think of another industry that would afford me the opportunities I've had."

**Check out all of the highlights from our latest alumni event held in Singapore at [westernsydney.edu.au/singaporealumni](http://westernsydney.edu.au/singaporealumni)**

*Photo: Gaynor Reid, Bachelor of Arts (Applied Communication Studies) 1992*

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**GAYNOR REID,  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF  
COMMUNICATIONS,  
ACCOR HOTELS**

"Being part of a young institution allowed us to be more creative in our outlook and there was a strong sense of pride in showing what we graduates from Western Sydney could achieve."

## GAYNOR REID'S TIPS FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE HOLIDAY

- Meet and eat. A smile and a few words in the local language will help you make friends all over the world. Street food is great – just look for the stalls with the longest queues and make sure it's cooked in front of you.
- Learn. From salsa lessons in Buenos Aires to wine tasting in Bordeaux, the best way to experience a destination is to learn a new skill with a local flavour.
- Take it slow. Stay longer in fewer locations. You need time to savour the local sights, smells and sounds and feel the heartbeat of a place.

# EYE SAFETY CAMPAIGN STARTED WITH A SQUINT

No hat, no play has been a school playground mantra since the 80s, and now teacher David Whetton wants to see sunglasses added to the rule. David, who completed a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) at Western Sydney University in 2006, was inspired to take up the cause after noticing children at his Southern Highlands school squinting while they played outside.

## ON A MISSION

"You wouldn't see an adult going driving without sunglasses, yet we neglect to make children wear them – it just hasn't been on the radar," says David, founder of School Shades, a company that designs, manufactures and distributes UV-protective sunglasses for children.

Since David launched the company last December, 20 schools across Australia have already added his shades to their school uniforms.

Spreading his sun-safe eye message at principal's conferences, managing the logistics of his business and also completing a Masters of Education (Leadership) at Western Sydney University, has made this a busy year for the father of three.

But he's clearly a man on a mission, and David has reduced his teaching hours to focus on his campaign. "When I speak to principals, the collective sentiment in the room is a call to action," he says.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

"Many older Australians have preventable eye diseases – cancer of the eyes, macular degeneration, pterygium and cataracts – and much of this could have been prevented if people had worn sunglasses when they were younger," says David.

"Large amounts of Australian and international research indicates that children under 12 particularly need to wear sunglasses because their eyes are more absorbent of a wider spectrum of UV light."

While the no hat, no play policy has helped, hats only provide half the protection eyes need, due to refracted light still getting through.

According to NSW Health figures, our state alone spends \$100 million on preventable eye diseases each year – putting the \$12 investment into a pair of School Shades into context. "I want to nip this in the bud in this generation," David says. "My goal is to see that every child in Australia has access to the highest quality shades. As Australia gets hotter, UV rays will only get stronger."

## FAST FACTS

- An estimated 20 per cent of cataracts are due to UV radiation exposure.
- Almost half of the 86,000 cases of pterygium treated in Australia each year are thought to be caused by sun exposure.
- Children are particularly sensitive to skin and eye damage from UV radiation.

*Source: Cancer Council Australia, National Cancer Control Policy*

## VALUABLE SUPPORT

David's success in the months since launching his business is the result of two years of research and planning, countless hours on the road, navigating a compliance maze and sending thousands of emails. David has also journeyed to the optical district in Shanghai where his sunglasses are manufactured, and had a crash-course in the intricacies of doing business with China.

"It has been a very challenging journey," he says. "I've moved from facilitating learning in the classroom to looking at dollars and cents."

David has been bolstered by the support of lecturers and peers in his Masters. "The special thing about Western Sydney University is the blend of personal care and academic rigour," he says.

"We have formed great networks within our Masters program, set up a Facebook account and are constantly bouncing ideas off one another." The course itself, which David hopes to complete mid-next year, has added to his confidence. "It gives me the research background when I'm presenting education leaders with sun-smart initiatives, and the title helps to open doors," he says.

**Find out more about our top rated education courses at [westernsydney.edu.au/education](http://westernsydney.edu.au/education)**

*Photo: David Whetton, Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) 2006*



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**NATHAN BURBRIDGE,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGIST, BLACKTOWN  
CITY COUNCIL, BACHELOR  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PLANNING (URBAN  
PLANNING) 1998**

**“I see our community  
as having enormous  
potential, and want  
to play my part  
in helping them  
succeed.”**



# LOCAL LINKS BUILD CAPACITY

**In many ways, Western Sydney University and local councils are a match made in heaven. For Western Sydney councils, having a university campus in their midst means access to a vast talent pool. For university students and graduates, councils provide experience and employment in a range of fields. Research partnerships and council-funded scholarships add further value to the relationship.**

Councils currently offering scholarships to Western Sydney University students include Blacktown, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury and Penrith City Councils, as well as the Hills and Wollondilly Shire Councils.

