Stem cell research will be a focus of Australia’s first international translational dental science research program, based at UWA.

The collaboration between the School of Dentistry and similar schools at the Universities of Leeds and Nanjing will push the boundaries of stem cell research using periodontal tissue, or teeth.

The program was initiated by Tony Phan, whom UWA News reader may remember has Motor Neurone Disease.

While he is unable to brush his own teeth, Assistant Professor Phan has set up this collaboration to exploit the potential of teeth in a major biological and clinical project.

While many doors have closed for him, the digital world, through the use of voice-activated software, has opened many more and he is in the final stages of setting up the collaboration.

The universities, all members of the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), will share resources, equipment and intellectual property to discover unique ways of regenerating periodontal tissue that has been damaged by disease or physical trauma.

The cultivation and use of stem cells will be a major part of the team’s research.

“The dental field is sitting on an untapped goldmine of knowledge in terms of stem cells,” A/Professor Phan said. “These stem cells, both from periodontal and pulp regions, are very easy to extract and cultivate, compared to bone marrow or embryonic cells.

“The periodontal stem cells have the same potential for cloning but none of the ethical implications as they are cultivated from teeth that are usually thrown away in the bin.

“One of our major aims is to create a dental stem cell library that can be freely accessed and used by any researcher in the stem cell field. Instead of having to focus time and money on extracting stem cells from origins that are difficult or have strong ethical implications, researchers can easily access and use the cells from a stem cell library,” he said.

His debilitating disease has not stopped A/Professor Phan from continuing his work.

In this issue  P3 CONVOCATION PAVILION PRIZE  P5 INDIGENOUS DIALOGUES  P7 UWA’S NEW MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
research and it was a paper he published in the high ranking Journal of Periodontal Research in June that attracted the attention of a PhD student at the University of Leeds’ Dental Institute.

“I was writing about a family of proteins that I had identified and patented which allow cells within teeth to survive stress and damage,” he said.

“The student who was interested asked if she could come here and work with me so I got talking to her supervisor, Professor Xubien Yang, Head of Stem Cell and Tissue Engineering Research at Leeds University.

“It turned out that we come from the same background – orthopaedics – and he has also patented proteins involved in periodontal regeneration. We wanted to work together so decided to formalise a collaboration and, as Professor Yang is also on the staff at Nanjing’s dental school, we extended the collaboration to that university and its deputy dean of dental studies, Professor Wenmei Wang.

“Leeds has a strong dental clinical research component, Nanjing has a strong and cost-efficient animal research area, while UWA has a strong oral biology component. This will allow us to achieve true translational research – moving the theory forward into the practical and clinical arena. While we are all sharing knowledge and funding, we all win.”

A student exchange will be part of the collaboration agreement which the partners hope to sign this month. A/Professor Phan has applied for a Research Collaboration Award through WUN, to kick off the partnership by funding travel to Leeds and Nanjing for his post-doctoral staff.

The Head of UWA’s School of Dentistry and Director of the Oral Health Centre of WA, Winthrop Professor Andrew Smith, has decided to extend the partnership to a school-wide collaboration.

“We are very excited at the opportunities that WUN has created to have a tripartite research relationship with our sister schools in Nanjing and Leeds,” Professor Smith said. “We hope to formalise the relationships through memoranda of understanding with the goal of setting up a joint translational dental research centre.

“In addition UWA will have a major input to the WUN Oral Health Conference to be held in Leeds in 2012, hopefully to be followed by a meeting here in Perth in 2014.”

A/Professor Phan said oral and periodontal diseases could play a long-term role in people’s health. “There are strong associations between periodontal disease and heart disease, premature birth and cancer. It is important that we try to understand and reverse periodontal disease and damage, to save lives in the long term.”

A/Professor Phan’s own medical condition has deteriorated since he was featured in UWA News in May. He now has a full-time carer, funded by the Vice-Chancellor, to enable him to stay at work.

“I am indebted to Professor Robson for his generous support,” he said. “I feel he has treated me as a human being, rather than a liability.”
Origami and earthquakes are the unlikely bedfellows that combined to produce a shelter for communities affected by natural disasters.

Two young Italian architects used the traditional Japanese techniques to design an easily-constructed shelter that won the UWA Convocation Pavilion Prize, co-ordinated by UWA's Cultural Precinct.

Their shelter will be constructed on Whitfield Court, in front of Winthrop Hall, during the Perth International Arts Festival. And the design will be the subject of a Business School summer school unit, to produce a business model and development plan, to try to ensure the shelter will become part of international aid agencies’ rescue packages, rather than languishing as the winner of a competition.

