

GradLife

University of
Western Sydney

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2 SPRING 2014

INSIDE

WOMEN OF THE WEST

ALSO

JOURNALISM, JAZZ AND STICKY SITUATIONS

We catch up with ABC news presenter and UWS graduate, Whitney Fitzsimmons.

GRADUATES RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS

Helping shape the next generation of experts in their fields.

PAYING IT FORWARD

How a charitable gesture from 80 years ago is still changing lives.

IN THIS EDITION

4

Driven to make a difference

Faten El Dana OAM and Lakshmi Logathassan are motivated by very different personal experiences but share a passion for helping others.

6

Journalism, jazz and sticky situations

We catch up with ABC news presenter and UWS graduate, Whitney Fitzsimmons.

10

Graduates return to their roots

Successful UWS graduates have returned to their old stomping grounds to help shape the next generation of experts in their fields.

18

A tale of love and fate

Silvana Azzi Heras, head designer for filmmakers Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, has created her own 'happily ever after' tale.

22

Closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

UWS graduate Dr Anyisia Den reconnects with her family heritage through medicine.

- 8 Paying it forward
- 12 Sleeping dragon awakens to environmental nightmare
- 13 UWS fee freeze
- 14 Research addresses complementary medicine's catch-22
- 16 Alumni share the buzz of Asia
- 17 Property a solid foundation for career success
- 20 Building a bridge to India
- 21 Helping others defy the odds
- 24 Reflections on UWS Hawkesbury's great journey
- 25 Forming networks and connections above a glittering city
- 26 Exploring arts residencies
- 27 Upcoming events 2014

Front Cover Image: Faten El Dana OAM

GradLife, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 2751 Australia

Website: uws.edu.au/alumni Email: alumni@uws.edu.au Tel: +61 2 9685 9500

Design: UWS iMedia and Design Services, Office of Marketing and Communications ALU5151

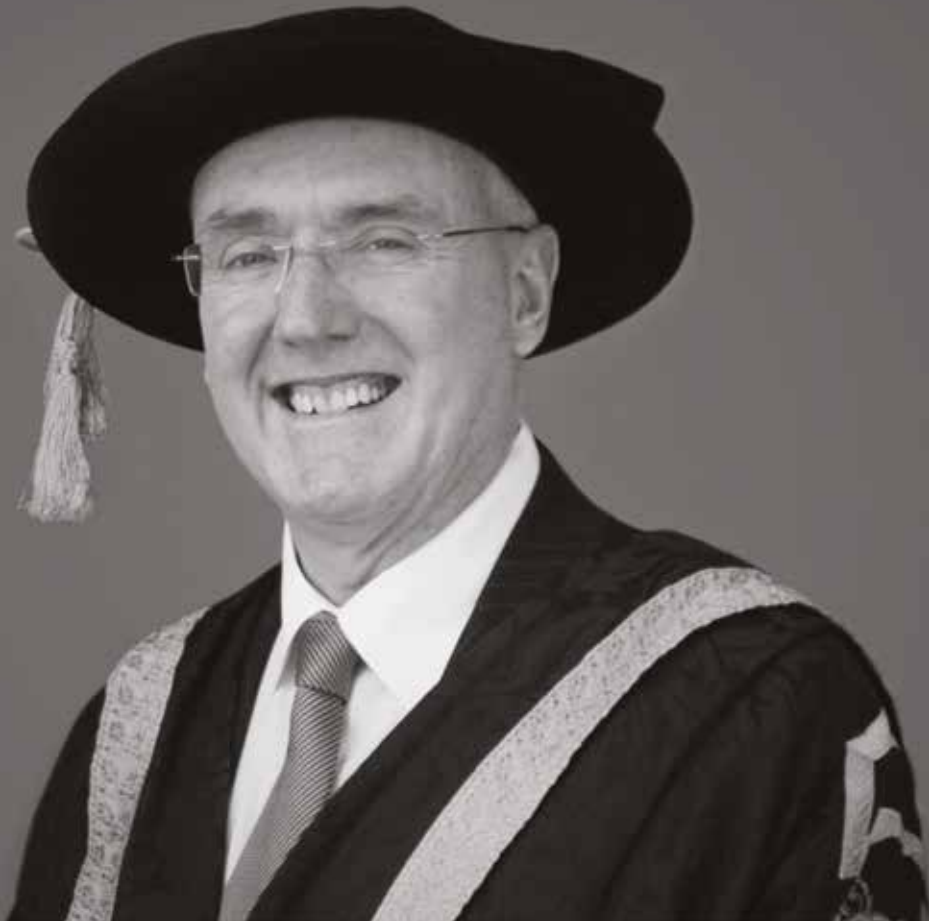
Journalist: Laura Albulario

Photography: Sally Tsoutas

GradLife Enquiries: UWS Advancement and Alumni

Copyright 2014

No responsibility is accepted by this University, publisher or printer for the accuracy of the information contained in the magazine.



CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL WOMEN

So much can be
achieved when passion
and education unite

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S NOTE

EDUCATION is the greatest tool a woman can have, according to NSW Women of the Year award recipient, Faten El Dana OAM. The Community Hero category winner is one of two UWS students honoured at this year's awards. Current law student Lakshmi Logathassan was named NSW Young Woman of the Year, and together they demonstrate just how much can be achieved when passion and education combine.

From El Dana's grassroots campaigns to improve the lives of migrant women, to Logathassan's innovative program that is helping disadvantaged students abroad, their contributions are just a sample of the inspirational work being done by University of Western Sydney (UWS) students and graduates across all fields.

In this edition of *GradLife*, we celebrate these, and other successful women who have graced our campuses. In medicine, mature-aged graduate Dr

Beth Lavings, overcame adversity to gain her qualification. You will also read about Dr Anyisia Den, who aspires to honour her Indigenous heritage through medicine. Further afield, environmental law expert Dr Qi Gao is making her mark in the battle to address China's mounting environmental crisis.

We also catch up with ABC news presenter Whitney Fitzsimmons, whose career traces back to UWS Nepean, and Silvana Azzi Heras, part of the design powerhouse behind Australian director Baz Luhrmann's critically-acclaimed productions.

With over 150,000 graduates and 42,000 current students, there are, without doubt, many more UWS success stories in the making. We encourage all our alumni to keep in touch and share their stories with the UWS community.

As we celebrate the 25-year anniversary of UWS, we hold up our wonderful graduates as our proudest achievement.

Professor Barney Glover
Vice-Chancellor
University of Western Sydney

DRIVEN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

'I want to continue helping women become active members of this community.'