## **CAMPBELLTOWN COUNCIL**

Campbelltown Council's Director of Business Services, Michael Sewell, says supporting scholarships at Western Sydney University was a natural move. "The University is an integral part of our community and one of the major benefits of our city," he says. "With council's diverse functions ranging from marketing to engineering, IT, and accounting, we're able to place graduates from many of the fields taught at the University."

The council currently employs two recent graduates from Western Sydney University and also offers two scholarships. The Ian Porter Scholarship targets students who have made an active contribution to the community, while the Brenton Banfield Medical Scholarship supports a Campbelltown local resident throughout their Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree. The former honours Campbelltown Council's late General Manager, while the medical scholarship is dedicated to a former Mayor. "Given the demographics of the area, with people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, it's important that we encourage local people to access that education," Michael says. "The hope is that they will work locally and contribute back to their community."

## **BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL**

Cross over to Blacktown and the partnership is equally strong, with Blacktown City Council offering annual leadership, academic and merit/equity scholarships to support local residents throughout their degree. It is also working with Small Biz Connect at the University to help local businesses build their capacity. With 90 per cent of Blacktown's 18,000 businesses fitting into the small business category, Blacktown City Council's Economic Development Strategist and Western Sydney University alumnus, **Nathan Burbridge**, says the partnership can make a significant difference. "I see our community as having enormous potential, and want to play my part in helping them succeed," says Nathan, a 1998 Bachelor of Environmental Planning (Urban Planning) graduate from Western Sydney University. The Kings Langley local worked in urban planning roles across Western Sydney councils before segueing into his current position.

His work at Blacktown City Council also involves a research partnership with the School of Business at Western Sydney University, looking at ways to help the area's 1,000 manufacturers meet today's commercial challenges.

*Photo: Nathan Burbridge, Bachelor of Environmental Planning 1998*

## **COUNCIL JOBS ARE HOT PROPERTY**

An internship at Campbelltown Council turned into a full-time job for Business and Commerce (Property) 2014 graduate from Western Sydney University, Linda Yi.

It also opened her eyes to the career opportunities available in local councils. "I didn't know there was a property role at council before it was advertised through my uni," says Linda, who is now Campbelltown Council's Property Support Officer.

Linda is one of 14 students from the University who have been involved with the Council's internship program since its inception in 2012. Linda started her internship towards the end of 2013 and was offered a position once she graduated in April last year. Her work involves managing leases for a diverse portfolio of council-owned properties.

With a longstanding interest in property, Linda says the course at Western Sydney University, which is accredited by the Australian Property Institute, was an easy choice. "The lecturers were very insightful, it incorporated a lot of site excursions and also guest speakers from the industry," she says.

Studying in Western Sydney, and finding a job close to home, were added bonuses for the Liverpool local.

"I'd definitely advise other students to look at internships and jobs in local government," Linda says.

"Councils cover such a vast range of areas, so whatever field you're in, chances are, there's some kind of position that would suit. It's the perfect place to build your experience."

**Find out more about offering an internship to a student at [westernsydney.edu.au/internships](http://westernsydney.edu.au/internships)**

# DREAMING UP THE FUTURE

**CRYSTAL HILLERY,  
MASTER OF TEACHING  
(PRIMARY) 2014**

“The most valuable part of being an alumni mentor is the power to inspire western Sydney kids to strive towards their goals and see university as a real possibility. As a full time professional, volunteering a small amount of time once a month is well worth the opportunity to positively influence the life course of some of our most vulnerable young people.”

**Staying connected with Western Sydney University means a great deal to our alumni volunteers but it means even more to the students who are fortunate enough to benefit from their time and talent.**

#### **ENGAGING EDUCATION**

The Western Sydney University Schools Engagement program provides primary and high school students with opportunities to improve their academic performance and expand their horizons. Programs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students incorporate university familiarisation, including opportunities to build skills and knowledge academically, culturally and socially.

School students are encouraged and supported in defining and pursuing educational and career goals, with programs focused on increasing educational aspirations and attainment. Programs aim to promote student engagement in learning and help build capacity in the school sector. This is guided by ongoing input from an external reference group of senior administrators and school principals from the public, Catholic systemic and independent school systems, and an internal steering group of senior stakeholders from key areas across the University.

