

GRAD*Life*

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 2
SUMMER 2018/2019

2018 Young Alumni
Award Winner:
Ahmad Al Rady

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Front cover: Ahmad Al Rady, Young Alumni Award Winner 2018, Bachelor of Health Science (Honours)/ Master of Podiatric Medicine, 2017, Bachelor of Medical Science, 2012. Photo by Sally Tsoutas.

Design: Celia Zhao, Western Sydney University.

Photography: Sally Tsoutas, Western Sydney University, Monica Pronk, Orville Tagud, Greater Visuals, Hugo Munoz, and Daniel Kukec.

Journalists: Saffron Howden, Patricia Pinto, and Diana Simmonds.

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TOWN AND GOWN 2018



A MESSAGE FROM VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER

As a world-class university, Western Sydney University (Western) is globally recognised for its research strengths and innovations in teaching. We are proud to be included amongst the world's most innovative and vibrant universities that push boundaries and set new standards in higher education.

As alumni, you are the greatest ambassadors for Western. It is through your success that we can showcase the high quality and unlimited potential of our graduates. The outstanding accomplishments of our 2018 Alumni Awards winners (pages 24-29) exemplify the remarkable talent amongst our alumni and I congratulate each finalist and winner on their success.

In 2018 Western was named one of the world's top 500 universities in the prestigious Shanghai Ranking's Academic Ranking of World Universities and ranked in the top two per cent of universities in the world by the QS World University Rankings. I am confident that as we continue to build on our strengths in industry collaboration, teaching, research, and student and graduate outcomes, we will continue to see Western rise in ranking.

More than 20,000 of our alumni are now living and working overseas. It is always interesting to hear from graduates across the world, making professional advances and having global impact, such as marketing graduate, Erika Burho, now Executive Director of ForbesWomen in the United States (pages 4-5), and Dr Tayanah O'Donnell, a lawyer and social scientist researching sustainability and climate change impact on the 'coastal landscape' (pages 20-21).

Not only are our graduates branching out from Western Sydney and making an impact across the world, but we also continue to attract higher quality students from overseas to our campuses here in Australia. Every year international students from over 70 countries choose to study at Western, including Fulbright Scholar Victor Lopez-Carmen, a Native American from the Crow Creek Sioux and Yaqui Tribes (page 30).

The impact of our research spans the globe, with our academics working from various locations such as Professor Miroslav Filipovic working at NASA's 747 flying laboratory (pages 16-17).

We are indeed an international university. Wherever you find yourself in the world, I encourage you to stay connected with Western and share your stories and successes with us.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest edition of GradLife.

Professor Barney Glover AO
Vice-Chancellor and President

AROU

Did you know that more than 20,000 graduates of Western are now living and working outside of Australia?

FROM New York to Taipei, we're highlighting some of the amazing internationally-based stories of alumni influence and success that have seen our graduates journey from Western's campuses to the world.



**ERIKA BURHO,
NEW YORK USA**

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS
(MARKETING), 2005
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
FORBESWOMEN AT FORBES

It's no mistake that Erika Burho began working at an organisation with 'women' in the title after six years at one of the most famously male-dominated institutions in the modern developed world. Images of the trading floor frenzy at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) as a symbol of Wall Street are countless. It's a space where men work, almost exclusively.

While Erika was the head of event marketing there, and not based on the trading floor, she lived and breathed the Wall Street culture. As a woman she was looked at, and talked to, differently as part of an accepted way of working. But she loved her job, was proud of what she was achieving, and tolerated the culture to 'survive and get on' at the world's largest stock exchange.

Survive she did – and thrive. But the pace was relentless, sleeping at her desk not uncommon, unbidden tears came more frequently, and her relationships outside work were suffering. 'You look in the mirror one day and think, "Why do I look so old?"' she says now. 'I think things had to break a little.' It was time for change.

ND *the* WORLD

WORDS BY SAFFRON HOWDEN
PHOTO SUPPLIED

Now in her third year with ForbesWomen, Erika has found the balance she was seeking. As Executive Director she has a multimedia platform to showcase some of the most powerful and innovative women in the world. 'What an amazing time to be shining a light on women and what they're doing,' she says.

Among all the extraordinary tales she hears from the women featured online, in print, and through an interview series hosted by journalist and publisher Moira Forbes, it's the challenges they have faced that resonate.

Erika grew up in a small town of 200 people in the state of Wisconsin, USA. She was the classic middle child – someone who would do anything for attention – and from a very early

age she knew she wanted to get to the bright lights of the big city. 'At the time I didn't understand it, but I knew that there had to be more out there'.

By 17 she had taken herself off on a student exchange program to Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast. 'Australia was probably about as far as I could get from where I was,' Erika says. After six months she knew she wanted to stay and enrolled in a Bachelor of Business (Marketing) at Western Sydney University, edging her way ever closer to the big city.

Her first job was with KPMG in Sydney, but New York was calling, and three years after graduation she moved to the 'city that never sleeps', determined to make her own way. 'I

always knew that I wanted to come to New York, the place where all the action is,' she says.

It took more than eight months of knocking on doors before she landed her first job there, and if she could give her younger self advice now, she would tell her to be more relaxed. 'I should have given myself a pat on the back more often,' she says. 'I always had to be a bit more fabulous.'

As the global #MeToo movement sparks new conversations and perspectives on the treatment of women in the workplace, Erika is well placed at ForbesWomen to shine a light on these important stories. It's time to focus on solutions and action by fostering networking groups and sharing survival tools, she says. 'We have to push the conversation in the right direction.'



RAMON ESPIRITU, SOUTH AFRICA

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS
(MARKETING), 2005
ONLINE PAYMENT PATHWAYS GURU

Ramon Espiritu says he's addicted to travel. The more of the world he sees, the more he wants to see. Born in the Philippines and migrating to Australia as a small child, Ramon's family settled in Western Sydney where the friends he made were as culturally diverse

as the region itself. Their stories ignited his curiosity about different cultures, and with it, wanderlust. Hence, the globetrotting career Ramon has enjoyed since graduating from Western.

Ramon's very 21st century specialty is online payments and financial systems. Think brands like PayPal, American Express and Amazon Pay, and the payment gateways of global giants like Hotels.com, Expedia and Sony PlayStation.

He leads the teams that make these systems work, most recently based in London, with regular jaunts across the continent.

Today finds Ramon in sunny Capetown, enjoying a well-earned break after eight years in Europe, just back from safari in Kenya. Post Africa, it's onward to South America, and eventually, back home to the Asia-Pacific and the next big adventure.





GEORGE PRAGASSEN, SPAIN

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS
(COMPUTING AND INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT), 2000
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL
INFRASTRUCTURE AND EUROPE IT,
PAGEGROUP

George Pragassen is relishing the jet-setting lifestyle his role as the Global IT Director for PageGroup affords. From the covetable vantage of glorious Barcelona (with a home opposite the beach), George and his family are loving life, Catalonia-style.