**A.H. BEARD COMMUNITY
HERO AWARD WINNER
FATEN EL DANA OAM**

Alum Faten El Dana OAM (Cover Image) and UWS student Lakshmi Logathassan are motivated by very different personal experiences but share a passion for helping others. Both were honoured with a NSW Women of the Year award on the eve of International Women's Day earlier this year. El Dana, president of Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia and an OAM recipient, took out the A.H. Beard Community Hero category for working to improve the lives of migrant women. Logathassan, a current law student at UWS Parramatta, was named NSW Young Woman of the Year. She established a program for sending second-hand laptops to disadvantaged schools in Sri Lanka and Kenya.

INSPIRED SERVICE

While school captain at St George High in 2012, Logathassan realised many fellow students who received free laptops as part of Kevin Rudd's digital education revolution campaign would have no need for them by the time they'd graduated, usually buying a newer replacement. She started collecting laptops within her own school and spread the initiative to schools throughout NSW. So far, over 250 laptops have been collected, to be sent to schools in rural Sri Lanka and Kenya. 'A lot of students in these regions have never accessed the internet,' Logathassan says. 'These are pieces of technology that can open so many doors in terms of education and career possibilities.'

Logathassan also spent a fortnight teaching English in a rural Sri Lankan village after completing her HSC, and

continues to run basic English workshops for new migrants in western Sydney.

El Dana's passion for helping others started when she was just nine years old. Growing up in Beirut, Lebanon, she was deeply affected when a neighbour died while giving birth. 'I remember telling my mum that I wanted to become a midwife to help women give birth safely,' she says. This ambition led her to study midwifery at Sydney University. She went on to complete a Master of Arts TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at UWS Milperra and uses her Arabic interpretation skills to link migrant women to health and support services. El Dana is program director at 2MFM Muslim community radio and volunteers at several community organisations. She has run a range of successful health initiatives, including an on-air campaign to help migrant parents of autistic children access the services they needed.

'In Australia we have a lot of opportunities and access to things that students in other countries just don't have. We're in a lucky position to be able to help them.'

**NSW YOUNG WOMAN
OF THE YEAR LAKSHMI
LOGATHASSAN**



CELEBRATING

25

YEARS OF

RICH REWARDS

El Dana recalls one of her radio callers who had been searching overseas websites for disability health services, not aware of similar services on offer in Australia. Another listener returned to tell her what a difference her help had made. 'She was thanking me for helping her find services for her autistic child – for the first time in five years, the child was able to call her mum,' El Dana says. 'I feel so happy when I'm able to help a woman get what she's after.'

For Logathassan, a memorable moment came while she was teaching English in the rural Sri Lankan region Kilinochchi. 'I had been running a workshop for six hours straight, it was so hot, packed with 40 students, but when I asked if they wanted to have a break for lunch, they said "no, keep going." They had so much willingness to grab the opportunity by both hands and go for it when given the chance. It reminds me how lucky I am and how important it is to ensure everyone has the opportunity to access education.'

EDUCATION IS KEY

A first generation Australian, Logathassan's views on education are shaped by her parents' experience as part of Sri Lanka's persecuted Tamil minority. 'They fled a civil war, from a place where they didn't have equal access to education,' she says.

'In Australia we have a lot of opportunities and access to things that students in other countries just don't have. We're in a lucky position to be able to help them.'

Promoting education is also a focus for El Dana. One outreach program she worked on through Bankstown TAFE targeted newly arrived migrant mothers. 'These women are focused on providing their kids with an education and bread on the table, so thinking about their own education is last on the agenda,' she says. 'We were helping them to start somewhere.' This included teaching English, running basic courses, helping the women with their resumes and encouraging them to build on their existing skills. 'I want to continue helping women become active members of this community,' El Dana says. 'Education is their greatest tool and women who are educated can raise educated children.'

To find out more about the outstanding contributions being made by women across our state, visit women.nsw.gov.au/women_of_the_year_awards

JOURNALISM, JAZZ AND **STICKY SITUATIONS**

We catch up with ABC news presenter and UWS graduate, Whitney Fitzsimmons.

‘INSULTED beyond belief’ is how Whitney Fitzsimmons describes her reaction to being told she’d make a good news presenter.

The offending comment came from a teacher at UWS when Fitzsimmons started her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Performance.

The prediction proved to be spot on. The 1994 graduate has since presented every news program on the ABC (bar only *Lateline* and *7.30*), and currently hosts the network’s *Business Today*. ‘Although being a news presenter was not a lifelong ambition, that’s not to say I don’t love it now,’ Fitzsimmons says. She reflects on her career in front of the camera.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO TV PRESENTING?

I originally wanted to be a professional actor. During the first week of a voice class at (UWS) Nepean we had to do an exercise where we introduced ourselves in front of the class. The teacher taped it and said ‘you’d be a really good news presenter because you’re so pleasant’. I saw it as the antithesis of being an actor, when in actual fact, a lot of performance skills are involved. I did work as an actor, I was lucky to get paid work on a regular basis, but I started to lose interest. I wanted to tell stories. I went in the direction of journalism and did a Master of Journalism at UTS. I’ve always been interested in news and current affairs and also like to be in a fast-moving environment, which you get on live TV.

WHAT APPEALS TO YOU ABOUT JOURNALISM?

It’s your job to get to the truth, which gives you a licence to ask all the hard questions. It’s challenging in the sense that you have to do this with different kinds of people from all walks of life, and find a way to relate to them. I like the way that journalism draws on a good base of general knowledge, but also gives you an opportunity to learn more as you go.

DOES ANY PARTICULAR STORY STAND OUT AS A FAVOURITE?

I sing a lot of jazz and have always loved (American jazz singer) Tony Bennett. I don’t usually go gaga for people, but someone like Tony Bennett has been an incredible performer for so long. I interviewed him when I was well into my career in broadcasting. I had to have a lot of confidence to meet someone at that level and was thinking, ‘what can I ask this man that he rarely gets asked?’ I was able to get through to the personal level.

AS A FORMER ACTOR AND BUSINESS PRESENTER WHO MOONLIGHTS AS A JAZZ SINGER, HAVE YOU FOUND ANY PARALLELS BETWEEN THESE DIVERSE ROLES?

Well, Simon Marnie (from radio program 702 ABC Sydney) once made me sing the market report on air. But yes, business is all about psychology and drama. It’s some of the most fascinating stuff and often gets treated very seriously, but it needs to be told in an engaging way.