#### **INVESTING IN OUR REGION**

Western Sydney has one of the most significant urban populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The campuses of Western Sydney University are located on the traditional lands of the Darug, Tharawal, Gandangarra and Wiradjuri nations.

The University is committed to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and further celebrating the diverse and rich cultural communities that give Western Sydney its energy and vibrancy.

The communities of Western Sydney are partners in the ongoing success of our University. We are committed to seeing every student in our region has the chance to succeed.

#### **PATHWAYS TO DREAMING**

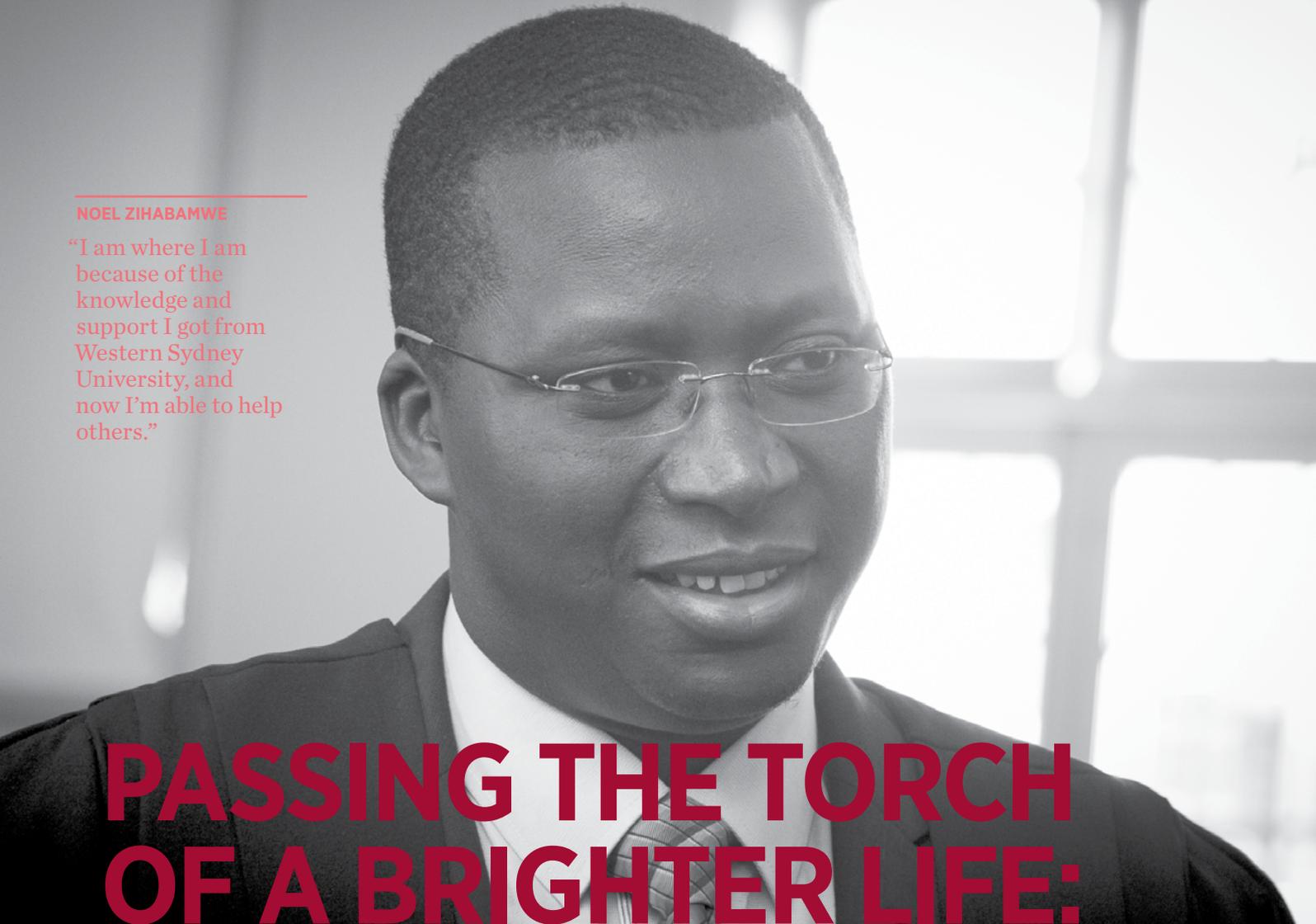
With the support of alumni volunteers, the Pathways to Dreaming program is about making a difference to the way young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students think about themselves and their futures. From Year 8, students can take part in a variety of activities which help to build their academic, study and interpersonal skills plus increase their awareness of further education and career options.

