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## First HERDSA Fellowships Awarded

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2003 in Christchurch, New Zealand was a significant day in the life of the Society. Not only did it mark the opening of another annual conference, but it also saw the awards of the first HERDSA fellowships.

At the end of his address to open the conference, Mr Steve Maharey, the New Zealand Minister of Education, presented the awards to ten academics from Australia and New Zealand who had piloted the scheme.

Twenty people had volunteered for the pilot scheme and agreed to develop portfolios for the award. Ten were faculty academics, nine were staff developers and one came from learning support. Fifteen institutions were represented. Twelve completed portfolios while two indicated that they would not be ready in time for the conference opening night.

The ten pioneer fellows were:

- Maureen Bell, Senior Lecturer

in the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources, at the University of Wollongong;

- Geoffrey Cooper, Associate Professor and Senior Learning and Research Skills Advisor, at the University of Western Australia;
- John Ferrier, Director of the Mount Bullar Campus, at Latrobe University;
- Jane Fowler, Lecturer in the School of Human Services, at Griffith University;
- Robert Kennelly, Lecturer in the Faculty of Management, at the University of Canberra;
- Kodi Naidoo, Training Consultant in the Training and Development Unit at Massey University;
- John Ozolins, Head of the School of Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University, Victoria;



First HERDSA Fellows

Back Row: Robert Kennelly, John Ferrier, John Dearn (President), Kodi Naidoo, Erica Sainsbury.  
Front Row: Jane Fowler, Kaya Prpic, Angela Brew (Former President), Christina Poyatas Matas, Maureen Bell

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Contributions for the next issue must reach the editor by Monday 10 November 2003. They should be sent to Roger Landbeck at the above address.

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# From the Editor

Since the last edition of the News the long awaited Australian Federal Government Review of Higher Education has appeared with some interesting proposals to encourage teaching. Full details of the reforms can be found at [www.backingaustrali.asfuture.gov.au](http://www.backingaustrali.asfuture.gov.au)

One of the proposals is to establish a National Institute of Learning and Teaching. A few details about the Institute are contained in this edition. One of the well-attended sessions at the Christchurch conference was a brainstorming session to get feedback on the terms of reference for the Institute. It was gratifying that HERDSA had been included in the process of consultation. Members are encouraged to keep up to date with the developments through the Institute's web site. Comments and queries are welcome.

The Minister of Education in New Zealand in his speech to open the Christchurch conference indicated that the New Zealand governments was also thinking of establishing a similar institute.

Congratulations to the ten HERDSA members, who became HERDSA Fellows at the Christchurch conference. It seems that the experience of preparing the portfolio has been well worthwhile. We hope that they will be the first of many in the coming years and that the Scheme of Professional Development will make a significant contribution to enhancing teaching and learning in higher education.

Welcome to new members of HERDSA who joined as a result of attending the recent conference. I hope that you can keep up to-date with the Society through the News and the email list and that you find your membership to be professionally rewarding. Please consider contributing articles about your work.

The next issue of the News will focus on indigenous issues in higher education in Australia and New Zealand. It did not prove possible to get the articles together for the current edition as promised so it has been deferred until December 2003.

**Roger Landbeck**

## Congratulations

Congratulations to John Dearn, The new president of HERDSA on his recent appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic at the University of Canberra.

## First HERDSA Fellowships Awarded cont ...

*from page 1*

- Christina Poyatas Matas, Lecturer in the School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University;
- Kaya Prpic, Educational Developer in the Faculty of Information Technology, at Monash University; and
- Erica Sainsbury, Lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy in the University of Sydney.

Five fellows have written brief accounts of their experiences in preparing their portfolios and these can be found on pages 5-7.

The HERDSA Fellowship Professional Recognition and

Development Scheme is designed to recognise higher education teaching which satisfies a set of quality standards related to a set of criteria. It then builds on that recognition through advanced professional development activities designed to ensure that the standards are maintained and built upon. Teaching recognised under the Scheme results in the award of a HERDSA fellowship (FHERDSA).

Full details of the Recognition and Development Process and the method of monitoring the quality of the Scheme can be found on the website [www.herdsa.org.au](http://www.herdsa.org.au). Click on "Fellowships" on the home page.

# Welcome to New Members of HERDSA

If you attended the Christchurch conference and were not a member of HERDSA then you automatically became one for a year through your registration fee. So welcome to the Society. Here are some details about membership.

During the year you will receive through the mail three copies of HERDSA News and three (four in 2004) of the Societies' scholarly, international journal, Higher Education Research and Development (HERD).