DO YOU ENJOY THE PRESSURE OF LIVE BROADCASTS?

I find it really exhilarating. You have to be prepared for breaking news at any second. When you're on air and a disaster hits, you've got people talking in your ear, you're reading the auto cue, writing notes – you gain a heightened sense of awareness.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH STICKY SITUATIONS ON LIVE TELEVISION?

Anyone who has been live on air will have war stories. My job is to be prepared for those moments. How I see live television is that we're all on a plane. The show is the plane, the passengers are the audience, the captain and co-captains are the producer and director. I am the flight attendant, the face, the conduit between what's happening in the cockpit and what the passengers know. I have to remain as calm as possible (when bloopers occur) and issue apologies where needed so the passengers know what's going on. The moment they don't know is when they switch off or get really uncomfortable.

IS THERE ANYTHING FROM YOUR UWS DAYS YOU STILL CARRY WITH YOU?

I'd say I use 80 per cent of the things I learnt at UWS on a daily basis. The voice training, acting training, performance techniques, camera techniques and body awareness are all part of what I do. Acting skills can be applied to an interview situation, particularly when you're dealing with people who are hard to get over the line.





PAYING IT FORWARD

How a charitable gesture from 80 years ago is still changing lives

A DIFFICULT decision faced Beth Lavings at the end of her first year of medical school. The mother of two young children had passed all her subjects, but the financial pressure was too much and she realised she'd have to stop pursuing her dream of studying medicine.

Having rearranged her life to go back to university, racked up a HECS debt and countless hours of difficult studying and juggling efforts, she was suddenly thrown a lifeline. She was chosen as the first recipient of the Professor Ross Hawker scholarship, worth \$5000 each year.

The 2012 UWS Medicine graduate is now Doctor Lavings, with a job at Gosford Hospital. Having been accepted into the GP Training Program, her ambition of becoming a GP is also within view.

'The scholarship made such a big difference to me – it gave me a fabulous opportunity to do something which would otherwise be out of reach,' says Dr Lavings, who started her career in graphic design, but had always wanted to get into medicine.

She also credits her supportive husband for helping her get through the course.

In her third year of uni, Dr Lavings' husband quit his job and set up a home business so he could look after their children. 'I'm very lucky - he was juggling financially, raising two kids, setting up and running the business,' she says. 'The hours (studying medicine) are so demanding that it's not a course you can fit in with an external job. The hours of a junior doctor in a hospital are very demanding, so my husband is still juggling all this.'

Dr Lavings hopes her work as a doctor will repay the generosity she received while pursuing her qualifications.

'I want to contribute back to the community as a GP,' she says.

'Particularly as a GP, you're the long-term constant in a person's life. They'll come to you pregnant, and then you'll treat their children and get to know their family. Following someone through their lives, they put their trust in you.'

It's a similar pay-it-forward mentality that inspired the late Ross Hawker's son, Bruce, to establish the scholarship that helped Dr Lavings. Professor Ross Hawker, originally from rural

NSW, won a scholarship to western Sydney's Hurlstone Agricultural College in the 1930s, and went on to receive a scholarship to study medicine at Sydney University. He built a distinguished career as a scholar and medical researcher, publishing over 50 books, chapters and papers on his specialist area of endocrinology. His career took him to some of the world's most eminent facilities, but he never forgot that it all started with a scholarship to a school in western Sydney.

'In a sense, being able to help the next generation of doctors completes the circle,' says Bruce Hawker, a political campaigner and philanthropist. 'It's a fitting memorial to somebody who made a remarkable contribution to medical research.'

The Professor Ross Hawker Scholarship has helped four UWS Medicine students since it was established in 2008. It's drawn from the Hawker Foundation, which distributes about \$60,000 annually in scholarships, grants and charitable gifts.

MORE: uws.edu.au/informationabout/scholarships_home



‘Being able to help the next generation of doctors completes the circle. It’s a fitting memorial to somebody who made a remarkable contribution to medical research.’

**BRUCE HAWKER, POLITICAL
CAMPAIGNER AND PHILANTHROPIST**

GRADUATES RETURN TO **THEIR ROOTS**

SUCCESSFUL UWS graduates have returned to their old stomping grounds to help shape the next generation of experts in their fields.

Robert Ewing, divisional asset manager at AMP Capital, has volunteered as a guest lecturer for students of his former course, Bachelor of Commerce in Land Economics.

He has enjoyed the challenge of lecturing to a multitude of people – very different to the boardroom presentations he's used to delivering. 'It's very rewarding both personally and in terms of my career path,' Ewing says. 'I tried to address a lot of the questions I would have liked to ask when I was a uni student. It was an interesting feeling being back. The commerce sector is a lot more diverse than when I came out of uni. It's more cut-throat, the GFC has definitely put a microscope over everybody's role.'

In the business field, graduate Megan Bromley, head of employee experience at RedBalloon, has guest lectured on human resources and also held a master class on job-seeking. As a 33 year-old mover and shaker, she believes her age makes it easier for students to relate to her. 'They think, "this could be me",' Bromley says. 'One of the things I've enjoyed about the opportunity is that it provides a chance to give the real-world exposure that I wanted when I was a student. I've had good feedback and a few students have been in touch wanting my suggestions and advice.'

Would you like to
share your career
experience and
insights with current
UWS students?

Join the Alumni Volunteers Network
via uws.edu.au/alumnivolunteers
or contact the Alumni office
alumni@uws.edu.au to find out how.



PUTTING THE HUMAN ELEMENT BACK INTO HR

MEGAN Bromley majored in human resources and has even taken out a prestigious Australian Human Resources Institute award, but you won't see her using the term on her job description.

Bromley prefers her title of 'head of employee experience' at RedBalloon, where she looks after recruitment, training, development and 'all the fun stuff'.

It's not simply a matter of semantics. Bromley is passionate about putting people first within companies – bringing out their true strengths and personalities, rather than making them conform to a generic corporate persona.

'I'm interested in how people experience their days at work, not how they're used as resources within their workplaces,' she says.

'People not only want to work for a great brand – they are branding themselves. With social media, there's a greater sense of sharing who you are as a person.'

This is the kind of progressive attitude you'd expect from a business that has gone from a one-person start-up to employ 65 people in little more than 10 years – and indeed, one that's built on selling experiences.

Bromley graduated from UWS in 2004 with a Bachelor of Business and has been with RedBalloon for over six years.

MEGAN BROMLEY'S TOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

WHO ARE YOU ON THE WEEKEND?

'I want to get a sense of the whole person, not just their nine-to-five self.'