Participants are mentored by Western Sydney University students and alumni, and the program incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, including sessions conducted by Aboriginal elders and educators. Each year the students at each school devise and implement a group project to benefit their school or community.

**Want to help make a difference?  
Register your interest to volunteer at  
[westernsydney.edu.au/alumnivolunteers](http://westernsydney.edu.au/alumnivolunteers)**





A black and white portrait of Noel Zihabamwe, a man with short hair and glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is a blurred office or indoor setting with windows.

NOEL ZIHABAMWE

“I am where I am because of the knowledge and support I got from Western Sydney University, and now I’m able to help others.”

# PASSING THE TORCH OF A BRIGHTER LIFE: A REFUGEE’S JOURNEY

Noel Zihabamwe was nine when he lost his parents, several relatives and good friends to the Rwandan genocide. He was taken in by a catholic orphanage and began studying law before re-settling in Australia at the end of 2006.

Aged 23, empty handed and with little English, Noel had a fierce desire to build a brighter future, and to complete his education. “We can learn from the past but we can’t allow ourselves to be stuck with the past – we have to move forward,” he says.

After months of English classes, he enrolled in a Bachelor of Community Welfare (International Social Development) at Western Sydney University. Since graduating in 2012, he has been committed to helping refugees and migrants make the most of their new life in Australia – a mission inspired by the support he received. Leading people to a point where they can give back to others is Noel’s ultimate goal. “That’s what happened to me,” he says. “I am where I am because of the knowledge and support I got from the University, and now I’m able to help others.”

As a Community Development Officer at St Anthony’s Family Care, Noel helps refugees and migrants assimilate into the community. He founded the CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) Men’s Social group who meet regularly to share experiences, seek information, and network with well-established migrants.

The Liverpool resident is also a Youth Project Officer at Bankstown Youth Development Service, focusing on encouraging young migrants into education and employment. His voluntary roles include serving as Cultural and Social Affairs Coordinator for the Rwandan community of NSW, and working with the Sydney Alliance, which gives community groups a voice on local issues.

Noel’s efforts were recognised when he won last year’s African Australian Outstanding Community Services Award. But his biggest reward is seeing positive change in peoples’ lives. He gives the example of a young African man he mentored who wasn’t interested in education, reasoning that his parents didn’t go to school and he’d missed his own chance by growing up in a refugee camp.

“I kept insisting and explained that his parents may not have had access to school, but now he had a school within 500 metres of his home,” Noel says. The man went on to complete a business degree at Western Sydney University, has a good job and is helping other young people. “Whenever he comes to me, he tells me ‘I am who I am because of you,’ Noel says.

Now a married father of two, Noel is a positive and determined individual, in spite of the violent horrors he has witnessed. He’s confident that his parents would be proud of the person he has become.

Noel was recognised for his service and community contribution with a Community Award from Western Sydney University in April 2015.

**For information about Pathways to University visit [westernsydney.edu.au/pathways](http://westernsydney.edu.au/pathways)**

*Photo: Noel Zihabamwe, Bachelor of Community Welfare (International Social Development) 2012*

Leaving a bequest is a powerful way to support Western Sydney University at a level that may not be possible during your lifetime. It is an opportunity to leave behind a lasting reminder of your life in a way that will benefit many generations of students, teaching staff and researchers into the future.

For more information on how you can leave a lasting reminder of your life to the University, please contact our Bequest Manager, Gayle Hannan, on +61 2 9685 9516 or email [g.hannan@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:g.hannan@westernsydney.edu.au)



# TYPING UP HER OWN FUTURE

**Established universities were a long drive away from Professor Margaret Vickers' Castle Hill home when she finished school in the late 70s. The thought of gaining a university education was equally distant from her mind.**

## **A LOVE OF LEARNING**

After barely passing her HSC, Professor Vickers went to technical college and became a typist. "It was so boring and the pay was terrible," she recalls. It's an unexpected beginning for someone who is now an accomplished academic as Professor of Management at the Western Sydney University School of Business. Professor Vickers began her university studies when, at the age of 21, she realised her typists' pay wouldn't be enough to live off beyond her family home.

With the personal computer boom gaining momentum, she chose a Bachelor of Business (Computing and Information Systems) at the then Nepean College of Advanced Education (Nepean CAE) (now part of Western Sydney University), and was one of just 11 students in the fledgling course. After graduating in 1987, she worked as a programmer, business analyst and in computer software sales before beginning her MBA.