You are also subscribed to the

HERDSA email list, which circulates news to subscribers each Wednesday. To find out more about the list go to <http://mailman.anu.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/herdsa>. The list is moderated so that all messages are checked by Roger Landbeck, the list moderator, before posting to subscribers. To post a message send it to [herdsa@mailman.anu.edu.au](mailto:herdsa@mailman.anu.edu.au)

The Society has a website [www.herdsa.org.au](http://www.herdsa.org.au) which contains details about the Society, its publications, sections on teaching and research and useful links to other sites related to higher education. There

is a members' section accessed by a password, which is your HERDSA membership number. There is also a new section for HERDSA fellows.

The HERDSA office is located in Sydney and managed by Jennifer Ungaro. The address is PO BOX 27, Milperra, NSW 2214. Phone: +61 2 9771 3911. Fax : +61 2 9771 4299 while the email address is [office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au). Please direct all enquiries about membership and orders for publications to the office. Articles for the journal HERD should also be submitted through the office.

## Message from the New President - John Dearn

First, let me say what an honour it is to be elected President of HERDSA. HERDSA has a long and proud tradition in Australasian higher education. Having a scholarly society dedicated to improving teaching and learning in the tertiary education sector has never been more important and I greatly look forward to contributing to enhancing the role and effectiveness of HERDSA.

Let me begin by saying a few words about myself. My background is in science and I moved to Australia from the UK to take up a Research Fellowship at the Australian National University in 1972. I was then appointed to a teaching position at the ANU before moving to the Genetics Department at Melbourne University in 1978. Over this time my interest in teaching continued to grow and in 1984 I moved to what was then the Canberra College of Advanced Education to teach the first year biology program. The challenge of teaching all areas of biology fascinated me and resulted in my appointment as one of three writers of the national year 11/12 biology textbook *Biology: The Common Threads* and to leading the Australian Biology Olympiad

Team in 1994 and 1995.

My interest in science teaching was consolidated in 1994 when I was awarded the first National Teaching Fellowship and spent four months at Harvard University as a Visiting Scholar investigating innovative approaches to science education. During this time I established the Science Resource Centre, a learning centre for first year science students at what was then the University of Canberra, and worked with the Federal Government on the Modes of Delivery in Higher Education review and with the Higher Education Council on the national Review of Distance Education.

In 1997 I was awarded the first Australian Award for University Teaching in the category science teaching and at the beginning of 1998 accepted the position of Acting Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (CELTS) at the University of Canberra. In 1997 I was seconded to the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) then appointed to its successor, the Committee

for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD), from 1998-1999.

Moving from a classroom teacher responsible for teaching classes of over 400 students to the world of academic staff development was a fascinating experience. The new challenges proved irresistible and I was appointed Director of CELTS in 1999. I have served on the National Executive of HERDSA since 1998 and in 2002 was appointed an auditor for the Australian Universities Quality Agency.

After a career spanning research, teaching and academic development I have very recently made another major change with my appointment as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Canberra which is providing a very different perspective on higher education! My work as a researcher, teacher, academic staff developer and now academic manager has provided me with the knowledge and experience to enable me to undertake the role of HERDSA President.

As President of HERDSA I will be supported by a new and very strong

Executive team elected at the AGM in Christchurch who you will be hearing about in HERDSA News. We are all dedicated to enhancing the quality of student learning and ensuring that HERDSA continues to play a vital role in supporting staff involved in teaching and learning in tertiary institutions in Australia and New Zealand.

HERDSA has always represented a broad range of interests in higher education including student learning support, discipline-based teaching, research into student learning and teaching, and higher education research and policy analysis. While this diversity of interest has sometimes been seen as problematical for HERDSA I see it as something very positive since it offers the exciting possibility of bringing together teaching and research in higher education and developing a strong research-based approach to classroom practice.

HERDSA is widely regarded as one of the leading teaching and learning organisations in the world and I hope that in coming years its reputation will continue to increase. Through

its newsletter, publications, Web site, journal and conferences HERDSA will continue to enhance teaching and learning in Australasian tertiary institutions and promote a scholarly approach to higher education. The new HERDSA Fellowship scheme, recently launched in New Zealand, recognises outstanding achievements in higher education teaching and will play an important role in promoting and developing professional teaching standards within the Australasian higher education community.

As well as supporting the needs of its members HERDSA has a vital role to play in representing the higher education community at the national political level in Australia and New Zealand. I am sure every incoming HERDSA President has said something along the lines of the tumultuous times facing higher education but it is hard to imagine a time of greater change we are now facing. The growing internationalisation of higher education the impact of technology, the changing relationship between formal study and work, the increased demands for accountability and

efficiency and the disaggregation of academic work are just a few of the factors that will shape higher education over coming years.

