

# GradLife

  
University of  
Western Sydney  
Bringing knowledge to life

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# GradLife

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At the University of Western Sydney, we encourage our students and graduates to boldly pursue their dreams and make a difference to the world. In this issue of *GradLife*, we hear the stories of UWS alumni who are doing just that.

UWS graduate Amina Elshafei was inspired by her family and love of cooking to become a contestant on the popular *Masterchef* TV show, where she quickly became a favourite among viewers. As a proud Muslim Australian woman who wore her headscarf on the program, Amina was surprised by the very positive impact she had on the community in terms of perceptions about Muslims, which saw her honoured with the Woman of the Year award at the Australian Muslim Achievement Awards 2012.

David Elliott MP has already achieved his two boyhood dreams of becoming an Army officer, and a Member of Parliament. As the first member of his family to attend university, he credits UWS with opening the door to these wonderful opportunities, and now as the Member for Baulkham Hills, David is working towards providing similar opportunities to others in the Hills district.

In this issue, we also read about the work of Dr Kelly Richards, whose research work at the Australian Institute of Criminology is shaping juvenile and restorative justice, and how Noel Niddrie has changed the face of Indigenous communications and broadcasting in Australia – and winning a Telstra Australian Business Award in the process.

Further afield, Charlotte Ens is now working for one of the world's largest PR agencies in one of the world's most exciting cities, chalking up some once-in-a-lifetime experiences along the way.

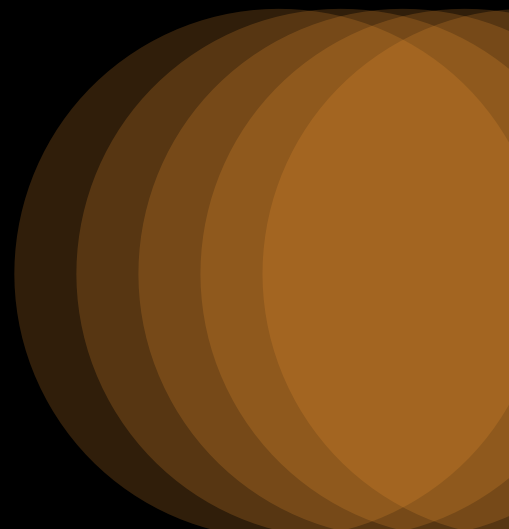
In our own backyard, teachers are working hard to support the dreams and ambitions of the next generation in a range of educational settings – from early childhood through to secondary schools. We also highlight how the UWS Education Alumni Network can provide much-needed resources, professional development and guidance, as our graduates engage in this crucial work.

As you strive towards your own goals and dreams in 2013, we hope UWS will continue to play an important role in your success.

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Professor Janice Reid AM  
Vice-Chancellor  
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# Cooking up a storm

UWS graduate Amina Elshafei first came to public attention as a contestant on Australia's most popular TV cooking show, *MasterChef*. However, there is a lot more to her story.

Inspired by her Korean and Egyptian heritage, and her parents' passion for food, Amina Elshafei lists cooking as one of the great loves of her life.

"I think having a great combination of cultures in the family really opened my eyes to learning more about the food," she says. "Now, as an adult and living away from home, I've got a much deeper appreciation for home-cooked food. You miss it. I've just been overseas, and I can't wait to have something Mum or Dad has cooked."

Despite the family passion for food, Amina kept her application to *MasterChef*, the television show which pits amateur cooks against one another, a secret from her parents and sister at first.

Amina quietly applied to become a contestant, not sharing the news with her family until she received a call from a casting agent. After some gruelling selection processes, she ended up being one of the lucky 24 contestants chosen for the 2012 series and was instantly an Australian favourite, thanks to her warmth and humour.

Amina believes her multicultural perspective and her background as a registered nurse were among the main reasons she was selected from so many hopefuls.

"Australia is so diverse and I'm a minute part of it compared to some of the contestants; I brought two cultures to the table," she says.

Amina was five when her parents decided to move from Saudi Arabia to raise their family in Australia. Attending primary school in the multicultural mixing pot of Campsie in Sydney's Western suburbs, she grew up knowing the many faces of Australia.

"Whether it was through the school or community, you had so many nationalities. For my parents,

being immigrants, it wasn't too bad for them settling in because they were able to associate with other Koreans or other Arabs," she says.

Straight out of high school, Amina followed in her mother's footsteps by studying for a nursing degree. She became a registered nurse in 2008 and started a graduate program at the Children's Hospital in Westmead.

In her third year of working as a nurse, she decided to push herself up the ladder and further her education by returning to university to study a Masters of Child and Family Health at the University of Western Sydney, graduating in 2012.

"I'm really happy I did the Masters because it's really opened my avenues for further development, as well as helped to further my career if I choose to," she says.

In 2012, Amina was honoured with the Woman of the Year award at the Australian Muslim Achievement Awards 2012. As a proud Muslim-Australian woman, Amina wore her hijab during her stint on *MasterChef*, and unexpectedly, had a hugely positive impact on the way Muslims are viewed in Australia.

"It was fabulous winning the award as it emphasised to me the effect as well as the change of opinion I've had in the community," she says. "I never went onto the show to make a statement about being an Australian woman with a headscarf – it was about the food and that was it."

"But food has that wonderful effect on people. No matter what culture you're from, bring a great meal to the table and everyone sits around and enjoys it. Food is a great portal to experience, as well as a way to share what you have been brought up with, your cultures, your religion."

Even so, Amina says she couldn't quite believe the effect

she had on the general population, which was "quite astounding".

Amina's experience on the show has also opened up avenues for her in further exploring cooking and the world of food.

She writes a recipe column for *The Australian Women's Weekly* magazine, mainly featuring food she likes to cook at home, and often hosts pop-up restaurant nights with her fellow *MasterChef* contestant, Audra.

"I'm really happy I did the Masters because it's really opened my avenues for further development, as well as helped to further my career if I choose to."

A major project – her 'big baby' is the cookbook she is working on, a very personal collection of recipes her parents taught her. She is also developing an interactive website for Australians to discuss and share recipes, which will launch this year.

And in between all these foodie adventures, Amina is still bringing her passion to her other great love of working as a nurse.

"When it comes to nursing, I'm still trying to improve my knowledge and my development in the clinical setting," she says. "Nursing is so dynamic, there's always something to do and learn."

**For more information about Nursing courses or Postgraduate study at UWS, visit [www.uws.edu.au/postgraduatestudy](http://www.uws.edu.au/postgraduatestudy)**

**To find out more about the UWS Nursing Alumni visit [www.uws.edu.au/NursingAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/NursingAlumni)**





Amina Elshafei  
Master of Child and Family Health, 2012

# Saving lives through prevention

“I believe very strongly that drowning prevention is something that’s very close to the Australian way of life.”

Justin Scarr is a man who loves a challenge. Even after 14 years working with the Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA), first as Education Manager, then as Chief Operating Officer and more recently as the Chief Executive Officer, fighting the ongoing battle against drowning has lost none of its importance.

“I get hooked on finding a solution to an issue and preventing drowning is a very easy issue to get hooked on, particularly as it relates to children,” he says.

It is no wonder that Justin has an affinity for helping children, considering he began his career as a primary school teacher.

After receiving a Diploma in Teaching in 1991 and then a Bachelor of Education in 1993 from the University of Western Sydney, he was selected by the Department of Education to join a group of graduates given job placements straight out of university.

Snapping up the opportunity, Justin found himself in charge of 32 five-year-olds at Auburn West Primary School, some of whom had barely spoken English before.

“I went in expecting to be sent to a Year 5 or Year 6 role and the principal laughed at me and said that the only class available was kindergarten, so I turned into a version of *Kindergarten Cop* in a sense,” he laughs.

After three fantastic years of teaching, Justin took off around the world backpacking solo for 12 months. When he returned, he joined the RLSSA. Established over 118 years ago, the not-for-profit organisation aims to prevent drowning and facilitate active

lifestyles by equipping Australians with water safety skills, through activities such as training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, advocacy, and lifesaving sport.