## **GAME-CHANGER**

A turning point came when Professor Vickers was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). "I didn't want to go back to the corporate world – I wanted to do something more meaningful," she says.

A serendipitous trip to the shops saw Professor Vickers cross paths with a former lecturer from Nepean CAE who told her about a tutoring job at the University. That job turned into a role as a lecturer, and she also graduated from the University with a Doctor of Philosophy (Commerce) in 1998.

Adversity in the workplace remains her main research focus. "It's definitely inspired by my MS," Professor Vickers says. "I'm interested in the difficulties that people encounter while working and how they've coped, whether they have a chronic illness, disability, mental health issues, or are victims of workplace bullying." The broader goal is to help businesses develop policies to support their workforce.

## **PAYING IT FORWARD**

A University stipend scholarship helped Professor Vickers complete her PhD, and she has now made a bequest to provide two ongoing research stipend scholarships at Western Sydney University. The scholarships will target research students with a disability or chronic illness. "I want to do something that will help people reach their life goals like I did," she says. "I thought about how much the uni has changed my life. I've gone from being a typist to being a Professor who has travelled the world and had wonderful learning and teaching opportunities."

*Photo: Professor Margaret Vickers, Bachelor of Business (Computing and Information Systems) 1987, Doctor of Philosophy (Commerce) 1998*



# WHEN PASSION IS A SOURCE OF TENSION

## Sherene Idriss' studies of Arab-Australian men reveal a growing group of creative outsiders.

An Arabic background can either be a creative asset or an insurmountable barrier when pursuing a career as an artist, musician or filmmaker, according to Sherene Idriss, a PhD student at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University.

Sherene explored the minority group's links to Australia's growing creative sector in a recently completed project, *The Just-In-Time Self: Young Arab Men, Skills and Narratives of Aspiration in the New Economy*. The 23 men interviewed for the project revealed a range of barriers to their creative ambitions, from prejudice, to geographical factors and family pressures.

### CREATIVE BLOCKS

"Many Arab-Australians come from traditionally working-class families," Sherene explains, noting that her interview subjects were children of shopkeepers, factory workers and self-employed tradespeople. "Their parents had the migrant mentality of wanting their children to achieve social mobility through respected professions such as law, medicine and teaching. Creativity was a complete contradiction."

The assumptions of employers and peers were also barriers. Sherene asked the men about their experiences as creative people at school, where "hyper masculinity" was the dominant culture. "Creatives are outsiders in these environments," she says. "Then, when it came to getting a job, there's the structural inequality – people thinking they didn't have the right look, or bosses asking them not to tell clients that their name is Mohammad."

### LOCAL PRIDE

Interview subjects saw their Western Sydney address as problematic, particularly with Sydney's creative arts scene centred on the inner-city. "Being in the scene is important if you want to be an artist or making music, but for these young men, it would be a big issue if they were to move out of home before they were married," Sherene says.

She found the men were left at a crossroads between giving it all up, dishonouring their family, or trying to create their own creative arts scene in the west.

"Some managed to present themselves specifically as Lebanese-Australian artists and turned their Otherness into a valuable commodity," Sherene adds.

### BIG PICTURE

With the media constantly telling young people to follow their dreams, Sherene's work presents a more complex understanding of what this really means to her focus group. "Nomatter which way you cut it, creativity and passion were a source of tension," she says. "It brings up other big questions about how schools and institutions might be failing these young people."

As the daughter of Lebanese migrants, Sherene says she has also emerged with a deeper understanding of herself and her culture.

Her earlier work includes an Honours thesis on the political representation of Islamic minority groups in Australia, and a role at Uniting Care, where she used her knowledge of Arab-Australian communities to address their general reluctance to receive help for mental health issues.

When Sherene saw her PhD project advertised as part of a broader study of various groups of young men, she took a leap of faith. "The lead academics, Dr George Moran and Professor Greg Noble, were very encouraging and supportive," she says.

More broadly, Sherene's studies of Arab-Australians serve an archival role. "We need to record and preserve the stories of our migrant communities so we can have a detailed understanding of social change and progress," she says.

**Find out more about higher degree research study at [westernsydney.edu.au/researchstudy](http://westernsydney.edu.au/researchstudy)**

*Photo: Sherene Idriss, PhD Candidate, Institute for Culture and Society*

## WHY WEST IS BEST

PhD student Sherene Idriss believes Western Sydney University, with its quality graduates and world-class research, plays an important role in combating negative assumptions about Western Sydney. "Being at the University has made me realise what a special part of Sydney this is," she says. "When you're in class, you're not just discussing textbook cases in a clinical way – the students have rich, lived experiences. By our success, we can prove how fabulous it is to be from Western Sydney, and to have studied at Western Sydney University."