WHO ARE YOU A BAD DAY?

'How they behave on a bad day – whether they go quiet, speak up, or head out for a walk – says a lot about a person.'

WHAT WOULD YOUR PREVIOUS COLLEAGUES SAY ABOUT YOU?

'References get made by managers, but it's pretty powerful to find out what they think others would say about them. You find out how self-aware they are.'

ARE YOU NERVOUS?

'I'm not there to trip anyone up. If I get a sense that people are nervous, I'll just ask them. As long as they're not afraid to talk about it, it tends to help them relax.'

DO YOU LIKE DOGS?

'Not a typical interview question, but it's an important one at RedBalloon as Founding Director Naomi Simson and CEO Kristie Buchanan may have their dogs roaming the office.'



SLEEPING DRAGON AWAKENS TO ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE

UWS graduate Dr Qi Gao returns to China to address her homeland's pollution woes

WHILE China revels in its newfound economic prosperity, its environmental scorecard tells a different story.

The nation's air pollution alone accounted for 1.2 million premature deaths in a single year, according to the *2010 Global Burden of Disease Study*, and state media reports have revealed that more than half the nation's underground water is polluted. With China's growing hunger for energy driving the construction of more hydro-electric dams along the Mekong River, the situation is also grim for less prosperous nations downstream.

As environmental lawmakers race to keep up with China's rapid development, UWS graduate Dr Qi Gao is preparing the next generation of law experts to face the challenge.

Dr Gao returned to her homeland after completing her PhD in environmental law at the Parramatta campus mid last year, and is now a lecturer at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. She believes better environmental governance, greater community involvement and environmental law enforcement are crucial in addressing the mounting crisis.

'Pollution and ecological deterioration remain the most severe and urgent environmental challenges in China,' she says.

'To promote better environmental governance, more legal arrangements need to be made to restrict the power of the government. In the meantime, it is necessary to improve the involvement of civil society in environmental decision-making.'

Dr Gao has been keenly following the revision of China's Environmental Protection Law, approved earlier this year. Due to come into force next January, the amendment recognises the public's right to know and to participate in environmental matters; it introduces a new counting system for penalties on pollution and puts greater responsibility on administrative agencies. 'For the first time in China, this opens a door for public interest litigation,' she says. 'I am keen to follow up on its impact. The revision has sent out some promising signs... but whether these measures can be effective in practice remains to be seen and I am cautiously optimistic about the environmental future.'

The damming of the Mekong is an even more challenging problem to address, with dams and other hydropower projects identified as the largest conservation threat to the river system. The impact of this cannot be overstated. Of the 60 million people who live in the lower Mekong Basin, which includes Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, 80 per cent rely on the river system for their food and livelihoods, according to global environmental network, The Great Rivers Partnership.

Dr Gao's PhD focused on developing a procedural framework for sustainable water management of the Mekong, and UWS provided critical connections to experts in the region. She says complexities around political will and geopolitical concerns heighten the difficulty in reaching a solution. 'The key challenges come from dealing with immature national legal systems and the fact that they are at varying stages of political, economic and social reforms. Unfortunately it is unlikely Mekong water disputes will be addressed in a timely and effective way in the near future, despite increasing environmental concerns on the impacts of dam construction.'

'Pollution and ecological deterioration remain the most severe and urgent environmental challenges in China.' **ENVIRONMENTAL LAW EXPERT DR QI GAO**



FEE FREEZE

REDUCES CHILL OF THE UNKNOWN

As debate continues to rage over the Federal Government's proposed higher education package, UWS is moving to ensure prospective students aren't held back by uncertainty.

STUDENTS starting at UWS this year have been spared from fee hikes, with the university moving to lock in fees at pre-budget levels. This means anyone who enrolls and commences studies at UWS this year will complete their course under the old fee structure.

Fee increases are expected across Australia's universities, following the Federal Budget's proposed changes to higher education funding. The changes, which include reduced Commonwealth subsidies for university courses and a deregulation of fees, affect all new domestic students who enrol in a Commonwealth supported place after May 13, 2014. But with new fee structures yet to be confirmed, UWS has provided an extended buffer period until the end of 2014.

UWS is the first university in the state to announce a fee freeze. Vice-Chancellor Professor Barney Glover says the university made the decision to provide certainty for new starters. 'We understand that the proposed changes to fees are of concern to prospective students and their families in western Sydney,' he says.

'We don't believe we can expect students to effectively sign a blank cheque as, like most universities, we are not yet in a position to provide our fees in the new environment.'

The fee freeze is expected to have a negative impact on the university's revenue, but Professor Glover says it's more important that students are able to make a clear decision about their study ambitions and aren't deterred by uncertainty.

'For many of our students, a university degree is one of the most significant financial investments they make at that point in their life,' he says. 'We understand the need to provide our students, and indeed our region, with high-quality, accessible higher education.'

UWS continues to discuss the changes proposed in the Federal Budget with the Commonwealth and is working to determine an accessible fee structure to be applied from January 1, 2016. Fee deregulation legislation will be put before the Senate later this year.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING: FAST FACTS

From 2016, the Commonwealth subsidy paid towards the cost of university courses will be reduced.

Universities and higher education institutions will be able to determine the fees they charge, with the maximum contribution amount for students at universities and other higher education institutions to be removed from 2016.

Students will continue to be able to defer payment of their fees through the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). Graduates will start repaying their debt once their income reaches the minimum repayment threshold, estimated to be around \$50,000 in 2016-17.

The existing 25 per cent HELP loan fee will be removed and there will be no limit on the amount that can be borrowed from 2016.

Most domestic students who were enrolled in, or had accepted a university place on or before May 13, 2014, will continue to be charged under existing arrangements until they finish their study, or until December 2020, whichever comes first.



RESEARCH ADDRESSES COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE'S CATCH-22

AUSTRALIAN consumers have been quick to embrace complementary medicines, but breaking into mainstream medical circles has proven more challenging.

The National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM), based on the UWS Campbelltown Campus, is working to remedy the field's limited evidence base, which has long been its Achilles' heel. From its beginnings as a small university research centre in 1995, the Institute has grown to house more than 55 research staff and students – complementary medicine's largest concentration of researchers in the western world. Its 'bench to bedside' work involves preclinical laboratory research through to clinical trials and policy development with regulatory bodies. As an example of its scope, current clinical trials alone include yoga for mental health, acupuncture to

improve birthing outcomes in infertility and herbal interventions for polycystic ovarian syndrome, stroke sequelae and vascular dementia.