His work with RLSSA has taken him all over Australia, including to remote Indigenous communities, as the organisation looks for ways to improve water safety.

“More children are getting swimming water safety lessons at a younger age, but that’s still leaving many children behind who perhaps don’t have the funds,” he says.

During his career, Justin has seen the face of Australian lifesaving change from being informed mostly by experience and ‘gut instinct’ to now being evidence- and research-based.

“Some of the early rescue techniques really came from a group of people standing around a pool coming up with the most effective solution,” Justin says. “We still have to work pragmatically, but now we are using data and research to try and put our finger on what factors might reduce drowning.”

Establishing international partnerships is an important part of the work of the RLSSA. As the Drowning Prevention Commissioner for the International Life Saving Federation (ILS), Justin spends time in countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam trying to reduce drowning among children – where the rate tends to be 20 to 30 times higher than in Australia.

Given the lack of tools, instructors and local lifesaving organisations, the RLSSA has really had to start from scratch, but their efforts from a research perspective have been a huge success.



Justin Scarr  
Diploma in Teaching, 1991  
Bachelor of Education, 1993





"We know that children drown fundamentally for two reasons: lack of supervision for children under five, and for children over five, it's a lack of swimming and water safety skills to keep themselves out of trouble," he says.

By placing younger children into a crèche and teaching school-age children how to swim, the RLSSA and its partners have shown they can reduce drowning by about 83 per cent in the communities where they work.

This work has also produced one of the standout achievements in Justin's mind – when RLSSA hosted the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in Vietnam in 2011.

A long way from lifesaving is his role as Director and a past Chair of Service Skills Australia, an industry skills council that takes him outside of sport and recreation into areas such as retail and hospitality.

Looking toward the future, Justin plans to continue working towards the prevention of drowning in Australia and across the globe. A self-confessed water baby and avid surfer, Justin can observe the benefits of his hard work as he enjoys the safety of his local beach with his wife and eight-year-old son.

"I believe very strongly that drowning prevention is something that's very close to the Australian way of life."

**For more information on the Education Alumni at UWS, visit [www.uws.edu.au/EducationAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/EducationAlumni)**

# Boyhood dreams achieved

David Elliott was driven to enter politics by his belief that “people in society have potential, and if they are only given the opportunity, they would be able to succeed”.

To be able to say you have achieved your lifelong ambitions by the age of 42 is a great accomplishment. And that's just what David Elliott MP has done, having achieved his boyhood dreams of becoming an Army officer and a Member of Parliament.

David credits the University of Western Sydney as playing no small part in helping him get there. As the first person in his family to attend university, David

completed a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in his long-held passion of history.

“Growing up in Bankstown, university wasn't necessarily an option for a lot of people in that demographic. For me to be able to sit for the regional entrance test because I lived in Western Sydney was a wonderful opportunity. The four years was fantastic preparation for my professional life, which has taken me from Duntroon, to peacekeeping as an Australian Army

officer, to chief executive of a multi-million dollar organisation to being a Member of Parliament,” David says.

Having completed his undergraduate degree, David undertook a Graduate Certificate in Public Policy. Following this, he started work on his first ambition, becoming an Army officer.

Though his HSC scores hadn't been high enough to grant him direct access to Duntroon - the Army's officer





training college - having a degree provided the qualifications he needed.

Having completed his training, David served in the Army for several years, before going into politics as the national director of the 'No Republic' campaign during the 1999 referendum. He then returned to the Army and was deployed as a peacekeeper in Bougainville for six months.

Reflecting on his time in the Army, David says with a laugh, "There is an old saying among military people that you get more nostalgic about your military life the more distant the memory is. But I loved the Army and the opportunities it gave me - it put me through a Master's degree and being able to serve your country for six months as a peacekeeper was fantastic as well."

From there, David moved into the private sector in senior executive roles with industry associations, including time as deputy CEO of the Australian Hotels Association and CEO of the Civil Contractors Federation. But his second ambition was calling, and in

**"Even though he was of a different political persuasion, I'm very grateful for the vision Gough Whitlam had to provide Western Sydney with its own university. I definitely wouldn't have gained entry to Duntroon and become an Army officer if it weren't for UWS. I also doubt whether I would have been in a position to undertake roles in business and in the community without the headstart from UWS."**

2011's State Election, he was elected as Member of Parliament for Baulkham Hills, as a representative of the Liberal Party.

David was driven to enter politics by his belief that "people in society have potential, and if they are only given the opportunity, they would be able to succeed".

"I thought the best way to help people reach their dreams was to be a Member of Parliament," he says.

David now has a number of goals as the Member for Baulkham Hills. Principal among these is to see the completion of the Northwest Rail link, an \$8 billion infrastructure project, as well as building on his electorate's sense of community, and reducing bureaucratic burdens on businesses and individuals.

"I want to defend the institutions that have made Australia great, and make sure that people know that they've got a champion against bureaucratic bullying. The one thing that I learned from 10 years in business as an industry association executive is that it's tough enough doing business in the 21st century, but it's made even tougher by government that's deliberately getting in the way," he says.

David now spends 20 weeks a year in Parliament, and the rest of his time in his electorate. While Baulkham Hills doesn't have a courthouse, a train station or a public hospital, it's a very family-oriented electorate, with much of the social infrastructure (including many of the schools) provided by non-government organisations. David has a packed schedule of engagements to consult and work with these organisations.

In addition to more formal meetings, David also regularly makes time on Saturdays for doorknocking and simply speaking to people in his electorate.

"I randomly pick a street and go and meet with people, and then send a note to the Premier's office on exactly what people are saying to me."

Balancing a busy public career and his family life with his wife and two boys takes sacrifice, and David says his own personal interests have been the first casualty. The family has faced a particularly difficult time over the past year as his wife Nicole battled breast cancer. While she is now well again,

the challenges of this time meant that David's sons often accompanied him to public engagements.

"I'm very lucky in my electorate that if I turn up on a Saturday afternoon at a public engagement with my sons or my family, they actually like it, whereas in some places they might turn their noses up," David says. "When we go to a retirement village, if I've got one of my sons with me, they even know what flavour of milkshake they want, and most of the churches I visit let me know they have Sunday school for the boys. We're very blessed in that way."

Though David was the first in his family to attend university, within his extended family there are now five UWS graduates. David's mother was in her 50s when she enrolled in a Bachelor of European Languages, majoring in French, at UWS. He met his wife at UWS, and his brother-in-law and father-in-law are also UWS alumni.

David's connection to the University has continued over the years in other ways - he employs a UWS graduate as his speechwriter and research officer, and he still enjoys a close relationship with a number of academics he met during his undergraduate degree, when he first revealed his political ambitions.

"One of the senior academic staff told me, 'If you are ever pre-selected, I'll be there to hand out how to vote cards for you on the day'. True to his word, at 8 o'clock in the morning on election day, he was there at the Northmead booth handing out cards for me."

He also acknowledges the role of UWS in helping him achieve his own personal goals.

**"Even though he was of a different political persuasion, I'm very grateful for the vision Gough Whitlam had to provide Western Sydney with its own university. I definitely wouldn't have gained entry to Duntroon and become an Army officer if it weren't for UWS. I also doubt whether I would have been in a position to undertake roles in business and in the community without the headstart from UWS."**

**For more information on the Arts Alumni at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/ArtsAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/ArtsAlumni)**

David Elliott MP  
Bachelor of Arts, 1993



# A passion for engaged learning

“Building engagement relationships locally and overseas is important as it provides opportunities that our students otherwise may not have.”

Now Director of UWS International and Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement & International), Associate Professor Yi-Chen Lan began his journey with the University of Western Sydney as a first-year undergraduate student in 1994.

“My own career here at UWS is proof that this University is committed to education and ‘Bringing Knowledge to Life’. I have remained involved with the University over many years because UWS has given me so many opportunities,” Yi-Chen says. “Now, as an ambassador of UWS, I can draw on my experiences and the career aspirations I had and how I achieved my goals to inspire others.”