It is vital that HERDSA continues to play a central role in advocating the importance of higher education and engages with debates at the national level and that HERDSA provides a forum for discussion of issues and is seen as an authoritative and influential voice at the national level. The new Executive is committed to working on behalf of its members for the ideals represented by HERDSA. Please let us know your ideas about what you would like to see HERDSA doing and the direction you would like to see it take.

I would like to end by thanking the outgoing Executive members, and in particular the outgoing President, Associate Professor Angela Brew, for all their dedication and hard work on behalf of HERDSA over the last few years. Under Angela's leadership HERDSA has come through a difficult period and can now look forward to a very positive and exciting future.

## New Members of the HERDSA Executive

The following were elected to the HERDSA Executive for the period 2003 to 2005:

**Maureen Bell** is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Development with the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR) at the University of Wollongong.

**Shelda Debowski** has recently been appointed as Director of Organisational and Staff Development Services at the University of Western Australia.

**Beatrice Hamilton** is a Senior lecturer in Biology with the Ballarat campus of the Australian Catholic University. She was previously a member of the

Executive from 1995-1999.

**Sharon Parry** is Director of Teaching and Learning at Southern Cross University.

**Kaya Prpic** is an Educational Developer and Facilitator for the FLITE Centre within the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University.

**Cristina Poyatas Matas** is a Lecturer in Spanish Studies at Griffith University.

**Kathryn Sutherland** is a Lecturer in the University Teaching Development Centre at Victoria University of Wellington.

**Alison Viskovic** is Senior Lecturer

at the Massey University College of Education. She was an Executive member from 1991-5 and 1997-8.

The on-going members of the committee are:

**Pip Bruce Fergusson** is Research Co-ordinator at Te Wananga o Aotearoa, a Maori tertiary institution.

**Simon Barrie** is an academic developer at the Institute of Teaching and Learning at the University of Sydney.

**Heather Sparrow** is Quality Improvement Manager, Teaching and Learning at Curtin University.

# Reflections on Preparing for a HERDSA Fellowship

I wanted readers to get a much clearer idea of what is involved in preparing for a HERDSA fellowship than can be gained from reading a brochure so I asked the Fellows to write personal accounts of their experiences. Here are five very different views of the event, the remaining five experiences will appear in the next issue of HERDSA News.

*Editor*

## Robert Kennelly

### *What did I have to do?*

The scheme required the preparation of a portfolio of my teaching. The process began on a flight from Sydney to Hong Kong in February when I started to think about my teaching ... like a stocktake of my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher ... with the guidance of the scheme's 7 criteria:

1. Teaching demonstrates a concern for student learning;
2. Assessment encourages and supports learning;
3. Needs of diverse students recognised and supported;
4. Contributions made at an institutional wide level;
5. Planned curricula include innovations to enhance student learning;
6. Critical reflection and evaluation informs teaching practice; and
7. Disciplinary and pedagogical research used to enhance student learning.

With the assistance of two mentors from the pilot scheme and an independent mentor from CELTS at Canberra University I analysed and reflected on my teaching over the past three or four years.

For instance, one of my reflections in relation to criteria 5, "innovations to enhance student learning", concerned research I am doing on the impact of specific teaching strategies on my students' learning.

I have been using the latest SPQ (Student Process Questionnaire) Biggs, 2001 to gauge students' deep

orientation to learning at the start and the end of the semester of one of my units.

The results have been disappointing in as much as the research cohort has showed a small but significant drift away from a deep orientation to learning.

Reflecting on these results in discussions with my Canberra mentor I started to wonder about the perceptions my students had of my teaching. To what extent could there be a gap between my espoused theory of teaching and my theory in use. I concluded that there was scope for increasing my understanding of my students learning experiences. In particular I would pay more attention to my students' experiences of management, giving them greater opportunity to integrate these experiences with the management theories they needed to understand and apply.

This is a brief example of one of the many reflections and learnings stimulated by this process.

Somewhere through this process of responding to the criteria I started to piece together a "teaching philosophy" (also a requirement of the portfolio). The philosophy is a 500-word document detailing my beliefs, values and underpinning guidelines for teaching. My philosophy includes the following paragraph:

An abiding interest in recognising, encouraging and nurturing a deep orientation to learning and a desire to help students develop skills needed to be successful at life long learning underpins my teaching practice. These values motivate me to investigate the influence of teaching on student learning and to reflect and apply what I learn about learning.