Whether it's Chinese herbal medicine, acupuncture or indigenous treatments, complementary medicine has been widely embraced. NICM estimates that two out of three Australians use some form of complementary treatment regularly, including for serious diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

According to NICM director, Professor Alan Bensoussan, a key aspect of complementary medicine is that it has largely been a grassroots movement, driven by patient interest, rather than the usual top-down approach through institutional investment in research.

A catch-22 of having an insufficient evidence base and poor research funding has hampered the introduction of complementary medicines into mainstream treatment, but there are some signs of a shift.

China's booming economy, for one, is helping push its herbal medicines to the forefront, and Australia's move to regulate Chinese medicine practice in 2012 will help ensure good quality practice, improve clinical outcomes and weed out rogue practitioners.

'Improving education and clinical standards of (Chinese medicine) practices creates enormous opportunities for the integration of care,' Professor Bensoussan says.



'The future for complementary medicine is very bright. The notion of incorporating the best of complementary medicine with the most effective means of conventional care is an important one.'

NICM DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR ALAN BENSOUSSAN

'The future for complementary medicine is very bright. The notion of incorporating the best of complementary medicine with the most effective means of conventional care is an important one.'

'NICM research is not about validating an isolated alternative to conventional care,' Professor Bensoussan says. 'Every clinical trial we do includes medical specialists in the field.'

The longstanding 'us and them' divide between mainstream and complementary medicine is unhelpful and, in some cases, rather arbitrary, he adds: 'Historically, there might be herbs and compounds identified in some cultures that weren't available in Europe, so they've just never made it into mainstream medicine'.

Complementary medicine is not just a gap-filler where conventional treatments are lacking. It can also

provide an alternative framework for assessing illness. 'If a patient presents with a problem, there are a number of mechanisms that might be explored to understand the reason,' Professor Bensoussan says. 'In Chinese medicine, other physical symptoms that might seem unrelated would be woven in to a pattern of understanding of the patient's clinical condition.'

Whatever one's views on complementary medicine, its widespread use alone arguably makes it worthy of exploration.

'When people are not well, they're very pragmatic and want to know about the best - and all - treatment options,' Professor Bensoussan says. 'What Australian consumers and clinicians are asking for is better evidence to guide (complementary medicine's) use. This is why a research concentration like ours is so important.'

NEW TRIAL TO GIVE HOPE TO VASCULAR DEMENTIA SUFFERERS

Dementia affects one in 10 Australians over the age of 65, and there's currently no treatment for vascular dementia, the second most common causes of the syndrome after Alzheimer's disease.

A landmark series of clinical studies, set to enter its third and final phase by the end of the year, could see herbal medicine step in to bridge the gap. If successful, the treatment may become the first prescription herbal medicine in the western world.

The National Institute of Complementary Medicine is leading the study in conjunction with clinical dementia specialists and hospitals across the country. Institute director, Professor Alan Bensoussan, says the evidence so far is positive. "If this trial is successful, it will mean there will be an option for treatment to prevent the rapid neurocognitive decline associated with vascular dementia, and prevent other symptoms such as depression," he says. Vascular dementia is caused mainly by repeated mini-strokes which damage brain function.

The upcoming trial of the highly refined three-herb combination will involve 230 patients. It follows from almost 10 years of laboratory-based research and early clinical trials. With the US currently trialing a herbal treatment for coronary heart disease, Professor Bensoussan says the race is on for Australia to be the first western country to introduce a prescription herbal medicine for the treatment of a serious medical condition.

ALUMNI SHARE THE BUZZ OF ASIA

The vast network of UWS alumni has just expanded its reach, with the establishment of a chapter in Hong Kong.

THERE are over 5000 former students living in Hong Kong, comprising both locals who were drawn to UWS course offerings as international students, and Australian expats attracted to Hong Kong's work opportunities and unique lifestyle after completing their studies.

Among them is expat Wilson Fernandez, who works in a business development role at PwC Hong Kong. The UWS Master of Management graduate moved to Hong Kong four years ago and believes doing business in Hong Kong is all about networks. 'I'm looking forward to connecting with people who share a similar background,' he says. Being exposed to networking opportunities is a key benefit for members of an international alumni network. The ability to share stories and tips on the ins and outs of local business culture is another.

With a young child, Fernandez lists Hong Kong's pollution and distance from family and friends as the biggest challenges of

his posting. But the pros outweigh the cons. 'It's an opportunity to work in an amazing part of the world with China at our doorstep and the variety of influences this brings,' he says.

Hong Kong local, Sherry Yip is helping to attract new members to the alumni chapter, and believes demand is strong. She migrated to Australia to complete a Master of Commerce in Financial Planning, but moved back home several years ago, now working as vice president in sales and distribution for MetLife. 'Sometimes I have met UWS ex-graduates in Hong Kong and we've all wondered why there's no alumni (chapter) for UWS here,' she says. 'I believe quite a lot of the Hong Kong alumni have the same thinking as us. We want to be connected. It will be a way to expand our social network and learn more from other alumni and UWS.'

UWS Alumni Manager, Ramya Acharya says the University is keen to engage with more of its graduates across the globe. 'Today's international alumni want to be involved, engaged, heard and to have a vested interest in the wellbeing of their institution,' she says.

There are more events being planned following the success of the Hong Kong Alumni Chapter's first cocktail event in July. Join the network online at uws.edu.au/HongKongAlumni

'Hong Kong has phenomenal energy. I still pinch myself some days walking through parts of the city where there's a real mix of east meets west.'

**WILSON FERNANDEZ, UWS
MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
GRADUATE AND EXPAT**



PROPERTY A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR BUILDING CAREER SUCCESS

A-REITS IN A NUTSHELL

- Australian Real Estate Investment Trusts, or A-REITs, give investors access to large-scale property assets that may be otherwise out of reach.
- Examples of properties typically owned by A-REITs include warehouses, offices, hotels and shopping centres.
- The trusts generate wealth through rental income, along with capital growth.

AUSTRALIAN property groups have been among the share market's best performers so far this year, a huge turnaround from the industry's dark days in the wake of the GFC.

Just as investors are again embracing listed property trusts, or A-REITs (Australian retail investment trusts) as a safe haven for their money, UWS graduate Adam Gruchot has put his money on the property industry as a launch pad for a prosperous career.

The high-achiever completed a Bachelor of Business and Commerce, majoring in property, at UWS Parramatta last year, and has already scored a coveted role as an investment analyst for property company The GPT Group. The listed company owns and manages \$8.6 billion worth of assets and boasts Sydney's iconic MLC Centre and Australia Square as part of its portfolio.