After completing a Bachelor of Commerce in Computing and Information Systems, Yi-Chen was invited to complete an additional Honours year.

With industry engagement always a strong feature of UWS’s educational model, Yi-Chen had the opportunity to work with aircraft manufacturer Hawker de Havilland, based at Bankstown Airport. His Honours thesis explored how an enterprise model in a workgroup environment could be facilitated by information systems.

Yi-Chen’s research had a long-lasting impact on the company, as he discovered when he met up again with the former CEO of Hawker de Havilland, Ron Beckett, at a UWS graduation ceremony. “Ron told me my thesis was still in practice in the organisation,” Yi-Chen says.

His success led to a passion for further study, and Yi-Chen completed a PhD on Management of Information Technology Issues in Enterprise Globalisation in 2004.

“In my thesis, I was talking about managing transactions, business operations through the Internet and e-commerce. It was quite pioneering for the time,” he says.

Yi-Chen joined the academic staff of UWS as a lecturer in 2001, a position he says, which enabled him to “give back” to the university by teaching and supervising research students. Yi-Chen was appointed as the Associate Dean

(International) for 2006, adding to his portfolio responsibility for promoting UWS programs abroad to “attract international students, as well as establishing and maintaining relationships with our partners organisations overseas”.

Earlier this year, Yi-Chen was appointed as the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Engagement and International), and most recently, Director, UWS International, which has enabled him the opportunity to elevate and apply his previous work to “a broader, university-wide level”.

Yi-Chen believes UWS plays an important role in Australian higher education.

“Having a university like UWS in the current Australian educational landscape that provides endless opportunities for students - whether they are new to study or taking further studies - as well as having opportunities spanning across an entire region is something quite unique and which other institutions cannot provide.”

“Building engagement relationships locally and overseas is important as it provides opportunities that our students otherwise may not have. Seeing our students develop and grow as professionals within their chosen careers and then graduate from our University career-ready is something that makes me proud to be associated with UWS,” Yi-Chen says.

Now furthering its commitment, Sydney Graduate School of Management is engaging with international alumni around the world, through bodies such as the Australia-China Alumni Association.

“Through social media, we get alumni to engage and connect with us, and conduct various alumni activities in different countries,” Yi-Chen says.

UWS is also expanding its focus on hosting regular events in Asia to connect international alumni.

**For more information on UWS International visit [www.uws.edu.au/international](http://www.uws.edu.au/international)**

**For information on the International chapters at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/InternationalChapters](http://www.uws.edu.au/InternationalChapters)**

Dr Yi-Chen Lan  
Bachelor Of Commerce - Computing  
and Information Systems (Honours), 1997  
Doctor Of Philosophy - Computing and  
Information Technology, 2004



# Using research to prevent serious crimes

"I am looking forward to drawing on my experiences at the AIC, to teach research methods using real-world examples."

Dr Kelly Richards' fascination with crime was fuelled as a young girl growing up in the Western suburbs of Sydney in the early 1980s. The extensive media coverage of a number of high profile cases, including the brutal murders of Anita Cobby and Janine Balding and their subsequent investigations, proved to be formative experiences for the young Richards.

"There was a kind of morbid fascination. You didn't want to hear about it or see about it, but at the same time I couldn't look away," she says.

Through an Honours degree and PhD in criminology at UWS, Kelly has channelled that interest into a career researching serious crime and offenders, to help reduce crime and reform the criminal justice system. She currently works as a principal research analyst at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), the pre-eminent national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice, while lecturing part-time at the School of Justice at Queensland University of Technology.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Kelly began working in the front line of community service, in roles at a women's refuge and as a community development worker, but quickly discovered this type of crisis-based work was not for her, as it did not directly draw on her criminology expertise.

Next, she worked in probation and parole, before returning to UWS to complete her doctorate, focusing on restorative justice. Rather than purely looking at punishment for a particular offence, restorative justice examines what can be done to repair the harm caused by a person's offence, and how this behaviour by the offender can be curbed.

Kelly finds the focus on research to inform evidence-based policymaking

very satisfying. The AIC has an important role in monitoring key statistics such as deaths in custody, homicides, armed robberies and the number of juveniles in detention.

"It's important to know, is homicide going up or down, in which groups, who is perpetrating it, who are the victims, where do they live, because all those things feed into prevention," Kelly says. "The AIC is very committed to getting its research out there to the people who are going to use it."

Kelly's work for the AIC over the last five years has covered areas such as youth justice and human trafficking. A recent report she has completed with a colleague looks at the issue of young people on bail and remand when they have not been sentenced.

"That's a national study looking at how do kids end up in detention when they haven't actually been convicted of anything. I am also working on a national framework for youth justice, looking across jurisdictions at the key principles we should be adhering to, such as providing developmentally appropriate responses to young people and acknowledging that they are not adults, and that we should treat them differently," Kelly says.

Human trafficking is a new research area for Kelly, with a project examining how people are using marriage visas to essentially place women in domestic servitude in Australia.

When asked if her research into such difficult topics as child homicide and sex offenders has a negative effect on her, Kelly says it's certainly not for everyone. "Most of the time we are a little bit removed from our subject, because we are looking at statistics. But definitely, when you are actually going into the field and talking to people, it's different. I am naturally the kind of person who is quite robust, but some of the trafficking interviews were pretty horrendous and I was affected by those."

Kelly's research has helped her form strong views on what should be reformed in Australia's justice system, particularly for young people. Kelly and her colleagues are currently making recommendations on meeting bail and remand obligations under United



Dr Kelly Richards  
Bachelor of Arts (Criminology), 2000  
Bachelor Of Social Science (Honours), 2002  
Doctor of Philosophy, 2007

Nations Conventions to which Australia is a signatory - these include using detention as a 'last resort' option for any young person. In the past, she has developed a standard formula for the measurement of juvenile reoffending.

Next on the agenda for Kelly is taking on a full-time teaching role at Queensland University of Technology, to help train the next generation of criminology researchers.

"I am looking forward to drawing on my experiences at the AIC, to teach research methods using real-world examples."

To Kelly, the practical application of her research makes her work meaningful.

**For more information on Criminology degrees at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/future\\_students](http://www.uws.edu.au/future_students)**

# On top of the world

"If you love your job, you're good at it and you work hard, you will be recognised."

Working in London on PR for some of the world's biggest financial services brands is a long way from Western Sydney, but that's where Charlotte Ens has found herself.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Communication Studies from the University of Western Sydney in 2009, Charlotte began her PR career in a small corporate financial firm in Sydney. But having gained a taste for the buzz of bigger agencies during her university internships, she was drawn to the big end of town.

Four years on, she can safely say she's achieved that and more. A year after graduation, Charlotte applied for a British passport and hopped on a plane to London, where she landed a job in the world's largest PR agency, Edelman.

"Despite how scary it seemed, the risk paid off," Charlotte says of her decision to leave Australia. "Here, I've worked on some of the most prominent brands in the corporate world, including HSBC, American Express, Barclays, AXA and Allianz."

When starting out, Charlotte discovered that she preferred the world of corporate PR, in particular finance, over consumer PR. Having moved recently to Edelman's corporate team as a Senior Account Executive, she has moved from specialising in financial services, but now faces a "whole new challenge entirely", servicing clients from every sector.

So what is it like working for the biggest PR agency in the world? Charlotte says working with extremely intelligent people and the size of the agency's global network makes it a fantastic learning experience.

"Working on such a huge range of clients always keeps you on your toes and that's what you get at a big agency," she says. "Six people on my work pod are ex-journalists and most have worked around the world somewhere or another. I learn so much in just one day, sitting under the grey skylight."

As the biggest financial hub of the world, coupled with the huge number of national news outlets and its proximity to other large economies, London seemed like the obvious choice for Charlotte to pursue her career.



"Despite a few inevitable ups and downs, living and working here for the past two and a half years has been incredible and has 100 per cent changed me as both an individual and a professional," she says.

Although Australia's warmer climate "still haunts my dreams most nights" and learning how to function as a young adult without her support system has been tough, Charlotte says the move to London has been very positive for her professionally and personally. A strong advocate for gaining career experience overseas, her advice for those thinking of making such a big move is, "do it".