Equally, George is loving seeing the ambitious Europe-wide IT strategy he implemented in 2016 start to bear fruit. When, after managing PageGroup's Asia-Pacific IT, he was asked to 'come up and run Europe'. It was an area

of the business where brave decisions needed to be made. George – armed with 15 years' experience and a Bachelor of Business from Western – bit the bullet and made them. Two years on, each and every element of George's plan is now in place and working.

George says that in business, and in all things, 'you've got to back yourself first, and the rest will follow'. Wise words from a man who's living them and reaping the rewards.



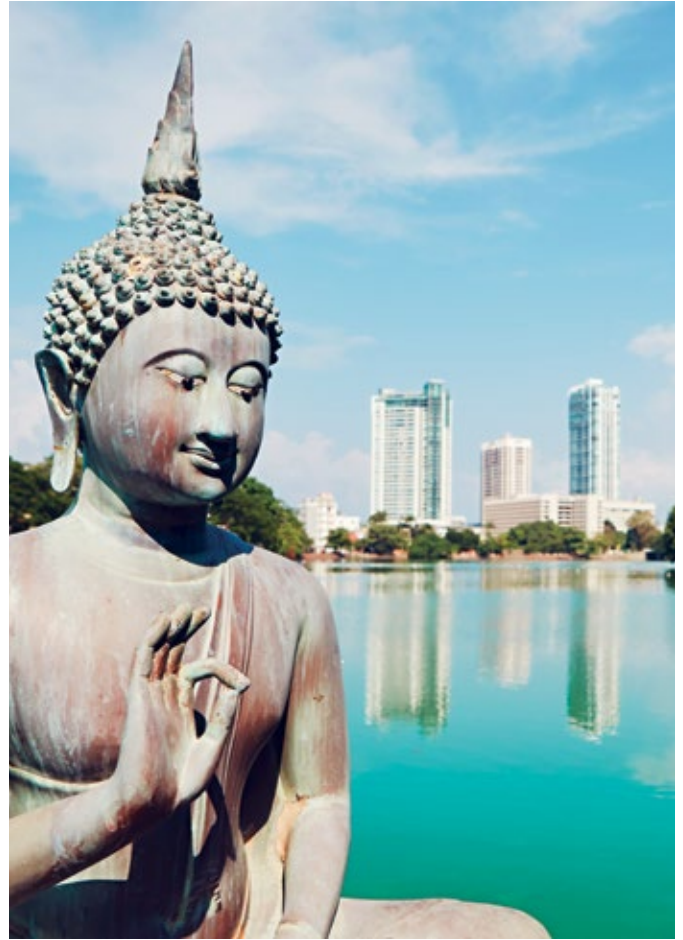
OZAN (OZ) BAHCIVAN, TURKEY

BACHELOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, 2013
EARLY CAREER DIRECTOR AT THE
INTERNATIONAL PSYCHO-ONCOLOGY
SOCIETY

When the 'Big C' strikes, it goes off like a grenade – hitting one directly, but also friends and family in a wide radius of suffering all around them. Why then are the psychological services to support oncology patients and the people close to them in such a primitive state?

In 2010, Ozan Bahcivan lived the emotional toll of cancer as he watched it take his beloved stepfather. He'd already chosen mental health as a career path, studying a Psychology degree at Western, but researching, creating and advocating for better psycho-oncology services has been Ozan's mission ever since.

He now divides his time between Spain and Turkey, working as a psychologist and psycho-oncologist in various hospital and clinical settings, and has recently established a private practice in his home city of Izmir, Turkey. As a Director of the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS), Ozan is playing a lead role in establishing the emerging field of psycho-oncology in Turkey. He's part of a pioneering group organising the country's first-ever congress, with 400 plus delegates signed up to attend. All while (somehow) simultaneously completing a PhD in Clinical and Health Psychology. At just 29 years of age, Ozan has had a huge impact on the lives of everyday people.



ROHIT RAO, INDIA

BACHELOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, 2002
MANAGING DIRECTOR, ACCENTURE OPERATIONS (RISK AND COMPLIANCE), ASIA-PACIFIC & AFRICA

In 2002 Rohit Rao graduated from Western with a Bachelor of IT – an excellent foundational qualification he's now employing to impressive effect.

Rohit earned his stripes working in senior executive roles in the IT and Services industries across Australia, India and North America. He's currently based in Bengaluru in South India, where he's the Managing Director of Accenture Operations (Risk and Compliance), for the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions. It is a position

that caps off 15 great years in an illustrious business career which has seen Rohit earn a reputation as one of the industry's good guys. He's known for his values-driven, dynamic and by-example leadership style – combining serious smarts with a can-do attitude, and the ability to keep team spirits up when the stakes are high.

At mid-career, Rohit is a man on a clear-sighted mission in pursuit of lofty professional heights.



PROFESSOR MAHESHA KAPURUBANDARA, SRI LANKA

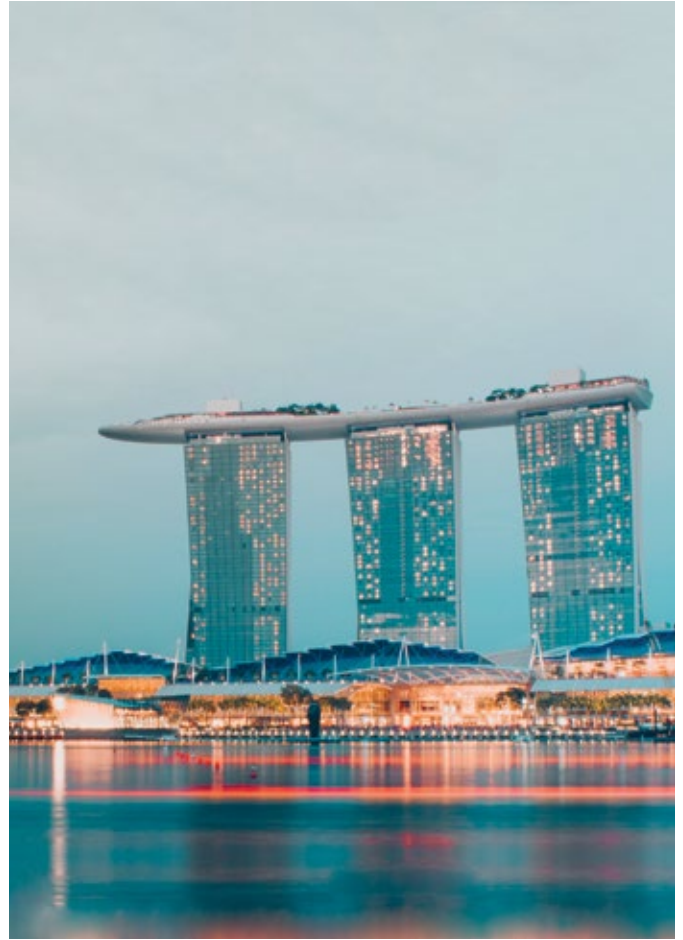
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, 2009
DEAN INTERNATIONAL, SRI LANKA INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Professor Mahesha Kapurubandara earned her PhD from Western in 2009. Prior to that Mahesha had won a scholarship to do a Masters in Computer Science at Thailand's prestigious Asian Institute of Technology, where she did exceptionally well.