Finally my portfolio included a reflection about what I had learnt from going through this process. I was able to specify a number of specific teaching innovations including the introduction of peer feedback on my lectures and workshops.

### *Was it worth it?*

Yes; it was like doing a very detailed stocktake of my learning about my teaching and its impact on my students' learning.

It takes time; it took 3 drafts, several long discussions with mentors, much soul searching and reflection with teaching colleagues, over about a 4-month period. I do not believe I could have done it in a few weeks. I needed time to cogitate, do more teaching and then reflect some more. It was an iterative process with some immediate benefits for my teaching.

This part of the process concluded with a face-to-face meeting with my 2 assessors. This is both gruelling and rewarding. Gruelling in the sense that it involved a detailed and rigorous discussion about the rationale behind my approaches to student learning. Rewarding because it confirmed the importance of continuous enquiry and it gave me some specific points for further development.

It was important for me to have a mentor who made time, for discussions, to read drafts and think of the questions that promoted an on-going reflection about successes and failures in teaching.

It is not that having received the HERDSA fellowship I think I am an excellent teacher.

Rather, it is a point in the cycle of teacher development where one's struggle to always provide a better learning environment for one's students, is recognised by one's peers.

Thanks to Angela Brew for the leadership, perseverance, and collegiateness which greatly assisted in launching this scheme.

For further information on the HERDSA scheme for the recognition of quality teaching please go to the website, ask the HERDSA office for a brochure or send me an email.

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## Jane Fowler

In sitting and reflecting on what might be best to share in this "short piece" about my experience of participating in the HERDSA fellowship scheme, I find myself in somewhat of a quandary. I could share my delight about the introduction of a scheme that aims to develop and improve the quality of higher education teaching and learning. Or I could talk about my good fortune at being given the opportunity to provide some input at the design and implementation phases of such a beneficial scheme. Alternatively, I could share my hopes that the scheme might provide part of a methodology by which universities recognise and reward quality teaching. Or I could focus on how I am looking forward to the opportunities for further professional development that involvement in the scheme will provide.

But what I will share, as perhaps my most valued part of the whole experience, was the opportunity to reflect on my teaching with "like-minded" academic colleagues. These colleagues shared the importance and value I place on adopting and adapting effective teaching, learning, and assessment processes to enhance the quality of the educational experience of our students. I was fortunate to be paired with a peer mentor who provided support throughout the process of putting together my teaching portfolio – a requirement of the scheme. Together we were able to reflect on and challenge each other's knowledge and experience. The fact that my peer mentor came from a different discipline and educational institution made the experience all the more fruitful. I was then provided the opportunity for deeper reflection on my teaching and learning processes with two "assessors" who provided feedback on my portfolio. Most appreciated was the offer to engage in further reflection and discussion with these newfound colleagues in the future.

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## John Ozolins

When I first looked at the documentation for the Fellowship, I thought that there was a huge amount of paper work to be done, and since these were the inaugural fellowships, was not at all sure of the level of

expectation to achieve the award of a Fellowship. Moreover, there was also the thought that I was putting myself up for assessment by my peers in Higher Education. The criteria were not that clear that I could feel absolutely confident – what if I did not interpret them correctly? The time pressure also created difficulties. I had been involved in the discussions leading up to the setting up of the Scheme, so felt at least that I had some idea of what to expect, but the lack of supporting documentation meant that I had to make judgements about how to go about completing the portfolio without being sure that I was doing it the right way. The interview aspect of the Scheme also seemed daunting at first.

After reading through the seven criteria and reflecting on my own teaching practice, I felt that I had sufficient evidence to put forward in support of my application. I was heartened a little by the appointment of a mentor, who would provide wise counsel about my portfolio. It did prove to be wise counsel, but unfortunately, too late for me to make use of it. I had to send my portfolio in before I received back comments from my mentor. The criteria themselves had to be addressed in terms of several questions, firstly, an account of what it is that I did in that area, secondly, what the outcomes were, what I had learnt by this and how I might do it differently in the future. The first two questions seemed to be easy enough, but it was the last two that were the most difficult. Each criterion was accompanied by some suggestions on how a response might be developed and this was helpful, since it indicated that there was a very wide range of ways in which a response could be given. Sometimes it also led to questioning whether the response given was adequate enough, given the range of possibilities. Fortunately, the interview with the assessors proved to be very helpful in filling in the missing details of the portfolio.

In preparing the HERDSA Fellowship portfolio, I have had the opportunity to reflect on my teaching practice, to assess what I have done in the past and what opportunities for further development there are. It has helped clarify for me the areas which I would like to pursue further professional development in – namely developing distance, on-line and electronic mode delivery learning, as well as ways in which different modes of teaching can be used to

enhance face to face student learning. It has also given me the opportunity to interact with other academics who have strong interests in the development of teaching. I hope that I will be able to use what I learn to enhance both my teaching and that of my colleagues.