Going straight from balancing his student budget to assisting GPT's portfolio managers with multi-million dollar decisions has been a steep learning curve, but Gruchot is up to the challenge.

'Sometimes you have to pinch yourself and think, "wow, I've just completed a revaluation well into the \$800 millions",' he says.

Gruchot gained his role after a year-long internship provided a valuable head-start. 'It put me head and shoulders above everyone else, it consolidated my knowledge, and I already had established relationships within the company,' he says.

Six UWS students have gone through GPT's internship program since it was launched in 2011. Most have gone on to full-time employment with the company. Interns are employed for the equivalent of two days per week during their final year of university, and also receive a \$10,000 grant.

GPT recruitment manager, Gemma Adams, says the quality of UWS graduates is high. The organisation works with UWS professor of property, Graeme Newell, to identify stand-out students. 'We started by targeting students with top academic results, then realised we also wanted to focus on students who are the right candidates for the GPT culture – who have the right level of maturity, are open-minded, eager to learn all-rounders with strong social skills,' she says.

The company's firm focus on the future has made it an employer of choice for graduates within the property industry. 'One of the things GPT values is future-shaping, taking a longer view of what's happening in the industry, looking at the external market and staying a step ahead of competitors,' Adams says.

For more information about internships through UWS visit:
uws.edu.au/Careers



'You've really got to hit the ground running, and then run as fast as you can and try to keep up.'

**ADAM GRUCHOT, INVESTMENT
ANALYST AT THE GPT GROUP**





A TALE OF LOVE AND FATE

Silvana Azzi Heras, head designer for filmmakers Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, has created her own 'happily ever after' tale.

She has her dream job, is married to the love of her life, and is bringing up a precious little girl. Getting to this point involved all the twists and turns you'd expect in a cinematic tale, and for this real-life protagonist, the plot traces back to UWS.

Azzi Heras first studied social work and although it was the wrong choice for a design enthusiast, it was a fateful one, as it was there that she met her husband, Kim.

'From there, I went straight into a Bachelor of Design in Visual Communications at (UWS) Werrington,' she says. 'I was lucky I did it at that school – the lecturers were amazing.'

The real stroke of luck came in her final year when a lecturer received a call from Luhrmann's production company, Bazmark Inq, asking if she could send her top student to help out. Even more fortunately, that top student wasn't available, and Azzi Heras was next on the list.

'I didn't even know who Baz Luhrmann was at the time, which is probably a good thing – I wasn't star struck at all,' she says.

It was only supposed to be a weekend's worth of work, and Azzi Heras even had to bring her own computer. 'I can still remember my dad carrying our enormous old Apple computer into the Darlinghurst mansion where they're based – pretty embarrassing.'

An instant connection with Catherine Martin saw Azzi Heras offered a permanent position as soon as she finished uni. In the 15 years since, she has worked on critically-acclaimed design projects including *Moulin Rouge*, *Chanel No.5: the Film* and the epic *Australia*. She was assistant costume and title designer for *The Great Gatsby* and most recently, associate costume designer for *Strictly Ballroom the Musical*. 'It has really become like my second family, both Baz and Catherine are always so generous and inclusive of all their staff, sometimes we even holiday together,' she says.

Azzi Heras migrated to Australia from Lebanon at the age of two, and is the youngest of five siblings. 'One's a doctor, one's an optometrist – I was the creative one who was always off with the fairies,' she says. 'My parents really wanted me to be a dentist so we could open up an Azzi medical centre.'

But she has found her own way to honour her family name. 'Apart from having my daughter and marrying the love of my life, my proudest moment was being at the Oscars in LA and getting a mention when Catherine Martin won the best costume design for *The Great Gatsby*,' she says.

'I had such an incredible time working on *The Great Gatsby*. The 1920s was a beautiful decade for fashion, everyone was taking risks, women wore shorter dresses, men wore pink suits, jazz music was everywhere and art deco was at its peak.'

Now in the process of relocating to New York to work on another suite of Bazmark Inq projects, Azzi Heras is looking forward to life's next exciting instalment.

Photography:
Douglas Kirkland (previous page)
Sue Adler (above left)
Justin Ridler (above right)

BUILDING A BRIDGE TO INDIA

MUMBAI, the birthplace of Bollywood, is a melting pot of cultures, colours and contrasts. UWS commerce graduate, Kylie Bell, has been based in the Indian business capital for almost four years as Austrade's trade and investment commissioner for South Asia. Just as she finds herself occasionally struck by sensory overload, she is also struck by the immense business opportunities in Mumbai and India more broadly.

The figures speak for themselves. India is the world's 10th-largest economy, with a rising middle class among its 1.2 billion people. Recognising the vast trade potential, the Indian and Australian governments have categorised their relationship as a strategic partnership.

As a 20-year veteran in the industry, having worked in Austrade's offices in Spain, Malaysia and the Philippines, Bell is fit for the challenge of connecting Australian businesses with opportunities in India, as well as the growing neighbouring economies of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. She takes a few moments out of her busy schedule to share her insights.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE INVOLVE?

Building contacts with senior Indian business leaders, assisting business people from both countries to make connections, providing guidance and advice on doing business in India and Australia, and providing access to information and local market intelligence.

DESCRIBE YOUR EXPAT EXPERIENCE SO FAR?

Living in Mumbai has been a busy, rewarding and generally chaotic experience. It can be overwhelming at first - it's a hive of activity 24/7 and can be a bit hard on the senses. It's a city of 22 million people all crammed into a pretty small space. The traffic, the pace of business and life, the noise - there is nowhere else like it. It's the business capital of India, it's a dynamic mix of cultures and religions. Skyscrapers stand alongside slums and sophisticated global corporates work alongside small street hawkers.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE THERE OF LIVING ABROAD?

You need to quickly get up-to-speed on a country's culture and understand the quirks of doing business. India has 29 states and each one is unique, with different languages, cuisines, customs and ways of doing things. You need to learn who's who in business and quickly build your networks. It's important to listen,

watch and work with your local team and leverage their knowledge and contacts.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATE OF TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND INDIA?

The relationship has grown steadily in recent years. Australia's strength in exporting primary products, particularly minerals and fuels, as well as services like education, positions us well to supply growing Indian industrial and consumer demand.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES AHEAD?

Realistically, India can be a challenging market for international companies. Time lines for developing business are longer than in many other countries, and there are issues with bureaucracy, transparency and barriers to trade includes tariffs, duties and regulations. This is where Austrade can add value to Australian companies by helping them identify the right market entry strategy, customers and business partners.