"I had to make a choice to save to buy a flat or to move overseas. I made a pretty quick decision and haven't looked back," she says.

Along with the perks of being able to jet to destinations across Europe on the weekends, Charlotte has had some exciting career experiences.

One of the highlights was the first major thought leadership project she worked on for HSBC's global trade forecast. Rolled out across dozens of countries, the report looked at growth markets for businesses across the world.

"I never thought I would be writing about how Ireland's trade growth is fuelled by exports in blood products," Charlotte says.

Though in corporate PR, the opportunity to organise and attend events are rare, Charlotte was involved in holding

a Christmas party in 2011 for American Express atop the Wellington Arch, one of London's heritage landmarks. Fifty of the top personal finance journalists from the UK attended the special event – a result that stunned and delighted American Express and guests were even given the chance to create their own perfume and make chocolates.

"It was an amazing night to reflect on the hard work of the year and the relationships we had built," Charlotte says.

The world of PR is becoming an increasingly popular career choice for young graduates, and as a result the market is more crowded than ever. To get ahead in this competitive industry, Charlotte's advice is to choose a specialisation after gaining some experience, get on the digital bandwagon, and be passionate about what you do.

**"Working on such a huge range of clients always keeps you on your toes and that's what you get at a big agency."**

"If you love your job, you're good at it and you work hard, you will be recognised. Sometimes it can be hard to put your hand up for weekend work, give an opinion to the CEO of a massive corporation or to make a dull subject sound like front-page news in 300 words, but if you put everything into it, then chances are you will come out on top," she says.

Looking toward to the future, Charlotte isn't exactly sure where she'll end up, although she does plan to return to Australia when it's time to settle down. In the meantime, she'll continue traveling and working hard.

"Five years ago, I would never have known I'd be sitting in my London office telling this story," she says. "Who knows what I will be doing in another five years, but I always promise myself to push harder and take (calculated) risks because it's proven to be the reason I love my job."

**For more information on Communication courses at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/future\\_students](http://www.uws.edu.au/future_students)**



# A goldmine of opportunity

"I have built a depth of industry knowledge, and that brings its own satisfaction."

If you told Bron Suchecki when he graduated in 1993 that 20 years later he would be sitting in Perth blogging about gold, he'd have said you were crazy.

But that's exactly what he is doing. Bron was first introduced to the world of precious metals when he joined The Perth Mint in Sydney fresh out of university. Perhaps unusually in this day and age, he is still with the organisation today – and he credits the broad-based management education he received in the Bachelor of Commerce at UWS with giving him the skills to work his way through different areas of the company.

Beginning in administration, in 1998, Bron jumped at the opportunity to move to Perth, when a position came up in the company's depository business, which stored metal for clients. The job was to help expand the department and move it onto an electronic platform.

"It was good having a broad base because that job was about setting up the business. I had to sit down with a programmer to design the computer system that did all the trading and the client management, then write operational procedures and information packs for clients," he says. "There were pretty big requirements to run that small business with the manager involved. That was really what started off my gold career."

From there he moved on to other positions within The Perth Mint, in financial and industry analysis, which involved creating an ASX-listed gold product, e-business and e-commerce, governance and risk, the treasury side of the business, and as company secretary. During this time, he undertook a Master of Professional Accounting at UWS. For the last three years, Bron has been manager, analysis and strategy, involved in research and writing to educate potential clients.

"Because gold is such a niche product, the only way to really market it is on the Internet. The depository business from the start relied on our website and banner ads to drive sales. Now it's getting into social media, so learning a whole new set of skills to

manage social media, the website and various applications is going to give me another boost and more interesting things to do in my career," he says.

It's an impressive and varied track record of roles, but Bron says the relatively small size of The Perth Mint is the reason he has been offered so many opportunities, which have kept the work fresh and engaging.

"Because I've got that broader-based training, I was always chosen for these tasks and moved into different roles because I had the flexibility to pick it up," Bron says. "I have built a depth of industry knowledge, and that brings its own satisfaction."

Over time, the allure of the precious metals market has certainly grown on him.

"It's a niche market, but the clients that buy gold are generally quite passionate about it," he says. "There's still some romance when a guy rings up and wants to buy \$2 million worth of gold."

Bron's foray into the public sphere through his blog, Gold Chat, and in other blogs and forums has established him as something of a gold expert, and gives him the chance to engage with customers on a more relaxed level.

"There's a lot of misinformation – anyone can write anything on the Internet about what's happening in the gold market with the gold price and it's good to be able to step in and explain what's really happening. People appreciate when you take the time to do that and help them out."

For the time being, Bron's immediate goal is to continue his client education work "and to do that with integrity".

"Not to drive people to buy gold, but to provide information in a neutral way, so people can look to The Perth Mint if they want independent, unbiased

advice to understand the gold market over the next few years," he says.

For those with management aspirations, Bron is a strong proponent of gaining experience in a broad range of roles, but staying with the same industry.

**For more information on the Business Alumni at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/BusinessAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/BusinessAlumni)**



Bron Suchecki  
Bachelor of Commerce – Management, 1993  
Master of Professional Accounting, 1999

# Pirate Pedagogies and other adventures

By Professor James Arvanitakis

"I spend much time reflecting on how to get the best out of my students – even if it means dancing at the front of the class."

In late November last year I was honoured to receive the 2012 Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award. It was the second straight year that a lecturer from UWS had been awarded this prestigious prize with Professor Roy Tasker being the 2011 recipient.

I must say, as someone who never considers myself a "real" academic, the award came as a surprise and I found myself unable to move for some minutes following the announcement (despite Senator Chris Evans waiting patiently on stage to personally congratulate me).

The most frequent question I have been asked since receiving this honour has been, 'why did you win'?

The answer is something that I have thought about long and hard. For while the award is handed to an individual for their efforts, in reality it should be seen as an institutional honour. The reason for this is that though the individual may undertake the teaching, it is within an institutional setting surrounded by one's peers, supervisors and students that innovation, advancement and experimentation of education is either encouraged or rejected.

The answer that I give is that, reflecting the aims of the university and those of many of my peers, I aim to deliver my teaching in an innovative way that reflects both my research and community engagement. It is this nexus between teaching, research and community engagement that makes the Office of Learning and Teaching recognised in making the final decision.

My teaching approach is made up of three pillars, which I vary depending on the student cohort.

My starting point is to see students as engaged in their community, rather than seeing them as being in deficit (or citizens in waiting).

Secondly, I work to decipher the world with living theories. I begin with examples and case studies that are both relevant and contemporary before I introduce theory.

Finally, I encourage students to see themselves as agents of change on an ongoing journey.

Using case studies to highlight the power relationships and structures around us, I advance a sense of active agency among the students, highlighting how they can make change happen.

The question is, how does this play out in the classroom?

I spend much time reflecting on how to get the best out of my students – even if it means dancing at the front of the class. And I have found that unconventional teaching methods work far better for first-year students than many old techniques.

The safe option when standing in front of 400 first-year students is to put together a bunch of PowerPoint slides, quoting theorists like David Harvey, David Held and Jean Baudrillard. These are inspiring and insightful authors that have a lot to offer.

Importantly, while I find these authors interesting, they can also be dense, and for first-year students their discussions can seem remote, often irrelevant and be disempowering.

As a lecturer, it is hard work to keep the students engaged, and the success rates are dependent on the cohort, time of semester, the assessment requirements of other subjects and even bad weather.

So I thought I would try and introduce something different. Here is an example of how I teach the concepts of chaos theory.

Instead of just talking, I start the lecture with a number of body percussion exercises – 400 students loudly clap and strike their bodies in time with each other. I explain how much like a 4/4 beat followed by a 3/4 beat, certain processes in our globalised world are actually in-sync, and can be relatively easy to identify.

The next stage is to then perform a "flash mob" with about 100 students at the front of the lecture theatre.