Prize winners Elisa Mansutti and Luca Pavarin are graduates from the engineering school at the University of Udine, in north-east Italy. The university was founded in 1978 as part of a reconstruction plan for the region, following a major earthquake in 1976. Coming from a community with relatively recent experience of a natural disaster, Elisa and Luca were keen to put their skills into helping people in similar situations.

“We studied origami and its theory of self-supporting structures, in our architecture units,” Luca said.

“It is a very simple structure to erect,” Elisa said. “Just 13 aluminium poles in the ground, then the seams of the fabric will hold it up.”

The honeycomb-like design provides for 12 private sleeping compartments around the outer part of the pavilion, with a big communal area in the middle. The designers were given a brief for an economical shelter (less than $12,000), easily deliverable to remote areas, using green technologies.

They brought together the best of several tent designs, rejecting those that needed guy ropes and the traditional emergency tent that does not provide any private compartments. They adapted the idea of the nomadic tent, using layers of fabric, depending on the weather (ensuring their design could be made with different densities of fabric), and the family camping tent, which uses zips to enclose or open out areas of different sizes.

Convocation (UWA graduates’ association) chose to sponsor the Pavilion Project to kick-start the UWA Centenary celebrations. Convocation Warden Simon Dawkins said the project was innovative and represented the international aspirations of UWA.

“We have put $10,000 towards the project and council members Fran Pesich and Warren Kerr (both architects) and Ian Passmore are working to implement it with the UWA Cultural Precinct,” Mr Dawkins said.

A total of 76 entries from 24 countries were judged by a panel headed by Winthrop Professor Geoffrey London. They had to choose an entry which fused art and architecture to create an environmentally-friendly shelter.

The designers were brought to Perth by the UWA Cultural Precinct to arrange manufacture and construction of their shelter. They have been talking to a manufacturer of tents for the armed services and estimate that the lightweight, strong and waterproof material they will need for their 144 square-metre pavilion will cost just $2,000. The aluminium poles would be extra.

Assistant Professor Jo Sneddon, who is running the Entrepreneurship and Innovation unit which will develop a business plan for the pavilion, said she hoped to be able to work with a relief organisation set up after the tsunami in Sri Lanka. ISTIH (International Skills and Training Institute in Health) was established by a group from UWA, Curtin University and the WA State Department of Health to train people for aid work in the Asia Pacific region. Its leader at UWA is Winthrop Professor Bruce Robinson.

Elisa and Luca have returned to Italy to start their Masters in Architecture at the University of Milan, but are planning to come back to Perth in February for the construction of their shelter.

(See page 8 for more on UWA’s Cultural Precinct)
Celebrating the ‘mightiest force’

One of the great strengths of this University is its vibrant community spirit, a spirit that is particularly visible whenever volunteers are needed.

A 24-hour relay organised by students recently raised around $90,000 for cancer research, education, prevention and services for people living with the disease.

Students in the Guild Volunteering Hub worked with Cancer Council WA on its Relay For Life in which teams walked or jogged with a baton in relay style for 24 hours to highlight the fact that cancer never sleeps. These students are to be applauded for their involvement in this very worthwhile event.

Others have been engaged in a two-semester program that is fundamental to helping our commencing students each year – the UniMentor scheme.

The program not only reflects our tradition of valuing new students and providing services to help them reach their full potential, it also allows the student mentors themselves to develop their communication and leadership skills through helping others in a voluntary capacity.

The energy and enthusiasm of all those involved is a true reflection of the altruism that exists within our University. And I particularly commend the efforts of our student mentors, who have so enthusiastically given up so much of their time.

We can all take heart from the generosity of so many of our students – whether it is as part of UniMentor, or helping at events such as the annual Parents’ Welcome and our recent record-breaking Open Day.

At the Open Day in August, it was notable that there were more staff and student volunteers than in any other year. This is a very positive reflection on the willingness of staff and students to support the University.

As well as student volunteers, we are very fortunate in having so many career mentors involved in our Career Mentor Link program. This continues to grow in numbers, helping students not at the beginning of their University education but towards the end, when they are making the transition into the workplace.

This program is now making positive differences in the lives of students not only here, but also in Singapore, where it was launched in June. All our Singapore mentors are alumni, including one who took part as a ‘mentee’ here on our Crawley campus a few years ago.

Without involvement such as this – from willing volunteers at all levels – our University would not be the great institution it is today, an institution recognised nationally and internationally as one of quality and substance through knowledge, teaching and discovery.

Generosity of spirit is a wonderful attribute, termed by American theologian Charles Dole as ‘the mightiest practical force in the universe’.

‘Giant of the profession’ enters hall of fame

Emeritus Professor Philip Brown, a modest but brilliant accountant, has notched up more firsts than some of the recently-feted Commonwealth Games stars.

The long-time star of accounting and finance in the UWA Business School (pictured) has attracted many awards in more than 40 years, including at least three major accolades for which he won inaugural titles.