WHAT MEMORIES DO YOU HAVE OF YOUR UWS DAYS?

My studies at UWS were very hands-on, practical and focused on real business situations. I still recall group assignments, lots of late nights and projects with local companies. This has all helped me in my roles at Austrade.



HELPING OTHERS DEFY THE ODDS

UNIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLE

- UWS has the largest number of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds of any university in Australia.
- 70 per cent of students are from western Sydney.
- More than six per cent are from non-English speaking backgrounds, representing 150 different nationalities, compared to 3.6 per cent across the sector.
- Over 50 per cent of UWS commencing students are the first in their family to go to university.

ALL ODDS were against Emeritus Professor Neville Yeomans completing high school – let alone medical school – while he was growing up on a dairy farm in South Gippsland, Victoria.

Recently named a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to education and medicine, which includes setting up the UWS School of Medicine, Professor Yeomans' achievements can be traced back to a life-changing scholarship he received as a teenager. The support enabled him to complete his high school education with a subsequent scholarship funding his medical degree at the University of Melbourne.

The leg-up he received in his younger days is one of the factors that inspired Professor Yeomans to make a bequest – a gift in his Will – to support the UWS Medical School. 'I want UWS to be free to use the money however they see fit, but one of the things they do offer is scholarships,' he says.

Despite now living in Melbourne and having worked and studied at other universities across the country and internationally, Professor Yeomans viewed UWS as a natural choice for his gift.

'I saw it as an opportunity to repay a bit of my debt because UWS gave me an opportunity to achieve something really worthwhile,' he says, describing his experience as the Foundation Dean of Medicine between 2004 and 2009.

'I enjoyed my time there so much. I have no hesitation saying that setting up the medical school, along with a team of terrific colleagues, was the most enjoyable and proudest achievement in my career.'

Professor Yeomans is particularly passionate about UWS's reputation as a 'university of the people', with more than half of the institution's commencing students the first in their family to go to university.

'UWS is a very practical place that plays a very important role in a very large part of Australia's biggest city. It gives so many opportunities to people to better their lives,' he says.

Having helped add medicine to the mix of UWS course offerings, Professor Yeomans looks forward to seeing the positive impact this will have on the area's health services into the future. 'A lot of medical professionals live further east, but this (medical school) is creating a shift in the centre of gravity. UWS graduates are very highly regarded and the standards of hospitals in the region can only benefit from having a medical school in their midst.'

For information on supporting UWS, contact UWS Advancement and Alumni on 02 9685 9511 or giving@uws.edu.au

'No-one at my school (in South Gippsland) had ever completed year 12 at that time. I probably would never have got into medicine and achieved the things I've been able to if I'd stayed there.'

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR
NEVILLE YEOMANS**



CLOSING THE GAP IN INDIGENOUS HEALTH

UWS graduate Dr Anyisia Den reconnects with her family heritage through medicine

WITH roots tracing back to the Warumungu people of Tennant Creek, Dr Anyisia Den is determined to make a difference in Indigenous health.

Although Dr Den never really got to know her Aboriginal grandmother before she died, her story, as a member of the Stolen Generation, has been a constant source of inspiration.

‘Thinking about my grandmother gives me incredible passion and motivation to continue when the chips are down,’ says Dr Den, who completed a UWS Bachelor of Medicine as a single mother.

‘It can be tough – I can do a 13-hour shift, and then have to come home and cook dinner for the boys, help with homework and run them to sport, but there are people with greater burdens to carry.’

Currently a resident doctor at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA), Dr Den plans to work in an Indigenous community after her youngest son, aged 14, finishes school.

‘It would be an absolute privilege and honour to get back to Tennant Creek and reconnect with my roots,’ she says.

Dr Den is particularly interested in obstetrics and wants to help address the high mortality rates of Indigenous children. Despite improvements over recent years, the death rate of Indigenous children is still more than double that of Non-Indigenous babies.

‘The fact that this is happening in a developed country is appalling,’ she says. ‘No-matter where you’re from, your background, culture or race, everyone should have access to good medical care. It’s an area I can see myself making a difference in – one small part of the many areas that need to be addressed.’

Fresh out of medical school, the 2012 graduate is already making her mark.

She was named RPA’s Intern of the Year for 2013 and operates under the belief that all patients should be treated as family.

‘They’re someone’s mother, father or loved one,’ she says. ‘People are entrusting you with a family member and it’s an honour to be able to look after them.’

Dr Den originally studied science and teaching at UWS Campbelltown and started her career as a high school teacher. She also lectured and tutored UWS statistics students. When the university launched its School of Medicine, the then 33 year-old saw it as an ideal opportunity to return and study something that had always interested her. ‘I loved teaching, but I saw medicine as an area where I’d be able to give back to the community even more,’ Dr Den says.

She believes her teaching experience, coupled with being a mature-aged graduate, helps her win the trust of patients.

‘A teaching background helps you relate to patients, families and colleagues,’ she says. ‘Someone with a bit of life experience under their belt can also be more empathetic.’

Whether it’s listening to a patient, holding their hand or comforting them before doing a procedure, Dr Den prides herself on taking an extra moment to improve every patient’s experience: ‘If your patient feels relaxed and confident that someone is looking after them, it heals them, they get better quicker. I leave work each day with an immense sense of satisfaction knowing that I’ve helped someone.’



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE

- The life-expectancy gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians is about a decade.
- Infant mortality rates are double among Indigenous Australians, but outcomes are improving.
- The Indigenous child mortality rate declined by 32 per cent from 1998 to 2012, outpacing the decline in Non-Indigenous child mortality.

Source: Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2014.

'No-matter where you're from, your background, culture or race, everyone should have access to good medical care.'

DR ANYSIA DEN

REFLECTIONS ON UWS HAWKESBURY'S GREAT JOURNEY

FROM its faux crime scene house for forensics students to its study of eucalypts in temperature-controlled chambers, UWS Hawkesbury stands out from your average university campus.

It's a fact the university's community is clearly proud of. About 140 alumni, current and former staff and members of the Hawkesbury community recently joined to celebrate the unique institution's rich history and bright future at NSW Parliament House on June 20.

Hosted by the Hawkesbury Alumni Chapter, the event featured Vice Chancellor Professor Barney Glover as guest speaker. In his address, Professor Glover listed some of the notable alumni who have attended the campus since it was established as Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1891. These include the sons of Prime Ministers Billy Hughes and Edmund Barton, a member of the Yates gardening family, several

members of the Lindeman wine-making family, the son of Henry Lawson and Andrew 'Boy' Charlton, who represented Australia at three Olympic Games.