After briefing the students on what to do, they come to the front of the lecture

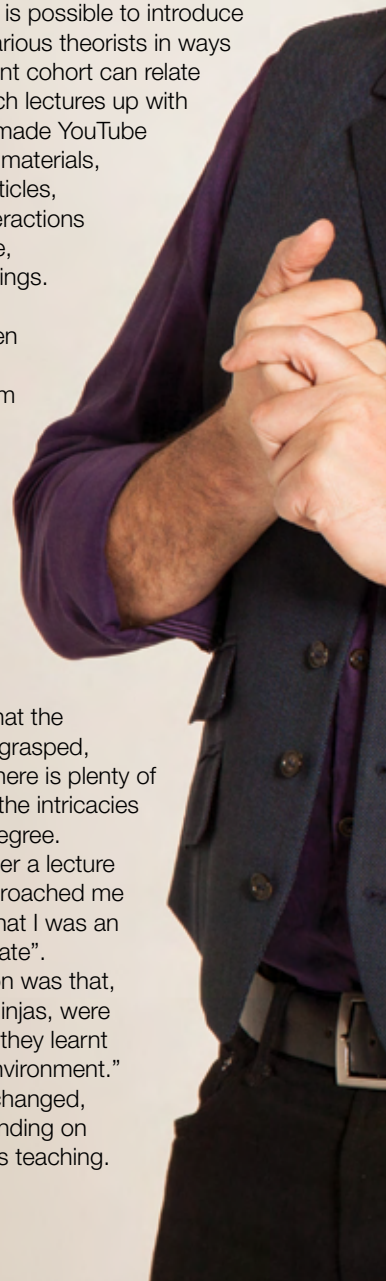
and perform an exercise that requires them to stand equally distant from two people within the "mob" – with those two people having no idea they are about to be mimicked.

The effect is amazing: as one person moves, the various people that are mimicking this individual also move, and the waves of action spread through the group as the ripple effect multiples. It is a demonstration of how we are connected in a ways that we often do not see, how such relations are often not obvious and are impossible to foresee.

Once this knowledge has been established, it is possible to introduce the work of various theorists in ways that the student cohort can relate to. I follow such lectures up with a specifically made YouTube video, written materials, newspaper articles, Facebook interactions and, of course, scholarly readings. I use a similar approach when discussing everything from gender and race, to technology, class and social movements.

Though some detail is sacrificed, what is more important is that the concepts are grasped, arguing that there is plenty of time to study the intricacies later in their degree.

One day after a lecture a student approached me and told me that I was an "academic pirate". His explanation was that, "pirates, like ninjas, were resourceful... they learnt to use their environment." My teaching changed, he said, depending on the class I was teaching.







## PROFESSOR IS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

His tutorials feature open phone lines for students to text-in questions, flash mob dances to explain chaos theory, and YouTube videos discussing the history of sociology using SpongeBob Square Pants.

Little surprise then that Professor James Arvanitakis from the University of Western Sydney has been named the Prime Minister's Australian University Teacher of the Year for 2012.

It is the second consecutive year that a UWS academic has received the prestigious Prime Minister's Award. In 2011, Professor Roy Tasker from the University's School of Science and Health also took out the top prize of 'Australian University Teacher of the Year'.

Formerly a merchant banker, Professor Arvanitakis pursued an academic career after witnessing child and indentured labour in third world countries.

He has since completed a PhD, titled *Hope and Abundance*; written a text book commissioned by Oxford University Press; received invitations to teach all over the world; and developed programs to bring together students and non-government organisations in the promotion of active citizenship.

He has also worked to develop sustainable, socially just and equitable economic policies with organisations such as Oxfam, Aid/Watch and the Centre for Policy Development, where he is a research fellow.

As part of his work with Oxfam, Professor Arvanitakis created Australia's Young Engagement Unit to develop active citizenship program, The Couch. The success of his work in this area was reinforced when the Australian Research Council (ARC) awarded a Discovery Grant to further his research.

"The ARC Grant is very special to me, as I actively encourage students to see how they can have a positive impact on the world," says Professor Arvanitakis.

"The students really respond well to this. For example, a number of my students initiated a UWS Oxfam branch to pursue a fair trade agenda, which, in turn, became part of the class discussions."

Over the last 10 years, Professor Arvanitakis has dedicated his academic career to enhancing the student experience with innovative teaching methods.

# alumni online



## FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Our Facebook page continues to grow with over 1,900 likes!

We hope to continue to increase our page members, so help us spread the word by liking us and sharing the page with your friends and fellow alumni.



[www.facebook.com/UWSAlumni](http://www.facebook.com/UWSAlumni)



## FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

With more than 900 followers our Twitter network is expanding!

Follow @UWSAlumni and help us increase our reach further by re-tweeting our posts to your followers.

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[www.twitter.com/UWSAlumni](http://www.twitter.com/UWSAlumni)



## CONNECT WITH US ON LINKEDIN

Did you know that we have a network of over 2,500 group members on LinkedIn?

Network with your fellow alumni in this professional online space via the UWS Alumni LinkedIn group page.

[www.uws.edu.au/alumniLinkedIn](http://www.uws.edu.au/alumniLinkedIn)

# Alumni Giving



## An interview with David Bruce-Smith

“What an incredible gift education is.”

Canberra resident and recent retiree, David Bruce-Smith graduated from UWS firstly, in 1994, with a Graduate Diploma of Social Ecology, and then in 1996 with a Master of Applied Science (Social Ecology) before going on some years later to complete a Master of Science (Honours).

David studied at UWS while working for the Australian Tax Office, where he spent the last 20 years or so as a business systems analyst and an internal organisational design consultant. Prior to that he worked in both the private and public sector, notably with Lend Lease, Capita Financial Group and the Department of Defence.

### What did you enjoy most about your UWS experience?

While the (then) School of Social Ecology at UWS Hawkesbury was relatively small, it offered a unique approach to adult education, bringing together research, scholarship, personal development and social enquiry. As a part-time student my studies involved five-day residential workshops and lectures on campus at the beginning of each semester followed by self-directed learning and research. What made this model both successful and sustainable was the dedication of the school's academic staff who provided encouragement, academic rigour, professional

knowledge, expertise, insights, as well as strategic focusing questions that kept the students' sometimes overly complicated, often meandering, and invariably wildly ambitious research projects on track.

My time at UWS was a celebration of ideas, enquiry, scholarship, friendship, and being part of a dynamic and diverse community of research and learning. I always felt that it was a great privilege to have studied there.

### How did your studies at UWS prepare you for your career?

I was 39 when I began studying at UWS. I had been to university back in the 1970s but for a range of reasons never quite completed a full degree. At UWS, I found a course and an environment where I could both thrive and excel. The combined notions of social ecology and the course of learning provided by UWS changed my understanding of the world. My studies combined the deeply personal with scholarship and the development of practical applications, which meant they had immediate benefit for my work and my career.

### What motivated you to support UWS?

Two things principally. The first is that one of the great lifelong lessons UWS

taught me is how profoundly liberating and emancipatory education and scholarship can be. This notion has become very important to me and, where I can, I want to help others pursue their education and academic interests.

The second is that access to UWS afforded me a level of tertiary education and a greatly enhanced professional career path that, in my 20s and 30s, I could neither comprehend nor would have believed possible.

Part of my struggles with university in the 1970s was my need to earn enough to support myself. If, by supporting the UWS Alumni Scholarship Fund, I can help reduce some of the similar struggles experienced by current students then I'm happy to do so.

UWS is my alma mater. Like many others, I have watched its development and consolidation during the last 20 years and am proud to be associated with a university that has an ever-growing role in providing access to high quality tertiary education for the diverse geographic and demographic area of Western Sydney.

**To join David and support the Alumni Scholarship Fund please visit [www.uws.edu.au/givenow](http://www.uws.edu.au/givenow)**

## SCHOLARSHIP SNAPSHOT SIMON WEE



Graduating from UWS in 2002 with a Bachelor of Construction Management, Simon Wee has been supporting the Alumni Scholarship Fund since

the fund was launched in 2009.

Simon returned to the UWS Parramatta campus in late 2012 to present the first UWS Community Scholarships awarded through donations from alumni, staff and students.