Today Professor Kapurubandara has become the first woman to ever hold the role of Professor of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) at the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT). Her doctorate at Western focused on how Sri Lankan small-to-medium enterprises can make optimal use of new technologies, and her

research is aimed at helping businesses across her country access and analyse Big Data to achieve success.

Professor Kapurubandara's growing portfolio of awards and accolades includes: ICT Leader of the Year; Finalist, ICT Educator of the Year (South East Asia Regional Computer Confederation Awards); and Silver Medallist 6th Professional & Career Women's Awards. She is now carving new ground as SLIIT's Dean of International, with a remit that sees her in charge of trans-national collaboration, global student recruitment and offshore facilities development.



**THIVANKA RANGALA,
MALAYSIA**

MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION, 2004
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, EDOTCO
GROUP

The digital age has arrived – and nowhere is this more apparent than in the rapidly-developing markets of Asia. We're in the 'Asian Century' now, and the sleeping tiger has well and truly woken. The region is home to the world's fastest growing telecommunications industry, and with it, the world's fastest growing need for telecommunications infrastructure.

With an MBA from Western, edotco's Chief Financial Officer Thivanka Rangala's high-flying business career is based in downtown Kuala Lumpur. edotco

was a start-up five years ago, with Thivanka on board from the get go, steering its strategic course. Now it is Asia's number one business for telecommunications infrastructure – owning and operating 26,000+ towers in six countries across the region.

With a socially-progressive, green-friendly business model, an ambitious growth agenda, and the endlessly capable Thivanka among its leadership ranks, edotco is an emerging Asian tiger with a promising future.



**KAREN APPATHURAI WIGGINS,
SINGAPORE**

BACHELOR OF ARTS (THEATRE
THEORY AND PRACTICE), 2001
HEAD, CREATIVE – CONTENT &
MEDIA, THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY,
SOUTHEAST ASIA

Karen Appathurai Wiggins' advice to fellow alumni is 'never be afraid to step outside your comfort zone'. Karen is living proof that fortune favours the brave.

Karen has landed a dream gig as the Content Studio's Creative Head for Millennial and Young Adult production, for Southeast Asia, where she is the 'ideas woman' and key driver behind a multimillion dollar suite of creative projects.

Prior to joining Singapore-based Disney, Karen worked across Australia and South-East Asia, producing award-winning content for NBC Universal, Matchbox

Pictures and Maker Studios, as well as in Australia, for commercial networks plus ABC and SBS. Her portfolio features children's shows, entertainment and factual work – including inspired reality programs such as 'Incredible Life Swap' (a first-of-its-kind series that combines cultural exchange, social experiment and game show tv) and 'Disney Princess – I Dare to Dream' (the Philippines' first digital reality series inspired by your favourite Disney Princesses).

Daring to dream, combined with her manifest talent and solid tertiary qualifications, has taken Karen far indeed.



GUY MALPAS, HONG KONG

BACHELOR OF AVIATION STUDIES,
2003
DEPUTY CHIEF PILOT (AIRBUS)
AT CATHAY PACIFIC AIRWAYS

In a star-studded field of Western Sydney University high-flyers, Guy is an alumnus who's wings all but touch the sun – high above the clouds and crisscrossing the globe at the helm of an Airbus A350, with hundreds of passengers trusting him with their lives.

Guy recalls days where even buying groceries was a challenge, but with a Bachelor of Aviation Studies from Western under his belt, he's living his dreams in spectacular, technicolour style, working as a Deputy Chief Pilot for Cathay Pacific. Guy based

himself in Paris for a time, and today he calls Hong Kong home – another of the world's undisputed great cities, with a magnificent harbour that he enjoys sailing on.

Recently, Guy scored a win for diversity with the launch of Cathay Pacific's 'Fly With Pride' LGBTIQ network, unveiled as part of the company's new diversity and inclusion policy – a huge achievement in this ultra-conservative, 28,000-employee-strong global company.



VIKRANT BHATIA, HONG KONG

MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION, 2005
CEO KC MARITIME LTD

In the notorious waters of Australia's Great Southern Bight, with 15 metre waves crashing over the shuddering ship he was captaining, Vikrant Bhatia, not yet 30 years of age, learned career lessons he'll never forget. Of course he was worried – who wouldn't be? But as captain it was his job to appear calm and in control, for the safety of his crew.

Today, Vikrant is a long time home from sea and the CEO of KC Maritime, a large company, headquartered in Hong Kong and

sending freight ships to ports all around the world. He oversees hundreds of staff, on and offshore, and believes in staying cool in a crisis and that there is no substitute for hard work.

Vikrant began his career as a deckhand earning \$30 a month. It took several brave segues – sometimes downwards and often sideways – along with an MBA from Western to realise his leadership aspirations. Nowadays, he's the captain of a career he loves.



LESLIE HUANG, CHINA

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS
(MARKETING), 2007
GENERAL MANAGER, YILI
INDUSTRIAL GROUP, CHINA

Leslie Huang graduated from Western with a Bachelor of Business (Marketing) in 2007. Today, he is the General Manager for the largest dairy producer in China, Yili Dairy Company. In 2016, it was ranked number eight on 'Global Dairy Top 20' list, released by RaboBank.

In his role, Leslie oversees a truly global network, with operations in Asia, Europe, America and Oceania. The company has recently invested 3 billion yuan (\$595M AUD) in New Zealand for the construction of the world's largest integrated dairy base. Yili works collaboratively with some of the world's top universities to carry out research and development in the fields of nutrition and health,

food safety, agricultural science, animal husbandry, ecological, and environment protection.

Leslie is well placed to see Yili rise even further, as the immediate past Vice-President of Bayer Consumer Health's China-based operations, where he led the company in its bid to take number one position in China's colossal over-the-counter traditional medicine market.

In 2014, with Leslie's guidance, Bayer acquired Dihon Pharmaceutical Group, one of the country's most known and trusted traditional medicine brands. With a price tag of more than half a billion dollars, it was a serious investment, signalling serious intent.



EVELYN KUO, TAIWAN

BACHELOR OF MATHEMATICS AND
FINANCE, 2001
MANAGER, INVESTMENT DIVISION,
TAIWAN SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL
REALTY

Evelyn Kuo doesn't give up. Her team members have heard her say the words 'no quitting' so many times that they must nearly be ready to scream. However, it is still the successful mantra Evelyn lives by daily and the rock-solid foundations on which she has built her illustrious career. That, and her degree in Mathematics and Finance from Western.

Today, Evelyn is based in Taipei working at Sotheby's Taiwan where she heads the commercial real estate portfolio. With exceptional skills in running starts

from greenfield sites, Evelyn was made for this role. She started from the ground up – without resources, databases, systems or partners – and now there's a mid-sized team behind her, a substantial client list, and a map of every commercial building in Taipei. Her business covers leasing and sales on commercial office buildings, retail stores, shopping malls, industrial real estate and land, and international commercial real estate investment. Evelyn is what's known as a 'closer' – her personal best is four at one time – and it's what she does best.