The latest of these is Professor Brown’s inaugural membership of the Australian Accounting Hall of Fame, recently established by the University of Melbourne’s faculty of Business and Economics. Along with four other accountants who have made significant contributions over the past 100 years, he was honoured at a ceremony in Melbourne last month. Director of the Hall of Fame, Phillip Cobbin, said the five inaugural members were “giants of the profession” who deserved to be recognised and celebrated.

Professor Brown’s status in the accounting profession was triggered by a co-authored seminal paper, in 1968, that defined the course of accounting research for at least 40 years. An Empirical Evaluation of Accounting Income Numbers looked at the relevance of earnings data and the timeliness of announcements. It revolutionised the community’s understanding of the impact of corporate disclosure on share prices and laid the foundation for much of the modern accounting literature. That paper later received the American Accounting Association’s inaugural award for Seminal Contributions to the Accounting Literature.

Professor Brown was one of the youngest professorial appointments to UWA in 1970. He helped to establish the University’s MBA course, one of the first in Australia.

Winthrop Professor Izan, Deputy Dean of the Business School, said Professor Brown was without peer in Australia. “He is amongst the most respected accounting scholars in the world,” she said.
How does ‘race’ have an impact on our lives? What is a ‘racial autobiography’? And what are the hidden obstacles that Indigenous students have to overcome as they undertake their studies?

These are just some of the questions that challenged the staff members from UWA Albany and the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management who recently took part in a pilot program aimed at increasing cultural awareness on campus.

The first part of the program, Couragous Conversations about Race, led by Malcolm Fialho, Senior Diversity Officer at UWA, soon had staff thinking deeply about their own heritage and their assumptions about people from backgrounds different from their own.

During the second day of the program, Indigenous Dialogues toward Cultural Competence, Indigenous Employment Officer Adam Casley and Assistant Professor Clint Bracknell from the School of Indigenous Studies encouraged staff to think about culturally-appropriate ways of engaging with the wider Indigenous community.

“The program is designed to foster self-reflection, enable participants to undertake an ‘on country’ learning experience and move towards developing and implementing specific protocols and practices to further improve university services and cross-cultural interaction,” explained Assistant Professor Bracknell.

Staff at the UWA Albany Centre were also asked to think critically about the cultural assumptions made in many textbooks and to consider how they could increase the Indigenous-specific content of the courses they taught.

“New Courses will be rolled out in 2012 with aims to embed Indigenous content across a range of disciplines,” A/Professor Bracknell said. “This pilot program is a step toward achieving those aims, through establishing a dialogue and providing resources.”

Marilyn Strother, Director of Indigenous Student Services, outlined the support available to Indigenous students both for those studying in Albany and for those facing the challenge of moving away from the region and local support networks.

Acting Director of the UWA Albany Centre, Jenni Flottmann, said it was exciting that UWA Albany had been chosen to be part of the pilot program.

“UWA Albany has been identified as a prime trial site for delivering the program due to its regional location, because we offer courses to Indigenous students, and because of our important connections with the local Indigenous community,” she said.

“A particular highlight for many of the staff was the opportunity to participate in an ‘on country’ learning experience led by local Noongar elder Lynette Knapp to view sites of cultural significance and to learn about the history and the landscape from the perspective of the Indigenous people of the region,” she said.

For further information on the Indigenous Dialogues toward Cultural Competence pilot program please contact the School of Indigenous Studies on 6488 3428.

For further information about matters relating to Equity and Diversity on campus please contact Malcolm Fialho, Senior Diversity Officer.
The UWA Centre for Microscopy, Characterisation and Analysis came under close scrutiny recently from a group of 44 marine scientists from around the world.

The scientists were in Perth for Frontiers of Science 2010, a joint conference staged by the UK Royal Society and the Australian Academy of Science.

Part of the conference included a visit to the centre for a close-up view of its world-class equipment.

CMA has a $10 million secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS) facility, which can be used to analyse solid samples and detect isotopes down to the parts-per-billion range.

UWA is the only institution in the world to house both NanoSIMS and 1280 SIMS instruments, which can provide international scientists and industry with unrivalled analytical capabilities for their research.

The Frontiers of Science 2010 conference showcased the work of talented UK and Australian researchers.

The Oceans Institute’s Professor Anya Waite was one of those presenting at the conference.

Professor Waite delivered a paper on ocean fertilisation, looking at whether algal blooms could be used for carbon sequestration.

By Science Communication student Lara de la Harpe

Getting school students enthused about astronomy during daily lessons is difficult, as the real wonders of the universe can only be seen at night, using sophisticated telescopes unavailable to most schools.

This has changed in WA, with the launch of a robotically-operated telescope called SPIRIT (SPICE-Physics-ICRAR Remote Internet Telescope).