‘It was great to be part of this exciting occasion and to see for myself how our alumni gifts really are making a difference.

‘The recipients are all such incredible individuals and from such diverse walks of life. I'm really looking forward to hearing how they progress with their studies and where they end up once they graduate – that will be another special moment for all of us.’

After graduating from UWS, Simon worked in the construction industry before moving into security. He currently works at the Sydney Opera House in the Emergency Planning and Response Team.

Simon credits his UWS studies with preparing him for working in large teams and high pressure environments, with teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills all sharpened through his time at UWS.

Reflecting on his studies, Simon recalls that he received youth allowance to help him through his course - by giving to the Alumni Scholarship Fund he feels he is ‘returning the favour’.

**Find out more about our new UWS Community Scholars and the Alumni Scholarship Fund at [www.uws.edu.au/giving](http://www.uws.edu.au/giving)**



# Building into the future

Urban planning is about considering the consequences of present actions on the future quality of life in the city.

By the time he graduated from the University of Western Sydney in 2012 with a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Geography and Urban Studies, Redentor Tandog could already call himself an experienced professional.

Redentor, who prefers to be known as Red, began working as a telecommunications infrastructure town planner in the Environment and Advisory Service Group at Aurecon in October 2011, before he had completed his degree. He now works with fellow engineering professionals to ensure communities are provided with the necessary telecommunications infrastructure to meet their growing technological needs, and has been involved in projects for NBN Co, Optus greenfields sites, Telstra upgrades and Crown Castle infrastructure.

Working with important clients such as these means he is continually facilitating cities, suburbs and rural areas to meet the needs of a growing number of mobile phone and internet users.

Red attributes his success in landing this role to networking and holding down three part-time jobs during his final year (two of which were unpaid), including roles with Holroyd City Council and a statutory town planning office in North Sydney.

"I learned in my research that practical experience prior to graduation would enhance my chances of landing a paid town planning role, either before or after graduation," he says. "It's very valuable in the sense that you gain some practical and professional skills that you won't learn at uni."

Red doesn't just enjoy his work; he speaks with passion about the potential contribution of town planning to society.

"Town planning concerns the wellbeing and quality of life in urban places, including cities and their suburbs, small towns and rural villages. Planners look from the

past and into the future to anticipate the future consequences of current trends and activities," he says.

With a commitment to ongoing professional development, in April 2012, Red took up the role of regional chair for Aurecon's professional development committee called Limelight.

Aurecon currently has over 7,500 employees worldwide, with the potential to grow toward 20,000 employees by 2020. As chair, Red leads local initiatives, which supports and represents emerging professionals across Aurecon.

This role gave Red the opportunity to fly to South Africa in late 2012 to share ideas and initiatives with other chairs around the world to support Aurecon's 2020 business strategy.

A highlight of the trip was visiting an orphanage in a small village in Pretoria, which houses 162 orphaned children; the majority of whose parents has either died from HIV/AIDS or were abandoned. The group planted a new garden area and conducted a rocket-building contest, which was powered by pressured water.

Red is also active beyond the walls of his own company, serving as a committee member for Young Planners, which is part of the Planning Institute of Australia, and founding a professional group on LinkedIn, the Urban Planning Group NSW, which has garnered over 230 members in one year.

Red's ongoing initiative and hard work at UWS contributed to him being awarded the Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division) Prize 2012 for the highest overall achieving student for town planning in the state.

He continues to channel his energy building his expertise and network in his chosen field, as well as planning his upcoming wedding and perhaps a return to study to complete a Masters.

"If you're passionate about something and you love what you do, then I believe you'll be successful in it," he says.

**For more information on the Planning Alumni Chapter at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/PlanningAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/PlanningAlumni)**

Redentor Tandog  
Bachelor of Social Science, 2012

# For the love of the game

Lynne finds that the international perspectives she gained through her degree at UWS are still vital to her success.

As the eldest of nine siblings who all grew up entrenched in football culture, Lynne Anderson has a strong love for the game. It left little doubt that she would pursue her marketing career in the “family business” when she graduated as a mature student from the University of Western Sydney with a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in marketing in 1991.

At the time, Lynne’s father, Peter ‘Bullfrog’ Moore, was the CEO of the Canterbury Bulldogs – a mantle he held for a record 26 years – and her husband, Chris Anderson, had begun his eight-season tenure as coach of the club. The Bulldogs were on the lookout for a major sponsor, and Lynne, applying the lessons she had learnt in her degree, was able to find one in Hyundai.

“I really do love the game. It was just opportunity and interest colliding,” she says.

Lynne then became marketing manager for the Canterbury Bulldogs Football club from 1993 to 1997, working on commercial activities and revenue streams, as well as the branding and positioning of the club.

“In those days, there wasn’t a lot of marketing discipline being applied to the world of sport. That was really just starting to take off, so I was lucky that a lot of the theories and learning from a marketing degree just made sense to apply to sport,” Lynne says.

This role gave her a ringside seat during the Super League legal battle over rugby league television rights, though she said her family background helped during this time.

“I knew the club and I knew the brand, so I always think that makes it a little bit easier when times are tough,” she says.

During her stint at the Bulldogs, Lynne became one of the first people to use sponsorship exposure measurement and evaluation techniques in Australia. With Hyundai as the major sponsor, she knew they needed to prove value if they were going to keep investing significant

amounts of money which led her to investigate what type of techniques were being used at a global level, and putting them into practice.

“What was a little surprising to me was that our clients were telling us no one was doing that for them. So when I moved to Melbourne, that led me to starting up the initial version of our company back in 1998, because I felt that there would always be a need to be more accountable, and if anything, that has just increased over the years.

After leaving the Bulldogs, Lynne set up her own sponsorship research consultancy, S-COMM Australia and New Zealand, and spent the next 15 years helping clients to show the tangible results of their sports sponsorship investments. Over time, this developed beyond initial exposure measurement to the use of market research and sophisticated analytics to determine return on investment. The company also established research around fans, and continue to develop knowledge and insights to assist teams and sponsors to understand and grow fans’ passion and behaviour.

In 2010, Lynne became managing director, Australia and New Zealand at Repucom, a global sports marketing research company. The company works with major sporting rights holders, broadcasters, major sponsors and, through a new division established last year, government and tourism event bodies.

While Lynne is now focused on managing her team and undertaking the strategic and administrative work that comes with a CEO role, she still enjoys keeping “her hand in the game”.

“I love working directly in the market and helping our clients really try and get the best information they can to make commercial decisions,” she says. “That might be helping a sponsorship manager decide where he should invest, or it might be helping a sport understand the challenges they’ve got with their fan base.”

She also enjoys helping her people develop their own careers,





"I love working directly in the market and helping our clients really try and get the best information they can to make commercial decisions."

Lynne Anderson,  
Bachelor of Commerce  
– Marketing, 1991

having taken her strong sense of family into the workplace.

"I've got great staff in my business, and a lot of them are Gen Y, but have been with me five years or more. They are obviously creating something that they want to stick at," Lynne says.

Now working for a global company, Lynne finds that the international perspectives she gained through her degree at UWS are still vital to her success.

"I was part of a cross-university collaboration in International Marketing with UNSW and UTS, where we actually worked with businesses and travelled overseas to see different countries in different stages of

development. That was fascinating, and the cultural sensitivities I need to have in place were certainly honed by that course," she says.

The recent explosion of social media is also adding a new dimension to the analysis of sports sponsorship and audience engagement.

"If there is a new medium that comes out and people want to really understand whether it's working or not, then we have to measure it for them. Certainly this year we invested in a social media analysis tool. So that's changed a lot," Lynne says.

With some exciting new announcements on the cards for Repucom in 2013, and having

delivered record revenues for the last five years in a row, Lynne is looking forward to a prosperous future with Australian sport.

"I am proud that we keep innovating and forging new areas to go into. The world of sport business is just getting healthier by the day," she says.