LOWEST

HIGHEST

NUMBER OF ALUMNI OVERSEAS

1,663

NORTH AMERICA

WESTERN is a world-class university with international reach and a reputation for academic excellence and impact-driven research. Ranked in the top two per cent of universities worldwide by the prestigious Times Higher Education World University Rankings, we continue to strengthen our international profile and research standing.

Our graduates are at the forefront of this global reach, living and working in countries all around the world. We are proud of our alumni achievements, and as you can see by the map, Western graduates are making a significant impact across the globe.



20,000+

ALUMNI WORKING
OVERSEAS

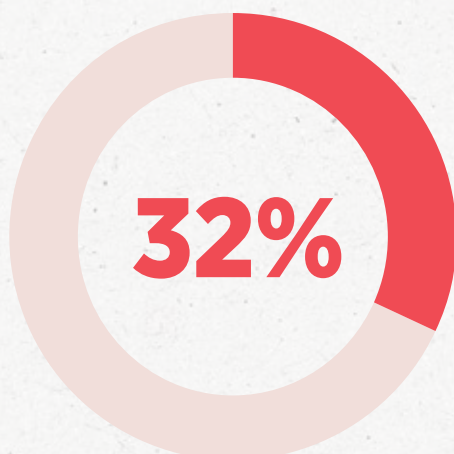
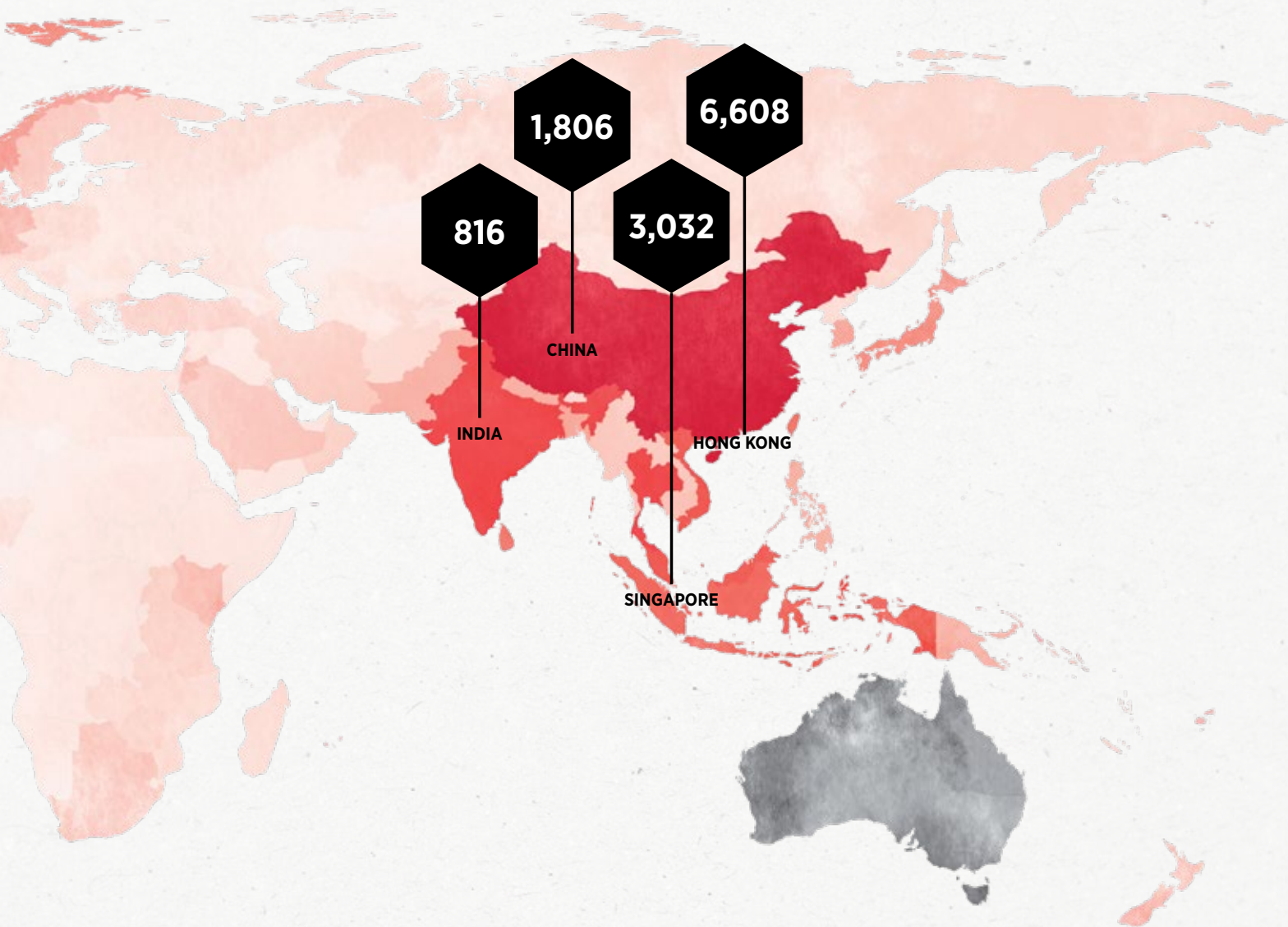
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128

COUNTRIES

**JOIN THE
NETWORK**

Update your education details on LinkedIn, and join 91,000 fellow alumni online at [linkedin.com/school/western-sydney-university/alumni](https://www.linkedin.com/school/western-sydney-university/alumni)



OF OVERSEAS ALUMNI
ARE BASED IN

**HONG
KONG**



**HONG KONG
SINGAPORE
CHINA
NORTH AMERICA
INDIA**

OVERSEAS PLACES
OUR ALUMNI RESIDE

a spotlight on

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DRIVEN by an insatiable curiosity and sense of making the world a better place, researchers at Western Sydney University are investigating such possibilities and posing many more questions, working closely with industry partners and community stakeholders.

The CWTS Leiden Ranking offers important insights into the scientific performance of nearly 1,000 major universities worldwide. The rankings focus on, amongst other things, the number and proportion of a university's publications that have been co-authored with one or more other universities, industry partners and other organisations. In 2018, Western ranked second among Australian universities for our collaborative publications (and 96th globally). It's through genuine partnerships that our researchers make discoveries that are relevant, important and applicable.

Some of these researchers and future-makers are featured in this issue of GradLife – from those who have started their career at Western, graduated with their doctorate and are now helping re-shape climate change policy, to visiting Fulbright Scholars investigating lessons learned in Australia for their First Nation's Communities in the Americas.

With a mission to serve regional and international communities, our University's research is designed to be impactful at a local, national and global level. Western is among the top two per cent of universities worldwide, and in the top 100 universities less than 50 years old, according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Our reach and impact is global, but the questions are generated locally in Western Sydney. The stories of discovery are significant, not just as research exercises but in terms of relevance to people's lives. They bring fresh perspectives to emerging and intractable problems, arriving at innovative and effective solutions.

As you read the stories of our researchers' insights, I encourage you to both embrace that same sense of wonder and ask 'what if?', as well as think about how you can further engage with us on our collaborative journey.