Located on top of the Physics building at UWA, the powerful telescope can be operated over the internet by high school students from their classrooms or at home. Using regular internet browsers, students can direct the telescope to accurately photograph the night sky and then access the images.

“This has definitely sparked my interest in astronomy,” said Hanna Sutton from Mount Lawley Senior High School, who was involved in testing the facility. Hannah and two students from Shenton College won Minor Planet Code accreditation for SPIRIT without leaving the comfort of their homes.

The SPIRIT initiative has been developed by the secondary teachers’ enrichment program, SPICE, and the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), with support from the School of Physics.

The telescope will enable high school students to observe the universe, gather data and conduct real science. By providing exciting and accessible hands-on experiences, the SPIRIT initiative aims to motivate students to study science at university and beyond.

“This is your telescope, kids,” said Professor Peter Quinn, director of ICRAR. “It offers an enormous opportunity to bring astronomy and physics into the classroom.”

The success of this initiative will depend on its adoption by science teachers as part of their learning program.

SPICE will provide professional development and learning materials for secondary school teachers to encourage and support them in using the SPIRIT telescope.

The telescope will also be used by undergraduate students studying astronomy and astrophysics at UWA.
He is an award-winning author, a lawyer, a teacher, a sportsman, a human rights campaigner and now Antonio Buti is also a politician.

Usually known as Tony Buti, the Professor of Law is winding back his academic duties at UWA as he takes on his new role of Labor Member for Armadale in State Parliament.

“It’s great to be back at the coalface,” he said. “Being a Member of Parliament is a bit like running a local legal practice, helping the constituents with their problems.”

But he plans to keep up his research and deliver the occasional lecture in the Law School. “I will retain an adjunct position here or something similar; it's still being worked out,” he said.

Professor Buti, who has lived in the electorate of Armadale for 40 of his 49 years, studied Human Movement at UWA and joined the Australian Labor Party while he was studying a subsequent Diploma of Education in 1983.

After teaching and travelling for some years, he returned to UWA to do a Masters in Industrial Relations, which led to him doing a full law degree at the Australian National University.

A Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford University followed. “But I already had a family to support, so I kept my teaching job at Murdoch University’s Law School, and travelled to Oxford seven times over the two-and-a-half years it took to complete the degree.”

Professor Buti’s legal interests range from human rights to education, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families (his DPhil thesis), British child migrants, drug testing in sport and sports law in general. After working for the Aboriginal Legal Service, he combined his interests and became a manager for four Indigenous footballers playing for the Fremantle Dockers. His legal and sports background helped Jeff Farmer, Scott Chisholm, Roger Hayden and Clem Michael to run their careers.

He has published widely, including a book on Drugs, Sport and Law and a biography of the late human rights campaigner, Sir Ronald Wilson, A Matter of Conscience, which won the Premier’s Prize last year.

Disability rights, education, reconciliation and the economy all featured in his maiden speech to Parliament last month. Professor Buti’s Honours supervisor in Human Movement, Professor Bruce Elliott, scored a mention for being one of the people critical to his education.

In the House of Representatives, he joins former Law School colleague, Christian Porter, who started teaching at UWA in 2007, the same year in which Professor Buti returned to the University.

Mr Porter won a by-election shortly after, left the University and, the next year, became WA’s Attorney-General.

He worked with his predecessor, Alannah MacTiernan, at Dwyer Durack, when he was doing his articles, and she was a senior, just before she left to enter politics.

She became a friend and role model and Professor Buti says he will be working as hard as he can to make his contribution to WA a significant one.
Like them or loathe them, virtual worlds such as Second Life have become part of our real lives in the 21st century and with them come the problems of real life, including legal complications.

At the recent Australasian Consumer Law Roundtable, hosted by UWA, keynote speaker Dr Christine Riefa from UK’s Brunel University, inspired an enthusiastic but open-ended discussion about protecting consumers in virtual environments.

“Much of it comes down to whether Second Life (SL) is a game or not,” Dr Riefa said. “Many of those who ‘play’ say it is not a game, it is a virtual existence. If we play Monopoly, we abide by the rules. What rules govern what happens in SL? People use real money to buy Linden dollars to use in SL. How are the transactions in SL (which can result in real profits once you change your Linden dollars back to your real currency) regulated?” she asked.

“Can we say: ‘It is only a game and intended as an exercise in fantasy’, so that normal rules don’t apply? This may encourage extreme behaviour that translates into real financial damages. Do consumer laws apply? How can we enforce such rules in a virtual world? What are the dispute resolution mechanisms?”