**For more information on the Business Alumni at UWS visit [www.uws.edu.au/BusinessAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/BusinessAlumni)**

# UWS Alumni GradLife benefits



The UWS GradLife Alumni Benefits program is back and better than ever. Members should now have received their new-look GradLife card and begun taking advantage of the great benefits on offer.

Being a member of the UWS GradLife program entitles you to a range of special alumni benefits, including discounted membership to the UWS Library and gym, discounts at the UWS bookshop, as well as invitations to special University events. Our new membership benefits are shown below for your information. A full list is available online via the GradLife website.

All graduates of UWS are eligible for a GradLife card, so visit [www.uws.edu.au/GradLife](http://www.uws.edu.au/GradLife) to apply for yours today.



## NEW!

- **10% off storage rates and 20% off boxes & packaging materials**
- **At selected locations**
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[www.uws.edu.au/GradLife](http://www.uws.edu.au/GradLife)





# UWS news



## NEW TELEVISION SERIES DRAWS ON UWS SKILLS

A new Television Sydney (TVS) series aimed at encouraging children to find their dream career through university study features a crew of UWS graduates doing just that.

*Enquiring Minds*, an inspirational new 10-part series aimed at primary school aged children that premieres on TVS digital 44 in March, has been produced largely by past and present University of Western Sydney students who all realised their dreams through their studies.

Producers Scott Richardson and Tim Vincent are currently completing their Master of Convergent Media studies at UWS, while former students Holly and Sacha are two of the show's four presenters.

Bachelor of Visual Communication (Honours) graduate Serryn Fowler

designed the graphics for the series, while Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication) graduate Lauren Oaklands was the independent consultant for the show's interactive website.

Fourth-year Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication) students were also a big part of the project, contributing design concepts for the show's branding before interns Daniel Scognamiglio, Janet Nguyen and Wendy Straker worked on the press kits, workshop activities and visual elements.

Ross Page, who assisted with the show's post-production and website, is currently completing his Bachelor of Communication (Honours) while Bachelor of Arts (Communication) graduate Krystyna Pollard is working on the media plan and publicity.

TVS chief executive Rachel Bentley said she was pleased to be involved in a show that reflected the real-life situation of those who made it.

"*Enquiring Minds* is all about opening up the possibility of turning a childhood passion into a real career through higher education," Mrs Bentley said.

"We have a wealth of people here at Television Sydney who have done that with their own lives.

"Television Sydney is proud to boast so many UWS students and graduates on its team."

Each episode of *Enquiring Minds* sees a child explain what their interests are – animals, robots, computer games – and links them with an academic in the field who explains how to turn that hobby into a career.

Children get hands-on experience in their field of choice, be that feeding a snake or operating on a "live" patient, and the whole series is designed to link to an interactive website encouraging students to pursue their interests into higher education.

Smartboard web apps and curriculum mapping means the series can also be used by teachers as a classroom resource.

Bachelor of Communication (Media Arts Production) graduate Michelle Romeo, who later completed a Masters degree in primary school teaching, worked as the curriculum consultant on lesson plans teachers can use.

UWS higher education policy and projects director Trish Mullins said the involvement of so many current students and graduates was testament to the educational standards of the university.

And those involved in making the show also believe it is a very worthwhile project.

"I think children will find the stories interesting and the website a lot of fun," said Lauren Oaklands, website and integrated game designer.

*Enquiring Minds* also provides an introduction to a second series aimed at an older audience.

The Models of Achievement television series is set to premiere in May, a 10-part documentary-style program showcasing the extraordinary

achievements of people who changed their lives through university studies.

*Enquiring Minds* is set to premiere on Television Sydney (TVS) digital 44 in March. Models of Achievement will premiere in May.

*The Enquiring Minds* and Models of Achievement projects have been established by the University of Western Sydney in partnership with TVS. This program is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), as part of the Bridges to Higher Education initiative. Bridges to Higher Education is a partnership of five universities (University of Technology, Sydney; Macquarie University; University of Western Sydney; University of Sydney; and the Australian Catholic University) and 10 other partners including TVS. Bridges to Higher Education is a \$21.2 million initiative, which aims to boost the participation of disadvantaged communities in higher education.

**For more information:**

**Bridges to Higher Education  
Programming information - TVS**

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## AWARD FOR UWS GRADUATE

The Australian Trade Commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka, has recently announced University of Western Sydney alumnus Damith Wijeratne (pictured) as the winner of an Austrade Australian Alumni Excellence Award.

Each year the Australian Trade Commission invites Australian educational institutions to nominate Sri Lankan graduates who have excelled in their fields of work or study.

Damith Wijeratne has a long history with the University of Western Sydney. After arriving in Australia in 2003 as an international student, he enrolled in a Foundation Studies and then a Diploma program at Sydney West International College – which now operates as UWSCollege.

Damith won the College Medal in 2003 for completing the Foundation Studies program with a perfect GPA. After a successful transition into the University's Bachelor of Mathematics and Information Technology degree, he was twice named in the Dean's Merit List.

Following his graduation from UWS in 2006, Damith returned to UWSCollege to teach in the area of ICT and Mathematics.

The Austrade Australian Alumni Excellence Awards recognise and honour alumni who have attained exemplary achievements in their field of specialisation at a national, regional or international level, as well as those who have contributed significantly to the

betterment of Australian education and their institution or alumni community.

Damith has been awarded the 'Australian Alumni Award for Education,' in recognition of his valuable contributions to education in Australia as a respected member of the Teaching Academe.

Dr Kerry Hudson, Dean and CEO of UWS College, says Damith is a highly regarded member of the UWSCollege team.

"Recently promoted to the role of Academic Administration Manager, Damith is also recognised by his colleagues at UWSCollege for his capability and commitment to students and the organisation," says Dr Hudson.

UWSCollege provides a pathway for students who otherwise may not have an opportunity to access higher education.

As an international student himself, Damith understands the difficulties, needs and rewards of being a student in this position and works to ensure that UWSCollege students are supported in their transition to University.

Also heavily involved in amateur sporting pursuits, Damith plays for local Sydney teams in Rugby Union and Cricket. He has been instrumental in organising UWSCollege students to play cricket matches against other Colleges.

Damith is currently undertaking his Masters of Information and Communications Technology at UWS, maintaining a distinction average – a significant achievement as he balances his studies with full-time work. \_ UWS Media Team.



# Snapshot

## LAUREN OAKLANDS

By day, Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication) graduate Lauren Oaklands toils in her “bat cave” as a web developer on the *Enquiring Minds* website, which will be used in classrooms via smartboard technology.

“I’ve been busy collaborating with the in-house graphic designer to maintain stylistic cohesion between the show and website,” she said.

By night, Lauren morphs into a game artist as she works on the Flash game that will be accessible via the website and deployed as an app. The game comprises 20 mini activities set inside the unique world of *Enquiring Minds*. Curious players can walk about and explore or interact with the various expert characters that inhabit the world.

“This creative role allows me to dip a toe into the pools of animation, illustration and research,” Lauren said.

“Of course, there are also the puddles of character design, set design, interface design and game planning to splash about in.

“The goal is to achieve an outcome that is both engaging and modern for the kids who will master the game.”

## TIM VINCENT

Producer Tim Vincent is currently studying a Master of Convergent Media at UWS’s Parramatta campus after working in television for 25 years.

Tim started as a reporter on Simon Townsend’s *Wonder World* and since then has worked extensively in television both in Australia and the United States, including co-creating *The Aquanauts* for the Discovery Network’s Animal Planet (US). He has also produced feature stories for *Top Gear Australia*, *Selling Houses Australia* and *Deadly Women* (US).

“Working on *Enquiring Minds* has been a rewarding series because it’s great to see kids getting to experience their dream careers for a day,” he said.

“The efforts of all the experts in their chosen fields to make each primary student feel welcome and involved will hopefully leave a lasting impression on all these young minds.”



## SERRYN FOWLER

Serryn graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Communication (Honours) from the University of Western Sydney in 2010.

His role in *Enquiring Minds* involves creating the program’s identity through logos and visual concepts, including animated broadcast elements and “bumpers” or “breakers”, the animated branding before and after ad breaks. It’s Serryn’s job to give the program personality and character, and then translate that across multiple platforms.