The Bankstown resident describes Western Sydney as a raw, real and warm place to live. "It lacks pretension and it's always evolving," she says. "If you look at Bankstown, the cultural make-up isn't what it was 10 years ago. For example, we're seeing a growing Sudanese community now. You're exposed to such diversity and always learning about different migrant groups. This is a place where Australia is changing rapidly."

# MAKING A SPLASH ON THE WORLD STAGE

**At just over 25 years young, Western Sydney University is punching above its weight in international rankings, now ranked 56 in the world in the influential Times Higher Education young universities list.**

“We’re doing extraordinarily well, particularly given the age of the university,” says Professor Kevin Dunn, Lead Dean for Global Rankings.

The University has also moved up in the Leiden Rankings, which specifically looks at indicators of a university’s scientific impact and level of collaboration. The ranking, which covers 750 major institutions worldwide, recently announced Western Sydney University as 259th in the world and 10th in Australia.

In another feat, the University is now rubbing shoulders with top achievers in the QS World University Rankings. These focus on strengths in specific subject areas, and put the University in the top 200 of all universities in the fields of psychology, education, sociology, agriculture and forestry.

“A decade ago, the University was nowhere in the rankings,” Professor Dunn says. “It’s an incredible rate of improvement and our underlying strengths suggest this trend will continue.”

## **FAQS – WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY RANKINGS**

### **How are rankings judged?**

Each system uses a combination of factors. The Leiden ranking, for example, is almost entirely based on bibliometrics – the statistical analysis of academic publications. “It looks at how often an article is cited – the proportion of papers by Western Sydney University that are in the top 10 per cent of highly cited articles,” Professor Dunn explains.

Another factor is how often articles are completed in collaboration with other institutions, countries and industry. Times and QS rankings also use survey data, based on academics’ perceptions of the university. Other surveys ask employers about the quality of the graduates in their workforce.

### **Why has Western Sydney University made such a leap?**

Improvements in rankings for the University are mostly related to higher quality publications, as measured through citations by other researchers, Professor Dunn says. We are now reaping the rewards of many years of research effort in areas in which the University excels.

“We have concentrations of excellence that are driving our performance, particularly in life and earth sciences, social sciences, humanities and medical sciences.”

The improved performance also comes down to a renewed focus on rankings. “We’re now getting serious about rankings and international recognition for our high quality research, teaching and graduate outcomes. We are paying more attention to what we need to do in terms of supplying data to evidence our success,” Professor Dunn says.

### **What does this mean for alumni?**

As the University builds its prestige in the international arena, this will enhance the favorability with which employers view a degree from Western Sydney University.

“Our alumni are also justifiably proud of the University,” Professor Dunn says. “The number one reason for getting rankings right is so that graduates can see rankings that match what they already feel about the university.”

In turn and as is already happening in Western Sydney and around the world, graduates can help build the reputation of the University through their performance in the workplace and their contribution to the community.

### **How about for the University?**

Rankings support the local and international profile of the University. “They help to ensure we can attract the best quality students and the highest performing teachers and researchers. They also assist us to attract high quality partners both locally and internationally to provide unique and innovative student experiences and contribute to regionally and globally relevant research” Professor Dunn says.

### **What else makes the University a stand out?**

With a high proportion of students who are the first in their family to go to university, Western Sydney University has a strong track record of attracting – and retaining – talented people who might not have otherwise gone to university. “We see that as a very important part of our mission and our focus is student-centred,” Professor Dunn says.

Being located in Western Sydney is another boon when it comes to research work. “We are at the centre of one of the most culturally diverse parts of our globe, and at the exurban edge,” Professor Dunn says. “Issues of population density, cultural diversity, transport, development and environmental sustainability are palpable here.”



87

56

From 87 (2014) to 56 (2015) – THE

10

100

Up 90 places to 10th in Australia  
(259 in the world) – Leiden

TOP  
200

Top 200 (out of 3500 universities  
worldwide) for psychology,  
education, sociology, agriculture  
and forestry – QS

## ROYAL RECOGNITION

Congratulations to the five alumni who were honoured in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours, recognised for their significant achievements and contributions to community.

**Peter Johnson PSM, Diploma in Teaching (General Primary) 1978**

Honoured with a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to education in New South Wales over a long and significant career in the sector and his commitment to providing a high level of service to public school students.

**Warren Wilson OAM, Bachelor of Business (Accounting) 1987**

Awarded with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his significant service to business and commerce through the sports entertainment industry and to the community of Western Sydney.