**WORDS BY PROFESSOR
DEBORAH SWEENEY,
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR
AND VICE-PRESIDENT
(RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)**

the WORLD RESEARCH

RESEARCH PATHWAYS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A CAREER IN RESEARCH?

Western Sydney University provides pathways for those interested in a career in research and looking to further their qualifications.

MASTER OF RESEARCH (MRES)

The Master of Research is a two-stage program designed to provide you with the skills you need to confidently undertake a PhD. Previous research experience is not required.

Stage 1: Research training coursework.

Stage 2: Supervised research project.

The degree involves two years full time (or equivalent part time) study.

RESEARCH TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

If you have completed a substantial research project as part of a previous qualification (such as a Bachelor Honours or Research Masters), you may be eligible for direct entry into the PhD program.

If you can demonstrate significant research experience in your role at work or in the community, this may be recognised for direct entry into the PhD program.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

The Doctor of Philosophy provides you with the opportunity to develop capacity to conduct research independently at a high level of originality and quality. You will uncover new knowledge through discovery, the formulation of theories and the innovative interpretation of previously established ideas.

A PhD qualification opens up a range of new career opportunities. It is also a great way for you to contribute the knowledge and experience you have gained in your existing career and make a positive impact to the research happening in your field of interest.

CAREERS IN RESEARCH

Academia

Lecturer
Researcher
Executive

Industry

Researcher
Business
Development
Scientist

Government

Policy Advisor
Intelligence
Analyst
Communications
Specialist

**w: westernsydney.edu.au/researchpathways
e: grs.enquiries@westernsydney.edu.au**



ASTRONOMY ALL-STAR

WORDS BY DIANA SIMMONDS
PHOTO BY SALLY TSOUTAS

As a boy, Professor Miroslav Filipovic was a stargazer. They filled the skies above his hometown of Belgrade in Serbia and would eventually lead him to Australia.

ARRIVING in Australia as a 25-year-old to further his studies, these days, he's that rare phenomenon: an astronomer who makes the news and has also been published in *Nature*, that most prestigious science journal. He's just turned 51 and is a Professor in Western Sydney University's School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics.

The news stories came about when he was one of the chosen few internationals granted a place on NASA's flying laboratory SOFIA (Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy).

'The flight started at 7.50pm from Christchurch, straight towards the South Pole, then a couple of loops at 43,000 feet and we came back about 6am – ten hours out there beyond the edge of the stratosphere. It's a Boeing 747 SP, that's "special purpose". It is the coolest thing you can do. Put it on your bucket list – fly into space, it's that good.'



“ I was a small child when man landed on the Moon. It was my dream. It was up there and I wanted that. ”

PROFESSOR MIROSLAV FILIPOVIC

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHYSICS), 1996

DIRECTOR, PENRITH OBSERVATORY AT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

WHY AUSTRALIA?

Sitting in his office at Western, he beams. ‘Australia is the best place for an astronomer. We have the second highest number of astronomers per capita in the world.’

The reason is surprisingly simple: ‘the southern hemisphere has the better sky’, he says. ‘The southern sky is by far more interesting to study. It is richer. Much better than the northern hemisphere.’

To a non-astronomer there is another surprising reason. ‘The most expensive instrument this country has ever financed is the Australia square kilometre array pathfinder (ASKAP) we are working on with the CSIRO in Western Australia because it’s so quiet, and that is the best because the instrument is very sensitive to noise.’

IS SPACE TRAVEL FUN?

‘No! It’s dry, you have to drink a lot of water and it’s cold because they open the tailgate for the telescope, it’s well below zero.’

WHY ASTRONOMY?

‘I was a small child when man landed on the Moon. It was my dream. It was up there and I wanted that.’

It was also about how things started, he says. ‘Eventually you realise it’s not simple and you want to contribute, to decipher, to try to answer these questions. To search for an answer is a most powerful thing within us.’

Professor Filipovic’s curiosity is still evident in the sparkle accompanying his explanation. ‘We are that TV generation – you can see beyond your town, beyond your country, beyond your world. It’s magical.’

SO WHAT’S THE POINT OF THE STUDY MADE ON SOFIA?

‘One of the very important parts about the evolution of stars is what is happening when one dies. It releases a gigantic amount of energy – it is (in most cases) very violent. The Earth’s atmosphere protects us, but the cosmic rays penetrate and kill us slowly, slowly. No matter how healthy we are, we will die. So – how can I prevent that?’

‘I want to extend the experience of our lives. I want to cherish and enjoy life as long as I can. Is 120-years-old enough?’

‘I believe in a good life, that we are all equal. I believe there is a lot of mystery out there and I believe in love.’



GROU

REF

WORDS BY DIANA SIMMONDS
PHOTO BY SALLY TSOUTAS

MAKING AN INVISIBLE RESOURCE VISIBLE FOR ITS SUSTAINABILITY TO VILLAGERS IN INDIA

As a boy in rural Rajasthan, Professor Basant Maheshwari became vividly aware of water when the levels of wells in his village began to drop.

'RAJASTHAN is among the driest states. My father was a businessman and also had a farm. Electricity was coming. He was a forward thinker and he knew it was important for the village, so he got others to sign up.' Power came and with it, better ways to access water, but digging ever-deeper wells – emptying aquifers – was not the answer.

'I asked why not divert rainwater from the bottom end of the field into an abandoned well? My father thought it was a good idea. From that time, I was most interested in better usage of water.'

After completing a Bachelor of Engineering at the University of Udaipur, followed by a Masters from Bangkok's Asian Institute of Technology and a PhD in water management from Melbourne, Professor Maheshwari has worked around the water world and, now at Western, he is again focused on Rajasthan and neighbouring state, Gujarat. 'The opportunity

to work in experiential learning attracted me to Hawkesbury,' he explains.

The northern Indian states are particularly reliant on monsoon rains to counter the region's aridity. For more than a decade Professor Maheshwari has been engaged in a project that harks back to his boyhood ideas.

Managing Groundwater use and Aquifer Recharge through Village-level Intervention (MARVI) is a simpler concept than it sounds, and demonstrates Professor Maheshwari's determination.

THINKING ABOUT WATER

‘Water is not only life, it is a living thing. We must have respect for it.’

PROFESSOR BASANT MAHESHWARI

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

‘I took the idea to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) around 2000 and unfortunately was advised that all of their funds were committed and they were not in a position to fund it. Eight years later though, I was in Canberra and ACIAR said, “talk to us next year”. So, I put it in my calendar for May and we were finally able to start!’

It wasn’t that easy however, ‘At first one would say, “we do not need to do this research, give us the money and we can just dig deeper and find the groundwater”, but of course, we have found that is not the way to do this kind of work.’

Managed Aquifer Recharge through Village-level Intervention or ‘MARVI’ is on-the-ground research connecting farmers to a crucial involvement in the outcomes. ‘They are the

researchers, we are not telling them we are doing this or that. They are doing it and owning the process’ – which is to methodically measure water levels in wells and collate data to build a picture of the health of aquifers. Numbers of villages and their wells were selected and the scientific equipment for the research consisted of a tape measure with a weight on one end.