Dr Riefa won a Fulbright Scholarship to go to the US for a semester to start looking at the consumer problems of SL. “I’m not solving world hunger here. It may seem trivial, but if transactions are done on a grand scale, people who ‘play’ SL stand to make or lose a lot of money. It is estimated that within the next 15 years, virtual economies will be somewhere between $7 and $12 billion.”

She said Europe had very good laws to protect consumers. “For example, if I buy a jumper online and when it arrives, I decide it is not the colour I wanted, I have seven days in which to return it and I get my money back. If I buy a jumper for my avatar in SL, how can I send it back if it doesn’t exist?

“Second Life was set up by a company called Linden. To take part, you agree to Linden’s conditions, which are to create an avatar of yourself. You control the avatar, which is different from earlier computer games, in which the computer controlled the persona you chose.
“You don’t need to buy land or houses or clothes for your avatar, but people tend to mimic their lives in SL, so they want these things.

“They buy Linden dollars, which fluctuate, like all currencies, but you get around 7,000 Linden dollars for about $US23.

“if the ‘game’ shuts down, there is no access to your virtual wealth. There are no certificates of title when you buy land in SL. There is anecdotal evidence of predatory lending at high interest rates. You buy land in SL which is on loan to you until you pay it off. If the lender does not transfer the correct computer code for you to unlock and have access to that land, to whom do you complain?”

Dr Riefa said there had already been one case in the US, which was settled out of court, involving somebody buying land in SL through an error in the auction system. Linden decided it was illegal and closed the person’s account, leaving him $8,000 out of pocket.

“We don’t know the details of the case as it was settled, but it raises the question: Do we apply the laws of the State or the laws of the game?”

She said another case was fake products being offered for sale in SL. “There are imitation Gucci watches for your avatars, which are not authorised by Gucci. If a shop in real life was selling these, Gucci could seize them and sue the retailer. They can’t do anything about it in SL, even though somebody is making money from using the Gucci trademark and designs.”

About five years ago, a woman in China became the first real life millionaire from transactions in SL. “She bought land, developed it, built houses and sold them to other people in SL,” Dr Riefa said, “I understand she now employs about 70 people to run her SL business.”

She said that while the people and the money involved in SL were real, the consumables were intangible, so it was difficult to apply consumer law.

“There are more questions than answers. Specialists in property law, criminal law and intellectual property are already looking at it. I’m hoping to attract funding to keep studying the consumer law angle.

“In the meantime, it is a fascinating subject for my students!”

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Art competition engages virtually the whole world

A stunning design for a future UWA Cultural Precinct building has won a prize for a San Francisco-based architect.

The design was one of 841 entries in a multi-disciplinary year-long art competition run by UWA in Second Life. Running the competition in the virtual world encouraged entries from all over the globe. It was organised by Jay Jay Jegathesan, School Manager from Physics and leader of UWAs presence in Second Life (SL).

Judges for the competition were led by Professor Ted Snell, Director of UWA’s Cultural Precinct, and included experts from all over the world including the US, France, Germany, Singapore and WA.

As with many architectural competitions, William Tomlinson’s 3D design for the flagship building will not necessarily be the one used for construction of the centre within the next few years. But Professor Snell said some aspects would be taken into account and Mr Tomlinson would be invited to submit his designs when the time came.

Another of the judges was University Architect Frank Roberts.

“While the standard of entries was high, Tomlinson’s simple but elegant proposal stood out with its innovation, cultural sensitivity, and practicality,” he said.

Other components of the competition were for 3D art and video production. The 3D challenge was won by London artist Nish Mip for an interactive work called Umbrellas; Mandurah-based artist Sharni Azalee won first prize for non-interactive art; and Bradley Curnow, a Bachelor of Environmental Design student at UWA, shared first prize in the video section, with Germany’s Laurina Hawks.

Professor Snell said the standard of the entries was impressive and exciting. “I was impressed by the sophistication of the conceptual basis of the works and the extraordinary skill in rendering them within the virtual world,” he said.

A prize pool of $3,000, shared by the winners, was provided by the Cultural Precinct, the Vice-Chancellorcy, art philanthropists, supporters of UWA and commercial sponsors.

“The arts have certainly been a vibrant part of UWA’s foray into the virtual world,” Mr Jegathesan said. “UWA is seen as a major player in this field.”

Within the next few years, there will be a major development of new cultural venues on the Crawley campus.

In the meantime, the Cultural Precinct will continue to present a dynamic and intellectually rigorous program of exhibitions, performances and associate cultural activities that amplify current concerns, flag future issues and provide a perspective from which to view the past.
Four staff members from different areas have won Diversity Initiative funding for projects in 2011. Martin Anderson from the School of Sports Science, Exercise and Health is one. His project, Pathways to University, will see a postgraduate student employed to conduct tours and a range of activities to bring indigenous school students onto campus and get them thinking about university study and life. They will visit a variety of Schools on campus and do a brief tour of each. This will also expose postgraduate students to Indigenous students and their learning needs.