**Karen Alexander OAM, Master of Applied Science (Social Ecology) 2001**

The Founder of Victoria Naturally Alliance was honoured with an OAM for service to conservation and the environment, and to the community.

**Dr John Falzon OAM, Doctor of Philosophy 1998**

The social justice advocate and Chief Executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society was awarded an OAM for service to the community through social welfare organisations.

**Allan Harriman OAM, Master of Applied Science (Fire Safety Design) 1997**

Honoured with an OAM for service to the building and construction industry through professional associations.

**Showcase your alumni achievements by sharing your story with us through the GradLife app – [westernsydney.edu.au/alumniapp](http://westernsydney.edu.au/alumniapp)**



# HAWKESBURY'S FIRST LADIES

Attending Hawkesbury Agricultural College (HAC) was life-changing for many of its pioneering women. For these three graduates, who attended HAC (an antecedent of Western Sydney University) in the 70's, their studies provided an opportunity for many women and a foundation for successful careers. At HAC they made lasting friendships and even met the men they married. Here, they share their stories.

## **ANITA DE LA MOTTE (BATH), DIPLOMA OF AGRICULTURE 1973**

Agriculture was a natural study choice for Anita, who comes from six generations of farmers.

However, as one of the first women in the course, it was also a challenging one. "Some of the older students made it very apparent that we were invading a male province," she says.

Students spent one day a week on the college farm, milking cows, shearing sheep and generally getting their hands dirty. Anita was determined to be successful, aware that she was paving the path for other women: "It was a great responsibility. We knew that if we didn't measure up, there wouldn't be any others". In the end, her hard work paid off. "There was mostly respect and support, it was like having a lot of brothers," Anita says. An exception was one Dairy Technology student, Raymond, who became her husband. The couple now have two children and live in Bomaderry, where Anita works as an agriculture teacher. "We still have reunions with our Hawkesbury classmates," she says. "Many of the people we met there are among our closest friends."

## **ANGELA PARKER, DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS (VALUATION) 1980**

As someone who has built a career valuing everything from residential blocks to grain silos, Angela Parker can't quite put a price on her education at HAC.

"It has had a huge impact on my life," she says.

Angela was one of the first university educated valuers in NSW and being a female valuer was a rarity in itself: "In one of my first job interviews, they said, we don't doubt you can do the job, but you're female - we're not sure how that will go".

Angela launched her career in the NSW Valuer General's Department, conducting real estate valuations for taxation purposes, land acquisitions and government-owned properties. Her husband, Mark, a HAC agriculture graduate, moved to various regional postings for work, and Angela was able to follow, thanks to her transportable skill set.

The game changed when the NSW Government began inviting private tenders for its services about 15 years ago. Angela joined a private valuation firm, run by a HAC classmate, and now works from a local office near her home in Austinmer. "I feel incredibly fortunate for the life that I've had as a result of going to Hawkesbury," Angela says.

## **ELIZABETH GIRVAN, HOME ECONOMICS TEACHER EDUCATION COURSE 1978**

The personalised learning experience that Elizabeth Girvan enjoyed at HAC has informed her own work as a teacher.

"It was a small campus and everybody knew you. You never felt like a number," says Elizabeth, who teaches textiles and is also a pastoral care leader at a Canberra school.

She was among the first 25 home economics students at HAC, and despite it being an exclusively female class, the campus was otherwise a male dominated campus. "The lecturers were very protective of us," she recalls. It was at HAC that Elizabeth met her former husband, and she went on to do practical teaching around the Penrith area. "There was a real need for home economics teachers and we were secure in the knowledge that we'd have a job to step straight into," Elizabeth says.

"We had the best of both worlds - the teaching education, and also a strong scientific focus. I was very proud of the skills I learnt at Hawkesbury and love sharing them with my students."

Elizabeth returned to HAC a few years after graduating to complete a Bachelor of Community and Family Studies, and has co-authored a HSC textbook on the subject.

**Find out more and get involved in the activities of the Hawkesbury Alumni Chapter at [westernsydney.edu.au/hac](http://westernsydney.edu.au/hac)**

*Photo: Anita De La Motte (Bath), Diploma Of Agriculture 1973, Angela Parker, Diploma Of Business (Valuation) 1980, Elizabeth Girvan, Home Economics Teacher Education Course 1978*



# BUILDING FUTURE-FOCUSED WORKPLACES

**Globalisation and the rapid rate of technological change make it difficult to predict what future workplaces will look like, according to Western Sydney University Master of Business Administration (International Business) graduate, Gitesh Agarwal.**

As Chief Marketing Officer and Executive Director of D&M Workspace Solutions, based in India, Gitesh has already seen a major shift in office design over recent years. His company has been involved in fit-outs for some of the most iconic offices in India, with international clients including Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, HP, Australian High Commission and ANZ, amongst others.