‘It took some time to convince the farmers that they could not give approximations of what they measure, that it had to be accurate, but over time they became interested in results and understood their importance.’

Knowing the state of groundwater meant farmers were better able to understand their water situation with their own data and even begin to change their traditional practices.

‘Farmers have adopted better irrigation methods, they have also changed the crops they plant when it is necessary and formed village groundwater cooperatives to share groundwater amongst themselves’, says Professor Maheshwari.

The necessity is partly due to climate change, he says. ‘It is making the monsoons four or five weeks late, and that is very bad for some crops and others need more water.’

Our attitude to water is also very important, says Professor Maheshwari, and he makes a profound observation that should be taken to heart by Australia as well as in rural India.

‘Water is not only life, it is a living thing’, he says. ‘We must have respect for it.’

TAYANAH O'DONNELL'S COASTAL LAWSCAPE

WORDS BY DIANA SIMMONDS
PHOTO BY MONICA PRONK

Dr Tayanah O'Donnell is a lawyer and social scientist whose passion for 'the coastal lawscape' affects us all. Her work is most easily described by her PhD thesis which explains, '...how climate change adaptation strategies are framed by different policies and laws, and how these strategies are negotiated by relationships between local councils, state policy and private property owners at various scales'.

However, Dr O'Donnell isn't your average high-achiever. She initially didn't finish high school.



How did things start out?

Dr O'Donnell was bitten by the law bug at age six following a 'discussion' with her grandmother about the ingredients of bubble and squeak.

'I was adamant there were no vegetables – because I hated veggies then, but loved her bubble and squeak! It was the only time I ever heard her raise her voice, when she said, "you could argue with a mouthful of marbles underwater. You should become a barrister!".'

Dr O'Donnell then asked her grandmother what a barrister was. It set her heart firmly on the law. Having completed her PhD in human geography, she says, 'I now have an equal love for geography'.

Later, as a 19-year-old single parent she went to Liverpool TAFE and completed a year 12 equivalent course in order to attend university. 'My then TER was high enough to

study law/social sciences at any university, but Western was my first choice', she says.

After graduating with her Bachelor of Laws/Social Science (Hons) and Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, she practiced law for a few years. She then went to work as Tipstaff to the Hon Justice Sheahan AO in the NSW Land and Environment Court, where an interesting piece of litigation inspired her career in research.

'That was the Vaughan litigation. Vaughan is a coastal property owner whose house is located in a high-risk coastal zone. He's commenced numerous legal actions to protect his property rights.'

The case before the court in 2009 was about the conditions of a development consent – pretty standard stuff, according to Dr O'Donnell – however it was for a sandbag wall built in a planned retreat location. The wall had collapsed during a storm, taking

with it several metres of Vaughan land, as well as causing severe public asset and beach damage.

'This case was interesting, because although it wasn't about specific climate change impacts, it represented the types of legal cases we might see in the future', she says. 'Climate change *will* see a lot more of these types of impacts, with devastating legal, environmental and social consequences for coastal zones.'

How do you identify or decide on a focus?

'I don't see these issues as binary – they're interrelated, a system,' says Dr O'Donnell. 'Through the lens of a "coastal lawscape" we can better understand the relationship between law, politics and culture in the context of coastal climate change adaptation.'

Dr O'Donnell is currently Director of Future Earth Australia hosted by the Australian Academy of Science,

of which Western Sydney University is a member.

'The team links science to sustainability', she explains. 'One example is our focus on sustainable urban systems. We're running a dozen full day workshops around the country to build communities of practice on urban issues and opportunities, and to build an evidence base for a national strategy for Australia's cities. The long-term sustainability of our cities is critical given the expected environmental, social, and economic changes we know are coming due to climate change. It's also practical given the rapid rate of expansion of urban centres, here and around the world.'

So, are you a pessimist or an optimist?

'An optimist', she says firmly. 'I have to be for my children and future grandchildren. I want them to know I did everything I possibly could.'



PUTTING THE LID ON PLASTIC WASTE

HOW we deal with plastic waste is becoming an increasingly important issue for our communities. Plastic lids are particularly problematic as they are too small to be collected and processed in regular recycling facilities. To illustrate the scale of the problem, and its impact on the environment and marine life, current student and eco-warrior Naomi Kroll founded The Plastic Lid Project.

Naomi collected more than 20,000 plastic lids from around the university's campuses. 'We had 5,000 people help collecting them which was a massive effort and a great example of community action. We collected so many lids I didn't know where to store them!'

Once she reached 20,000 plastic lids (and truly exhausted her home's storage spaces), she created a beautiful artwork with the materials resembling a giant turtle, called 'Drowning in Plastic'.

'Turtles are particularly at risk from plastic waste polluting our oceans, as they mistake floating plastic for food', she says.

Naomi displayed her artwork at the Youth Eco Summit held in Sydney in 2018, and held an interactive workshop where children helped make two new pieces resembling rainbow fish and star fish.

'We received great feedback from the teachers, many of whom took an art plan so they can do a plastic lid art project with their class. The children said they had a lot of fun and got really engaged', says Naomi.

The Plastic Lid Project has reached over 28,000 people, exhibited at events such as the Penrith Real Festival, and Naomi presented on her work during the Asia Pacific Youth Summit which showcased impressive initiatives from across the region relating to the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.





Find out more at facebook.com/EarthIQ
or follow the conversation using [#EarthIQ](https://twitter.com/EarthIQ)

TAKING a positive step to engage and empower millennials and their communities for a climate change-impacted future, Western has launched a new awareness campaign. Earth IQ is both a beginner's guide to climate change, and a way of inspiring a generation to embrace more mindful and sustainable living, one carbon footprint at a time.

The University is one of only 10 universities in the region committed to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and one of only four universities appointed by the UN as a Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development.

85%
OF MILLENNIALS

indicated their life would be affected by climate change in the future.



Young women were **8 TIMES** more likely to be concerned about climate change than men.



ONLY 12% OF MILLENNIALS

saw climate change entirely as a consequence of human activity.

ALUMNI AWARDS
2018

“My work is not something I do, it’s who I am. If someone else is seeing problems, I see possibilities.”

PROFESSOR IONA NOVAK

Chancellor's Alumni of the Year Award Winner

PROFESSOR IONA NOVAK

WORDS BY SAFFRON HOWDEN

Professor Iona Novak understands better than most what it means to be misunderstood by a well-meaning health system.

Born with the rarest form of an uncommon disorder called hereditary angioedema, she experiences frequent bouts of severe swelling that obstruct her airways. A couple of times a week, she stares down death.

However, she has never let herself be defined by her condition, and says of her numerous visits to hospital emergency wards: 'I've been very misunderstood my whole life.'

This makes the PhD alumna a formidable advocate for the people she has dedicated her professional life to helping – those living with cerebral palsy.

Professor Novak's 15-year clinical research career is full of collaborations enabling firsts: the first national Cerebral Palsy Register, the first Australia-US-Canada stem cell alliance she established as a Fulbright Scholar, and now the first Australian stem cell trial in the search for a cure.