Dr Susan Young from Social Work and Social Policy won funding for a project called Prevention and Support. This strategy aims to build mental health and well-being for students on social work placement. It focuses on the student experience on placement and is intended to ensure that mental health difficulties, which may arise from or be exacerbated over the course of the placement, are explored in an open and non-judgemental forum that emphasises prevention and support.

The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) initiative has been revived in the Faculty of Engineering Computing and Mathematics by Kate Brandis. It aims to raise awareness of engineering, computer science and mathematics, as careers for female students. Kate hopes to encourage and excite female students to pursue studies in these areas and to increase female participation in non-traditional fields.

The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning has a grant to help staff from non-English speaking backgrounds. Winthrop Professor Denise Chalmers’ project, English language support for teaching staff will provide relevant, tailored oral communication language support for UWA teaching staff from these backgrounds.

Major employers were keen to meet students at the School of Indigenous Studies' inaugural careers expo recently. More than 20 companies and government departments were represented, with information for the students about career paths, opportunities for vacation work and cadetships and internships. Gabrielle Garratt, Academic Co-ordinator at the School of Indigenous Studies, said some of the companies were already sponsoring students. “BHP Billiton Iron Ore provides scholarships for our students and Rio Tinto, Wesfarmers, some Government departments and other companies offer cadetships.”

About 30 cadetships provide an allowance similar to AbStudy and 12 weeks work each year, which can be spread over vacation periods or a day a week during the academic year, or a combination of both. Mining companies dominated the day, but Ms Garratt said they were delighted to have a strong contingent from the ABC, including presenters Russell Wolfe, Craig Smart and Karina Carvalho and ABC State Director Geoff Duncan. “Our 180 students are spread across all faculties, including some who are studying Arts (Communication), so it was good for them to get some idea of opportunities in the media,” she said.

Sarah Kahle from Study Abroad was also at the Expo, to encourage Indigenous students to go overseas.
One of the University's peacocks went walkabout last month and was off campus for nearly a week.

Vern, the youngest of the three males in the five-bird group, seemed to be following in the steps (or flight) of his ancestors nearly 40 years ago. He was seen wandering the grounds of St George's College on a Monday afternoon. The Chaplain, Richard Pengelley, called the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to say Vern had been seen but was no longer around.

Shana Davies, a faculty administrative assistant who helps to care for the peacocks and peahens, sent out word via the secretaries' mailing list that Vern was on the run.

"I received a reply from a staff member at the School of Medicine, saying that he had been seen walking up and down a first floor balcony at QEII on the previous Friday evening," Shana said.

"We now knew he'd been away for four days and had crossed two busy roads. Did he use the underpass? Did he fly or just dash across? We were very concerned and asked local rangers to keep a look out for him."

Shana said she had begun to feel very worried when she had heard nothing by Thursday morning. "Then, at lunchtime, somebody from Kings Park called, saying he'd been discovered and was safe and sound in the enclosure of a transfer station on Saw Avenue," she said.

Shana enlisted the help of Leitha Delves, who had been the long-term carer for the peacocks. Leitha has left the full-time employment of the University but returns occasionally on contract and she was on campus when Shana took the call from Kings Park.

"Leitha helped us to recapture Vern and bring him safely home," she said. Vern’s escapade was similar to the first break-out by UWA’s peacocks when they were new to the campus.

When the peacocks were introduced in the 1970s, they were kept safe for the first two months in a ‘hide’ in the Tropical Grove. The first time they were let out, one ran straight out onto Stirling Highway and was killed. Another made it to QEII but had disappeared by the time somebody from the University got there and, unlike Vern, was never seen again.

The remaining three flew straight to the New Fortune Theatre, which they have called home for the past 40 years. The Arts Peacocks, as they are known, have their own page on the University website, which is often referred to by people from all over the world wanting information on keeping and breeding peacocks.

The Arts Peacocks are usually happy to stay close to home.
**Why there is a debate about climate change**

There is always debate about issues that matter to us and affect our lives. But how can those without an understanding of the particular science or technology involved make informed decisions when both sides seem to have all the answers?

Professor of History and Science Studies at the University of California, San Diego, Naomi Oreskes, can tell you how – or at least why there is a debate at all.

Professor Oreskes is coming to UWA on November 22 as a guest of the University’s climate science group and the Institute of Advanced Studies.

For two decades she has studied the process of consensus and dissent in science: how do scientists decide when a fact is ‘established’, and what happens when scientists can’t agree?

In 2004, she showed in an article in *Science* that there really was no longer a scientific debate about the presence of climate change and its human origins. And this year, the US Academy of Sciences concluded quite unequivocally that it is a ‘settled fact’ that the Earth is warming ‘and that much of this warming is very likely due to human activities.’