“*Enquiring Minds* represents a fantastic opportunity to create engaging content across multiple platforms,” he said.



# Chapter Spotlight

## Education Alumni Chapter

With around 1,600 students enrolled in Education degree programs in early childhood, primary and secondary every year, as well as students from other disciplines who complete an Education component during the course of the year, Education plays an important role at UWS. But the School's influence stretches far beyond the confines of the University.

Associate Professor Christine Johnston, Acting Deputy Dean of the School of Education at UWS and Director of Engagement and International, says that Education is often "the face of the university with the community".

The School of Education has an extensive engagement program, where undergraduate and postgraduate students are not only involved in professional experience in schools in the Greater Western Sydney region, but also have the opportunity to work with students and communities in a range of contexts and geographical areas, including refugee communities, students who are carers of their parents, Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and schools in Malaysia.

UWS Education academics have also been involved in the longstanding 'Fair Go' research project, working with teachers as researchers to improve practice in schools in Greater Western Sydney.

Dr Jorge Knijnik, Senior Lecturer in the UWS School of Education and Education Alumni Network Coordinator, says that this type of engagement enables students to start gaining practical experience at the same time as opening the door to understanding their future profession, especially when

### Chapter Membership

This chapter is most relevant to UWS Master of Special Education, Master of Education (Social Ecology) and Master of Education (Leadership) and other education postgraduate alumni.

### How do I join?

To become a member of this chapter visit the UWS Alumni website and complete the online form.

led by committed academic staff in "hands-on, reflective practice".

"They go out and do the experience, and then later on they talk to their lecturers about that, and they build on experience with new theories that they are learning," Knijnik says.

After graduation, UWS has a range of programs to support alumni as they make the transition to teaching. Becoming involved in the Education Alumni Network is particularly beneficial for Education graduates, as it provides considerable opportunities in building a support network to deal with what is sometimes stressful work and access continuing professional development – both crucial for today's teachers.

For those who are looking to take the next step in their careers, completing a Masters qualification can help them get there. Graduates can return to UWS to undertake further degrees, such as the Master of Special Education, the Master of Education (Social Ecology), and the Master of Education (Leadership).

"There are opportunities too for our researchers to be supporting teachers in their own action research, as they evaluate their practice and try out new approaches and ideas," Johnston says.

To maintain professional accreditation with the NSW Institute of Teachers, teachers must now undertake ongoing professional development of 100 hours







Angel Mok  
Bachelor Of Early Childhood  
Studies (Child And Family), 2006  
Master Of Teaching  
(Early Childhood), 2007

## FINDING THE PATH TO A PHD

Angel Mok would never have found herself on her current path to a PhD without the experience she had studying at UWS.

Having already completed a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies, Angel was part of the first cohort for the Master of Teaching in Early Childhood at UWS in 2005. She says being among the “pioneers” had many advantages.

“We had lots of opportunities to communicate with the academics – they were very friendly and very supportive,” Angel says. “All the academics in the School of Education have very high standards of professionalism, they are very knowledgeable in their areas, and they were really good role models for me now I am working as an educator in higher education, in terms of how to communicate with my students to understand their needs.”

When Angel completed her Masters she gained experience in a variety of different education settings, including long day care, preschools, and primary schools as well as universities.

Angel is now undertaking PhD research, exploring the cultural identity of Chinese residents in Sydney, and how it influences their children’s performance in mathematics. The PhD path is one she was always passionate about, but never thought she would actually follow, and concedes that finding the right direction for her career was often tough.

“Very often new graduates are confused, they don’t know what to do, and especially before they can build a relationship with their colleagues in schools, for example, they really need space and a place for them to share ideas or just to talk about their problems in a safe environment, where people understand where they are coming from and they are not being judged.

“I think that one of the greatest values of the UWS Alumni Network is that you can talk to someone from a similar background, who understands your situation and can provide you with the social and professional support we all need,” Angel says.

over five years, and as an accredited provider, UWS can help them meet these requirements through short courses offered through its Education Knowledge Network, which provides access to the University’s resources.

The School of Education is also currently developing a formal mentorship program for teachers supervising

students during their professional experience placements, which it hopes will be accredited through the NSW Institute of Teachers for professional development purposes.

**To join the UWS Education Alumni Network, visit**  
**[www.uws.edu.au/EducationAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/EducationAlumni)**

# recent alumni events

## ANNUAL LAW ALUMNI DINNER

The University of Western Sydney Law Alumni Chapter held its annual Law Alumni Dinner and Occasional Address on 2 November 2012 at the Hilton Sydney.

With around 100 guests in attendance, UWS Chancellor Professor Peter Shergold AC was the host of the black-tie event.

The Hon. Justice Ian Coleman presented the evening's keynote address, while Federal Magistrate Tom Altobelli (formerly an Associate Professor in the UWS School of Law) also spoke during the evening.

UWS Dean of Law, Professor Michael Adams, says, "Justice Coleman is a

senior judge in the Family Court and gave a wonderful address on the impact of law on the general population and how UWS enables more people to be educated and change lives, especially through *pro bono* work and volunteering. A special guest of honour was Mrs Elayne Hayes, who the following week hosted a fundraiser for her late husband, Associate Professor Robert Hayes."

With a number of law firms supporting the event by buying tables for their lawyers, the evening was a wonderful success in connecting law alumni.

"The event is a fantastic way to help raise the profile of law graduates as they enjoy the company of law alumni, academic staff and even some law students who look forward to graduating soon. The speakers were engaging and thought-provoking – it was a great event," says Professor Adams.

**To see more photos and find out more about the Law Alumni Association visit [www.uws.edu.au/LawAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/LawAlumni)**







## BRINGING MUSIC GRADUATES BACK TO UWS

The Playhouse Theatre at the University of Western Sydney Kingswood campus was the venue for the first-ever Music Alumni Reunion, on 30 November 2012.

The music degree began in 1994, so after 19 years Diana Blom, the Director of Academic Program, Music, School of Humanities and Communications Arts, says it was definitely time to reunite, with over 40 staff and alumni coming together to catch up.

"This was an opportunity to gather alumni, see what they are doing, interest them in the current degree program, and allow them to network with each other and the staff," Blom says.

Two current undergraduate students, Olivia Hucker and Christopher Fulham, gave performances, while Founding Professor Michael Atherton gave "a very thoughtful speech about music, its role in our lives and in life generally", Blom says.

The music faculty invites all alumni to reconnect with the University and talk to current students, and hopes to establish an endowment fund to provide performance scholarships in the future.

**To see more photos and find out more about the Music Alumni Chapter visit [www.uws.edu.au/MusicAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/MusicAlumni)**

# upcoming events 2013

## JULY

Alumni Volunteers  
Thank You Function

[www.uws.edu.au/AlumniVolunteers](http://www.uws.edu.au/AlumniVolunteers)

Celebrating Hawkesbury Luncheon

[www.uws.edu.au/HAC](http://www.uws.edu.au/HAC)

## SEPTEMBER

Spring UWS Graduation Ceremonies

[www.uws.edu.au/NewAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/NewAlumni)

## OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER

UWS Law Alumni Occasional  
Address (date TBA)

[www.uws.edu.au/LawAlumni](http://www.uws.edu.au/LawAlumni)

### FIND OUT MORE

Look online at [www.uws.edu.au/AlumniEvents](http://www.uws.edu.au/AlumniEvents) or contact the UWS Alumni Unit at [alumni@uws.edu.au](mailto:alumni@uws.edu.au) for more information

## stay connected

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) holds our alumni in high esteem, taking pride in each graduate as they progress beyond their studies and into their chosen career. Assisting more than 140,000 graduates, the objective of the UWS Alumni Unit is to ensure all of our alumni 'keep in touch' with their University.

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  
[WWW.UWS.EDU.AU/STAYCONNECTED](http://WWW.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  
[WWW.UWS.EDU.AU/GRADLIFE](http://WWW.UWS.EDU.AU/GRADLIFE)**