Her secret is the deep empathy she has for the people her work will ultimately benefit. 'They set the research agenda,' she says. 'If you listen to your patients, you understand what matters to them – it's amazing how much progress you can make.'

Professor Novak is now the Head of Research at the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research Institute based at the University of Sydney, a centre she helped found. But her path was set way back when she was eight years old, sneaking television viewing that had been strictly banned by her teacher mother.

During one of these illicit screen times, Iona, living in rural New South Wales, watched *Annie's Coming Out*. The Australian drama is about a girl with cerebral palsy who was institutionalised at a young age and later released thanks to the advocacy of her teacher. It had a profound effect on Professor Novak, who had already marvelled at the stories of her grandmother working as a nurse during World War II.

She set her mind to a career in health care and later completed her undergraduate studies in occupational therapy. When she saw BOTOX® being injected into the legs of cerebral palsy patients to improve mobility, she asked herself, 'Why can't this also be used in the arms and hands to the same end?'

Professor Novak's passion for new possibilities in cerebral palsy treatment led her to Western, where she sought out Professor Anne Cusick as a supervisor and mentor. 'Professor Cusick is one of those rare individuals who sees the potential in people and then empowers them to succeed,' Professor Novak says. 'She taught me that if you didn't have the answer within yourself, it would be out there.'

Western provided the relationships she needed to build her career and focus her work, encouraging her to be creative and think outside the box. 'Have possibility as your framework rather than fear of failure,' is her advice to the next generation of researchers and students.

Juggling her life-threatening condition with clinical research and a love for painting and photography is a seamless daily act for Professor Novak. 'My work is not something I do, it's who I am. If someone else is seeing problems, I see possibilities.'



International Alumni Leadership Award Winner

PROFESSOR SYED ZIAUR RAHMAN

WORDS BY DIANA SIMMONDS

With Professor Syed Ziaur Rahman's family background, his destiny always lay in human health.

Professor Rahman is a scion of one of the great Unani physician families, with roots dating to the twelfth century. His family are the custodians of many medical manuscripts as old as of tenth century. Among these are extremely rare editions.

His family helped found the practice of Unani in India where it became, along with Ayurveda, one of the twin pillars of traditional medicine practiced across the subcontinent for centuries, and remains widely used to this day.

Professor Rahman has an illustrious research and teaching career in pharmacology. His global impact includes pioneering work to eliminate animal exploitation in medical teaching, exploring the contemporary potential of traditional medicine, and founding a new field of research into the environmental impacts of pharmacology. Professor Rahman was awarded a PhD in Medicine from Western in 2015.

He is a difficult man to catch between planes, countries and engagements. An email Q&A came back from somewhere in the world and is as illuminating as his work.

Q: CAN YOU TAKE US BACK TO YOUR CHILDHOOD AND FIRST AWARENESS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR FAMILY IN UNANI MEDICINE?

A: I vividly remember the Unani polyclinic being run from our house in Aligarh city. My grandfather used to involve me in preparation of medicines, especially different oils and tablets. When my grandfather developed a tremor and difficulty in writing, he dictated letters for his patients to me. In this way, I learned basic concepts of Unani medicine. Because of this experience, I took Pharmacology as my main subject.

Q: COULD YOU EXPLAIN UNANI?

A: Unani is founded on the basis of four humours: Black bile, Yellow bile, Phlegm and Sanguine. Unani medicine promotes six essential factors that are considered responsible for maintenance or bringing about changes in the body. There are six essential factors: Ambient air, Food and drink, Sleep and wakefulness, Excretion and retention, Rest and activity of body, and Psychological activity.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF 'BIG PHARMA'?

A: Ah... it's a great question and needs long debate. Big Pharma, in my view, is a business, and sometimes operates for sinister purposes and against public interest. It also includes 'Lifestyle Drugs' that are applied to medications which treat non-existent diseases, non-life-threatening and non-painful conditions such as baldness, wrinkles, acne etc. These are not medical problems at all but intentionally medicalised for pharma gain.



Professor Syed (Zia) Ziaur Rahman
Doctor of Philosophy – Medicine,
2015. Photo by Orville Tagud.

Young Alumni Award Winner

AHMAD AL RADY

WORDS BY SAFFRON HOWDEN

Freedom for Ahmad Al Rady is doing 10,000 things at once ‘just because I want to’.

Ahmad is a podiatrist, poet, philanthropist, community leader, social activist and business owner. Wielding an undisciplined curiosity, Ahmad has achieved more in his 28 years than most do in a lifetime.

Arriving in Australia from Iraq just in time to catch the Sydney New Year’s Eve fireworks at the turn of the millennium, he was nine years old.

‘When I first came to Australia my English wasn’t up to par so I did a lot of reading and writing... I fell in love with that,’ Ahmad says.

As a teenager he considered a career in writing or art, but a fascination with science combined with a strong sense of social justice steered him towards a medical science degree at Western.

‘There’s the feeling of wanting to give back,’ he says. Between work at the Diabetes High Risk Foot services at Royal Prince Alfred and Concord hospitals, Ahmad runs a podiatry clinic and donates his time and skills through his new charity, Sole Purpose, which provides shoes and socks, and free podiatry consultations to the homeless in our community.

But his love of the spoken and written word remains. He co-founded the acclaimed Bankstown Poetry Slam more than five years ago and continues to write and perform.

‘When I first started to write, it was out of frustration about not being heard,’ he says. Now his poems are less political and more about the human experience – designed to inspire rather than agitate.

‘As a young person you’re told to pick a lane, but life is not just one lane.’

BANKSTOWN POETRY SLAM

Bankstown Poetry Slam is a community platform which empowers people to express themselves through spoken word poetry. Visit bankstownpoetryslam.com to find out about upcoming events.

“As a young person you’re told to pick a lane, but life is not just one lane.”

AHMAD AL RADY



Ahmad Al Rady
Bachelor of Health Science (Honours)/
Master of Podiatric Medicine, 2017,
Bachelor of Medical Science, 2012.
Photo by Orville Tagud.



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Alumni Award Winner

SHANE KENNELLY

Shane Kennelly is a proud Bundjalung man with a complex backstory – an early life marred by the long shadows of the ‘stolen generation’, family conflict and constant, grinding poverty. But he has also been blessed with a talent for maths, enthusiasm for study, and a steely determination to build a better life for himself, his family and other Indigenous Australians.

In 2008, Shane graduated from Western with his second degree, a Master of Business (his first was in Aeronautical Engineering). In 2010, along with his brother Adam, Shane founded Kennelly Constructions, a socially-aware construction company which includes an Indigenous workforce. Today, Kennelly Constructions is a leading national contractor with major

projects across Eastern and Northern Australia. It delivers civil, electrical, construction and maintenance services, employing over 20 per cent of their workforce with Indigenous construction workers, and has offices in Brisbane, Canberra and Darwin. The company pursues an explicit point of difference around caring for and respecting its employees, with a motto and guiding mantra that ‘we are only as good as our people’.