Professor Oreske’s lecture tour of Australia will promote her new co-authored book, *Merchants of Doubt*, about how a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming.

The book tells the troubling story of how a small cadre of influential scientists have clouded public understanding of scientific facts to advance a political and economic agenda.

One of the leaders of UWA’s climate science group, Professor Stephan Lewandowsky, said that misinformation about climate change was rife in Australia and they were hosting Professor Oreskes at UWA to help counter it.

“Our group is determined to help get the actual scientific knowledge out there, so Australians can start debating how to reduce their carbon emissions instead of spending their time debating whether or not to tackle climate change,” he said.

The group includes academics from the Schools of Earth and Environment, Plant Biology, Population Health, Psychology, Humanities (Philosophy), Mathematics and Statistics, and the Oceans Institute, the Science Communication Program, and the Faculty of Law.

Professor Oreske’s lecture is at 6pm on Monday November 22 in the Social Science Lecture Theatre. Her book, *Merchant of Doubt*, will be on sale before and after the lecture. It is a free lecture with no RSVP required. She is also participating in a hypothetical on climate change policy with UWA academics that afternoon from 2.30 to 5pm at the UWA Boatshed.

Contact Professor Lewandowsky at lewan@psy.uwa.edu.au

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**Cell research wins award**

A PhD student working on the cells that transmit malaria has won a WA Student Excellence Award.

Stephan Karl was presented with the 2010 Western Australian AusBiotech-Glaxo Smith Kline Student Excellence Award by WA’s Chief Scientist, Professor Lyn Beazley, at Parliament House.

His supervisor, Professor Tim St Pierre, said Stephan had shown immense dedication to his research. “The hard work he has put into his project is paying off,” he said.

Stephan is competing in the national finals in Melbourne this week.
“Imagine waking up every morning knowing you are about to die... and then you get a second chance.”

This was PhD student Balarka Banerjee’s opening statement in his Three Minute Thesis – the presentation that won him the Trans-Tasman Challenge last month. Balarka explained the medical complexities of lung transplants within three minutes to beat 33 finalists from universities across Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. He held the judges’ attention as he explained his work to combat chronic rejection.

“More than 3,000 people receive lung transplants every year and although researchers have successfully minimised acute rejection-related mortality, there is still no cure for chronic rejection,” Balarka said.

“It causes gradual destruction of the airways leading to lung failure and 80 per cent of post-transplant deaths. This project investigates the causes and mechanisms behind chronic rejection.”

The Three Minute Thesis competition is open to Masters and Doctoral students and is judged on three criteria: communication style, comprehension (did the audience understand it?), and engagement (did they want to know more?).

Dr Krys Haq, from the Graduate Research and Scholarships Office, who helped to run the local rounds, said it was the first time UWA had entered the competition. “The quality of the presentations was fantastic,” she said. “Summarising several years of complex research into a three-minute presentation is an incredibly difficult task and the students did a wonderful job.”

Balarka called on his schoolboy public speaking and debating experience to win the $5,000 prize. He is doing his PhD in the School of Paediatrics and Child Health, supervised by Dr Anthony Kicic. The prize money will go towards travel to the US to attend the 2011 meeting of the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation in San Diego.

Balarka had the support of a great team across the campus. Dean of the Graduate Research School Professor Alan Dench funded the local Three Minute Thesis competition. And Professor Jane Davidson from the School of Music used her performance skills to help him refine his delivery. Her students provided feedback as he honed his presentation for the finals.

Dr Haq and her colleagues at the Graduate Research and Scholarships Office and Dr Kicic also encouraged and assisted him.

UWA will host the finals of the competition next year.
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*UWA NEWS 1 November 2010*

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**RESEARCH GRANTS**

Grants Awarded Between 4/10/2010 and 15/10/2010

**ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA EX DISIR: ASSA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE LINKAGES**


**CATTLE INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT (WA)**

Professor Martin Barbetti, Adjunct Professor Michael Ewing, Dr Gavin Flematti, CRC for Plant-Based Management of Dryland Salinity, School of Plant Biology, WA Department of Agriculture and Food: “Cause, epidemiology and management of kikuyu grass poisoning in Western Australia” — $50,000 (2011)

**STATE HEALTH RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SHRAC)**

James Rippey, Dr Adrian Goodie, Dr Gregory Sweetman, Winthrop Professor Antonio Celarosa, School of Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care, Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, Fremantle Hospital: “Using Telehealth to Supervise, Teach, Guide and Interpret Clinician-Performed Ultrasound from a Distance” — $121,904 (2010)

**TIWEST PTY LTD**

Assistant Professor Michael Moody, School of Plant Biology: “Assessment of the Putative New and Threatened Subspecies Creatibia Thekenmannia Subspecies Coojarlo its Taxonomic Status Phylogeography and Interpopulation Diversity” — $19,500 (2010-12)

**WA FISHING INDUSTRY COUNCIL**

Neil Macquille, Dr Euan Harvey, School of Plant Biology, OceanWatch Australia Ltd: “Measuring Dropout Rates from Commercial Dernerial Gillnets in Western Australia” — $35,000 (2010)

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**NOTICES**

**AGM**

The UWA Academic Staff Association AGM is to be held on Thursday 11 November 12.30pm in the Seminar/Tearoom, 1st Floor, ANHE. All members welcome. Contact: Joanna on 6488 3836.