The campus has come a long way since its foundation as the state's first agricultural college, teaching wool classing, shearing and horse breaking. Now in its 25th year as part of UWS, Hawkesbury campus boasts a suite of world-class facilities, including the Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment. The Institute has a team of over 50 scientists leading the way in research ranging from genetics through to predicted impacts of rising CO2 levels.

Hawkesbury campus provost, Professor Roy Tasker says the close ties between the university's network of students, teachers and alumni were evident at the luncheon. 'They all share a bond of friendship and a sense of belonging to the campus, with rich memories of their experiences. Our rich and unique history is something to savour.'

If you're passionate about UWS Hawkesbury, there are three ways to show your support.

- Donate to the appeal for scholarships online at give.uws.edu.au/Hawkesburygiving
- Find out how to donate towards pavers in Stable Square by emailing Brian Lindsay at b.lindsay@uws.edu.au
- Help the Hawkesbury Alumni Chapter maintain its list of alumni by emailing the UWS Alumni Office at alumni@uws.edu.au



FORMING NETWORKS AND FRIENDSHIPS ABOVE A GLITTERING CITY

Conversations and libations flowed freely as Hong Kong-based alumni gathered for a cocktail party in the city's swish Conrad Hotel.

The hotel's Pacific Bar was abuzz with chatter as graduates united to network and reflect on their time at UWS. The July event attracted more than 20 attendees, largely Hong Kong locals who studied at UWS.

It was the first event of its kind, following the recent move to establish a Hong Kong alumni chapter. One of the local alumni ambassadors, Sherry Yip, says it was great to have such a strong turnout.

'I would like to send my sincere gratitude to the UWS Advancement and Alumni team, and the two other Hong Kong ambassadors, Wilson Fernandez and Sebastian Ha,' she says. 'Without their involvement and support, we wouldn't have been so successful in our first event. We look forward to running more activities and building a successful Hong Kong UWS Alumni Association.'

The ambassadors aim to attract more members through regular meetings, activities and a newsletter. Next on the agenda is a Christmas networking event and an annual ball.



EXPLORING ARTS RESIDENCIES

Soon to be graduate of the UWS Institute for Culture and Society, Bettina Rösler, is one of more than 120 presenters at the Institute's upcoming Knowledge/Culture/Economy International Conference.

Rösler's PhD, *Reimagining Cultural Diplomacy through Cosmopolitan Linkages: Australian Artists-in-Residence in Asia*, examined the complex nature of cultural diplomacy and its role in facilitating social change.

'For a long time now, government initiatives aimed at building cultural relations have been judged according to their capacity to further foreign policy agendas and the economic "interests of the nation"', she says. 'By investigating the experiences of participants in the Asialink Arts Residency Program, I explored some of the cultural entanglements generated by Australian cultural diplomacy.'

Rösler's research is valuable in that it aims to reimagine potentially outdated approaches to conducting cultural diplomacy beyond purely economic, trade and strategic interests. It encourages cultural diplomacy to be recognised as a vehicle for a kind of cultural engagement that can significantly increase Australians'

knowledge about, and understanding of, culturally diverse peoples.

Rösler's conference presentation will focus on Australasian arts networks, linkages and exchange, particularly arts residencies. Sharing her experiences of the spaces she has explored and visited, she will discuss the potential that artists-in-residence programs have for creating intercultural dialogue, and ask how we can take different approaches to cultural policy making.

Rösler will be joined at the conference by keynote speakers Aihwa Ong from the University of California, Berkeley; Timothy Mitchell from Columbia University; Chris Gibson from the University of Wollongong; and Katherine Gibson from the University of Western Sydney in addressing the changing practices of knowledge and culture that have been central to recent debates concerning economic and organisational life. The conference will focus on five main themes: Asia Pacific Cultural Economies, Cultures of Finance, Economic Diversity, Digital Life and Fragile Environments.



Knowledge / Culture / Economy
International Conference
3-5 November 2014

The Knowledge/Culture/Economy International Conference will be held at the University of Western Sydney's Parramatta campus, 3-5 November 2014. Sponsors for the event include the Journal of Cultural Economy.

The Institute for Culture and Society is seeking sponsorship for the conference. If you would like to give your support to the Institute's work through sponsorship or would like information about attending, please contact Kristy Davidson, phone 02 9685 9674 or email k.davidson@uws.edu.au

Further information on the conference is available on the ICS website: uws.edu.au/ics/events/knowledge_culture_economy_conference

UPCOMING EVENTS 2014

SEPTEMBER	Spring Graduation Ceremonies	uws.edu.au/NewAlumni
17-19 OCTOBER	Parramasala Festival, Parramatta	parramasala.com
	Offshore Hong Kong and Vietnam Graduation Ceremonies	uws.edu.au/NewAlumni
COMING LATER IN 2014	Vietnam Alumni Event	uws.edu.au/VietnamAlumni
	Alumni Awards	uws.edu.au/AlumniAwards

STAY CONNECTED

Immediately following your graduation or completion of studies at the University of Western Sydney, you become a valued member of the UWS Alumni community. We encourage all of our graduates to update their details online and remain connected with UWS.

Update your details, join chapters and stay connected online at uws.edu.au/stayconnected

GRADLIFE MEMBERSHIP

We also invite you to join the GradLife Membership Program to gain access to benefits exclusive to UWS alumni.

To find out more or to join visit uws.edu.au/gradlife

FIND OUT MORE

Look online at uws.edu.au/AlumniEvents or contact the UWS Alumni Unit at alumni@uws.edu.au for more information.

Keep up to date with UWS on our social media channels.



facebook.com/UWSAlumni



twitter.com/UWSAlumni



uws.edu.au/alumniLinkedIn



Thank you

With the support of our alumni and staff we have been able to provide 14 Community Scholarships to our students.

With your support we can ensure more students like Mereti make it to their Graduation Day.

give.uws.edu.au/gift

COMING 1 NOVEMBER

A NEW WAY TO CONNECT

GradLife is moving into the digital age and is available via the Free UWS GradLife App.

The new app is available for iPad, Android and Windows and will **replace printed copies of the magazine.**

Access content directly from your device, including image galleries and online content.

Download the app at uws.edu.au/AlumniApp or visit uws.edu.au/myGradLife



Download on the
App Store



GET IT ON

Google play



Download from
Windows Store