“From open-plan offices, which see a dilution of defined hierarchy, to collaborative and ‘touch-down’ spaces, the change is evident,” Gitesh says. In addition, competition for talent has put a greater emphasis on making offices attractive to employees: “The employee is now the centre of attention – the ‘internal customer’ comes first. Sustainability is also a big buzz word, from the optimal use of materials, to recycling of energy and water, and design that’s in alignment with the natural movement of air and light.”

With his 10 years experience at Austrade and consulting over 2,000 companies, alongside his education at Western Sydney University, Gitesh feels well-equipped to meet the challenges of his industry. Gitesh’s choice of university for his Masters came after a chance meeting with a former classmate who had studied in Australia and spoke highly of the experience. Having completed his undergraduate studies in India, Gitesh decided to follow his friend’s recommendation. “To be honest, it was a risk as I had never been away from home, and never so far away,” he says.

The risk paid off for the class of 1996 graduate. Gitesh was delighted by the lush green landscape of Western Sydney University’s Campbelltown campus, the advanced facilities and emphasis on team work. “The studies had this feel of research and reason,” he says. “It exposed us to resilience, exploratory methodology and was an experience to last forever.”

A nominee in the recent Australian Alumni Excellence Awards, Gitesh says studying in Australia was solid preparation for his many international business dealings. “Understanding the country has come in very handy,” he says. “I feel like life has come full-circle.”

**For information about Postgraduate study at Western Sydney University visit [westernsydney.edu.au/postgraduate](https://westernsydney.edu.au/postgraduate)**

*Photo: Gitesh Agarwal, Master of Business Administration (International Business) 1996*

# GLOBAL CAMPUS

This year has been a busy one for strengthening ties with alumni across the globe. Here's a snapshot of recent events.

## CHINA

From Beijing to Shanghai, Chinese alumni maintain strong links to Western Sydney University, as demonstrated in networking events in both cities in March. Dinners at Swissotel Beijing and The Hilton in Shanghai both attracted large groups of alumni, Austrade delegates, University representatives and local educational institutions. The events provided the University with a platform for building further partnerships with Chinese institutions for research, student exchanges and local course offerings. China is one of the top source countries for international students at the University, and home to over 3,000 alumni.

## INDIA

India's Australian Alumni Excellence Awards were held in Chennai on 6 June. Western Sydney University was a sponsor of the annual event, which recognises excellence in graduates from Australian universities currently living and working in India. We were delighted to nominate two of our outstanding alumni. Gitesh Agarwal (full story on page 26), a 1996 Master of Business Administration (International Business) graduate was one of the contenders. The second nominee, Vikas Punjabi, received the Victorian State Government Award for Outstanding Achievement in Food, Travel and Leisure. After completing a Master of Business (Operations Management) in 2001 and Graduate Diploma in Enterprise Resource Planning in 2003 at the University, Vikas went on to launch The Chocolate Room in 2007. The decadent café chain has since gone global, with more than 160 outlets.

## SINGAPORE

Invitations to an 8 June networking event in Singapore prompted an enthusiastic response. Around 40 alumni and guests enjoyed cocktails and canapés at the Park Hotel in Clarke Quay as they listened to updates from Vice-Chancellor Barney Glover. Several other dignitaries attended, including the Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, Philip Green OAM. News of the leap in the University's international rankings was well received, and a sense of pride and connection to the university was palpable as alumni shared their experiences and made new business connections. We look forward to returning to Singapore again soon and in the meantime supporting local alumni to stay connected with each other. Please contact [alumni@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:alumni@westernsydney.edu.au) if you would like to become more involved.

**Make sure you don't miss out on future events. Update your details now at [westernsydney.edu.au/stayconnected](http://westernsydney.edu.au/stayconnected)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2015

### SEPTEMBER

Spring Graduation Ceremonies

### OCTOBER

Alumni Volunteer Thank You Dinner

### NOVEMBER

China Alumni Awards

### DECEMBER

Malaysian Australian Alumni Council Gala Dinner  
Vietnam Alumni Gala Dinner  
Hong Kong Alumni and Friends Function

Look online at [westernsydney.edu.au/alumnievents](http://westernsydney.edu.au/alumnievents) or contact the Alumni team at [alumni@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:alumni@westernsydney.edu.au) for more information.

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