Kennelly Constructions also provides a scholarship for an Indigenous person to study Civil Engineering, and sponsors Queensland’s Aboriginal Achievement Award, which honours a young Indigenous person’s extraordinary achievements.



Community Champion Alumni Award Winner

FATEN EL DANA OAM

Midwifery and teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) might seem an unlikely pairing, but it makes perfect sense when you hear Faten El Dana OAM’s inspirational story. When she was a young girl growing up in Lebanon, a neighbour died whilst giving birth at home. This made Faten decide to become a midwife.

Faten discovered that to pursue her dream she would have to migrate to a country where it was possible to study midwifery. Enter Western Sydney University and a new life in Australia.

Faten spoke English when she arrived, but her heart went out to the women she’d meet who couldn’t. As a midwife at Westmead Hospital, she developed an understanding of the pressing

health issues pertaining to women from non-English speaking backgrounds. As a migrant herself, she empathised and developed a passion for helping migrant women in Australia and improving their awareness of important health issues.

In 2012, Faten was awarded an OAM in recognition of her extraordinary work as a health educator, Muslim women’s health campaigner and ESL teacher. Today, Faten is President of the Muslim Women’s Welfare of Australia, the Arabic Consultant for the Multicultural Health Communications Service, a member of the Consultative Council of Australia’s Anti-Discrimination Board, and part-time Program Manager for Muslim Community Radio 2MFM.

Professional Excellence Alumni Award Winner

KYLIE WARD

Imagine if all Australia's nurses downed-tools tomorrow – it would spark a national emergency. Nurses do a lot of the heavy lifting in our health system – physically and emotionally, day in and day out, consistently and exceptionally.

Kylie Ward holds both a Diploma in Nursing and a Master of Management from Western and is now CEO of the Australian College of Nursing, where she is an advocate for greater recognition for nurses, here and around the world. She points out that for 23 years running nurses have been named Australia's most trusted and ethical occupation, and it's high-time they got the recognition they deserve.

Kylie is also spearheading efforts to encourage more young people to

consider nursing, including young men, in an attempt to counter the predicted 125,000-strong shortfall in our national nursing ranks by 2030, despite the profession offering a richly-rewarding, globally-portable career that technology can never replace.

She makes her tremendous difference on an international scale, in a role that sees her delivering professional development to nurses in the Cook Islands one day, supporting young mentees in Asia or Africa the next, and advocating for the world's nurses as a career-defining purpose.

'I love what I do because I know that nurses can, and do, make a tremendous difference to the welfare and wellbeing of societies,' Kylie says.



Hawkesbury Alumni Award Winner

DAVID GOODFELLOW

David (Dave) Goodfellow paid his way through his agricultural degree shearing sheep and running the Hawkesbury campus bar. By the time he graduated, David had almost 30 students working for him and had turned that bar into a goldmine. Even back then, David's prodigious talents for people management and money-making shone through, as did his ability to work hard and lead by example. David's managerial philosophy is simple – if you do the right thing by your employees, they'll do the right thing by you. It's a belief that has stood him in powerfully good stead during a high-flying career that's taken him from China to Canada and everywhere in between, and earned him an international reputation as

Australian agriculture's 'go to' business guru.

David has taken his love of the land and parlayed it into a remarkable career. He's been an academic and an agricultural consultant, and is among the country's most successful agricultural investment strategists. Building agricultural investment portfolios for the likes of Mutual Trust, Macquarie Bank's Paraway Pastoral Company and RIFA – he has returned significant profits for clients in Australia and around the globe, via strategic smarts and unparalleled industry knowledge. Quietly, and without fanfare, David has helped shape the modern Australian agricultural industry and done his university proud.



Visiting Fulbright Scholar Victor Lopez-Carmen grew up in Arizona – thousands of miles from Australia and its First Nations Peoples. But as a Native American from the Crow Creek Sioux and Yaqui Tribes, he sees the parallels – the problem of education being paramount among them. From a high school class of 150, Victor is one of only six who graduated from college, travelling the length of the United States to do so.

IN 2017 Victor graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Health Sciences and Chemistry) from Ithaca College in New York State. He has graduated from a Master of Public Health at Western as a visiting scholar, dividing his time between New South Wales and Queensland. The Fulbright Program is the flagship foreign exchange scholarship program of the United States, aimed at increasing bi-national research collaboration, cultural understanding and the exchange of ideas.

In keeping with this mission, Victor has been conducting pioneering work investigating the social, cultural and health impacts of the commonplace phenomenon whereby Indigenous learners (some as young as 10 years old) are forced to leave their homelands and attend boarding school to access further education, or in many cases, even finish high school.

As Victor asserts, universal access to education is a human right enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of which Australia is a signatory. Already, he suspects that if the real costs of boarding school were factored in – not only the economic cost, but the toll it takes on mental health, family, community and culture, it would actually be more effective to build a quality schooling system closer to Indigenous homelands.

WORDS BY PATRICIA PINTO
PHOTO BY SALLY TSOUTAS

A FULBRIGHT FUTURE

Victor Lopez-Carmen, Arizona USA •
Master of Public Health, 2018,
Western Sydney University, Fulbright Scholar

& TOWN GOWN 2018

As an almighty thunderstorm lit up the skies, more than 950 befrocked and besuited champions of Western Sydney University dashed out of the rain and into the Grand Pavilion for the University's 2018 Town & Gown gala dinner at Rosehill Gardens – to celebrate high-achieving alumni and pledge their support for health and medical research.

THANKS to the support of Gold Sponsors Brydens Lawyers, Charter Hall and PwC Australia, and Silver Sponsors Adobe, Bouyan Holdings, GJK Facility Services and Navitas, as well as Bronze Sponsors and table supporters, this biennial black tie event raised in excess of \$500,000. These funds will go towards the 'Western to the World' program, to support collaborative exchange opportunities for our brightest research students and early career researchers. They will have the opportunity to learn from the best minds in their field and similarly, share their knowledge with partners across the globe, truly bringing 'Western to the World'.

The idea is to foster collaboration and grow an 'international sharing of knowledge', Office of Advancement Executive Director Deborah Carr says. Chronic disease (such as diabetes, cancer and cardiac disease), healthy ageing, midwifery, mental health and health innovation are the priority areas. The focus is

on genuine research translation and research intertwined with clinical practice.

'Everything we do starts with a focus on the people of Western Sydney', Deborah says.

Chancellor, Professor Peter Shergold AC and Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Barney Glover both dispensed with a traditional speech, instead being interviewed on stage by Master of Ceremonies and TV presenter Ray Martin AM.

Professor Iona Novak's stirring speech as the 2018 Chancellor's Alumni of the Year was certainly a highlight. She likened the University's contribution to her ground-breaking clinical research into cerebral palsy as a stamp in her education and career passport.

'The house really did come down; there were tears', Deborah says.

WORDS BY SAFFRON HOWDEN
PHOTO BY DANIEL KUKEC





TOP 2%
OF UNIVERSITIES WORLDWIDE*



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*Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2018. #QILT Employer Satisfaction Survey 2016 to 2018. ^QS Top Universities: QS Stars Ratings 2019.