**PARTNERSHIPS IN PRACTICE**

PHCRSED Annual Research Conference November 12, 2010 University Club of WA

This is a great event for the Primary Health Care Research community, with an excellent range of keynote speakers, presenters and topics. For more information, visit www.phcredwa.org.au or call Lyn Brun, State PHCRSED coordinator, on 9966 0200

**CLASSIFIEDS**

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Honda “Today” scooter, $990. 50cc engine, red color, electric start, automatic transmission, gloves, helmet and protective cover. 7,300 km, very good condition. Registration 10/2010. Call Krish at 6488 7314 or email krish@cyllene.uwa.edu.au

**BED**

King size, $130. Wooden, antique style and mattress good condition. Call Krish at 6488 7314 or email krish@cyllene.uwa.edu.au

**HOUSE/SITTING**

Canadian academic couple visiting UWA would like to arrange to house-sit for two months in early 2011. The dates are flexible, but February and March are preferred. We are non-smokers visiting without pets, but have cared for our own home, pets, garden, etc, for many years. Email: venus@phyics.mcmaster.ca

**TO LET**

France, South West Holiday accommodation. Self-contained apartment in one of the most beautiful Medieval Villages of the Perigord Noir, BELVES. For more details see website: http://belves.info/ or contact Susana Howard Ext 8669. H: 9246 5042. Email: smelodeh@gmail.com

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Dr Shane Langsford or Jeanette McQueen

**UWA NEWS**

**classified**
Academic careers in short supply

Is a career in teaching and research an attractive pathway for young people these days?

As one of these young people, let me give you my thoughts. About six months ago, I was in the US for one of the major IEEE conferences that happens once every year. As you do when you’re bored one afternoon while visiting a country where the cultural theme includes the mantra that bigger is better, you grab the remote and check out the ridiculous number of TV channels and programs on offer.

I stumbled upon a documentary discussing educational policy, and was confronted with an elderly professor who was candidly expressing his disappointment in the state of the education system and the emergence of the “Gordon Geckos” of the world in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis. He went on to ask how we could encourage more young people to take up careers in science, arts and education, as opposed to aiming for high-powered high-paying jobs on Wall Street.

That prompted me to think back to my final year of university, when my peers and I were all very excited at the prospect of finally graduating, but at the same time were pondering over what we would actually do next. As it turns out, most of these people went on to careers in banking and finance while others went on to careers in the resources sector, lured, in part, by salary.

I was one of the few who chose to continue studying and undertake a PhD. I did this because I had a strong interest in science and because I wanted to be engaged in research. I am now privileged to be on an ARC fellowship. I consider myself lucky to actually enjoy and be able to do the work that I do. I am also really hopeful that I can make a long-term career out of this pathway.

However the situation with most postdocs is that contracts are usually offered for short and fixed terms, and the projects they work on are usually tied to external funding and not fully aligned with their strengths and interests. Thus their circumstances severely hinder their capacity to make substantial contributions or even competitively build up their track records. Very few of these people actually move forward to permanent positions, and long-term careers within a university or research institution.

Most of them end up changing directions completely and pursuing unrelated professions. But they are then relatively disadvantaged by being associated with the labels of over-qualified, under-experienced, and slightly older.

The main reason for this situation is simply a lack of opportunities.

So at a time when Australia is apparently crying out for the skills of scientists, mathematicians, researchers, it seems almost anticlimactic that once they are trained, willing, and eager to contribute, the system is hard-pressed to offer them any genuine long-term opportunities.

There is also the question of the attractiveness of the few opportunities that are actually available, especially when considered in the context of the full spectrum of career paths that are available in the market. It is no secret that salaries for teaching and research positions are average, at least compared to the salaries in the currently booming sectors, which are noticeably high and deservedly so.

The bottom line appears to be that the opportunities are simply not there for any would-be takers. Perhaps what is really needed is a system-wide push, through coordinated policy and investment, to create some much-needed opportunities for the next generation of teachers and researchers.

As things are, a career in teaching and research is somewhat risky and stressful. Would you recommend a career in teaching and research to someone you know?