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## Erica Sainsbury

An email from president Angela Brew on March 7, 2003 was the catalyst for my participation in the pilot HERDSA Fellowship Recognition and Development Scheme, and four months later, almost to the day, I was honoured to become one of the first ten Fellows. Looking back on the process, I would not say that the award has changed me as such, but I am absolutely certain that I have learned a great deal through my involvement in the scheme.

The scheme called for the compilation of a portfolio, something I have now completed annually for the past four years. Interestingly, at a session during the 2003 HERDSA conference, I participated in an animated discussion of the various conceptions of "portfolio" held by different people – a discussion that raised some interesting issues. For me, no two portfolios have been identical; in each case the purpose has been to showcase my teaching (and my students' learning), but the criteria for evaluation have been significantly different. In itself, this aspect has given me some useful insights into the different ways in which evidence can be used to demonstrate quality learning.

One of the more useful parts of the process was the opportunity to critique my teaching and learning philosophy. In particular, this portfolio structure facilitated an evaluation of the extent to which my philosophy is aligned with my practice, and identification of areas where improvements are needed. It is relatively easy to be happy with a well-crafted and articulated teaching philosophy, while allowing complacency to result in a gradual drift away from it in practice.

The HERDSA portfolio called primarily for reflection, structured around seven criteria for quality teaching, which are congruent with the Society's statements about



good practice. The strength of these criteria is manifest in the focus on student learning, and the recognition of teaching as scholarly practice. Over the years, I have found the opportunity to engage in sustained reflection to be incredibly valuable, but have probably not made it as much of a priority as I might. A process such as portfolio preparation is ideal as a vehicle for recording and charting the development in my thinking and doing, and the deadline associated with the application process was remarkably effective in focussing my attention! Knowing that the continuation of this Fellowship is contingent on maintenance of ongoing professional development, reflection and evidence-gathering will undoubtedly be a stimulus to be more diligent in the future.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the process was the opportunity to interact with peers from a range of different disciplines and teaching contexts. I particularly liked the fact that the pilot participants were able to work with a co-mentor (though in the fully-fledged scheme, mentors will already hold Fellowships), and to discuss their experiences with two assessors in a collegial manner. I think I have learned more about teaching over the years through peer activities than from any other source (apart from my students of course – they have taught me considerably more than I have taught them!). The whole focus has been on development as well as on demonstration of quality, and it is this feature which is perhaps the greatest strength of the scheme. Becoming a HERDSA Fellow is not the end of a journey – it is simply one more step along the way.

*Erica is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Sydney. She is also the First Year Coordinator for the Bachelor of Pharmacy degree.*

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### Juliana Kaya Prpic

*If you start from a thought, that's the worst thing. Starting from a picture is better. Starting from a vague but exciting feeling is best of the lot. It'll get hold of you physically, it will dance you around.*

-Les Murray

Developing this teaching portfolio has indeed been a journey - a journey very much like the building of my garden seat (see above). I started to build this seat four years ago when I returned from a three-month visit to Thailand to a garden full of weeds! Armed with a garden fork I set about getting my garden back in order. It was one of those warm autumn days that Melbourne is famous for but by mid afternoon I was HOT. I sat for a moment of repose under the silver birch tree when I suddenly thought how wonderful it would be to build a garden seat. Not only would it provide a place for contemplation, it would also solve the problem of dealing with the pile of broken concrete acquired from a disused path.

The first step was to construct the actual seat, which I did, slowly. Using the broken concrete, I mortared layer upon layer, until I was satisfied with the shape. Between layers I collected ceramic tiles, old plates, interesting stones and other bits and pieces. I didn't really have a firm image of what the finished seat would look like. I just trusted the feeling. I spent hours sorting bits of tile, first arranging them this way, then that way.

An interesting part of the process



was the reaction from our friends and neighbours. Some would bring boxes of broken china to add to the growing ceramic stockpile, others would advise on colour schemes, while others still would exclaim, "Are you STILL going with that seat? When are you going to finish?" My seat is still in a state of becoming. I am surprised and delighted at what has finally emerged. And I love it. I loved building it. I loved thinking about it. I love to lie on it and watch the clouds float by as I contemplate the meaning of life and learning.

So too, with the building of this portfolio, and indeed, my role as educator, it too is in a state of becoming (and I hope it stays that way!). I have enjoyed immensely

the process of sorting through my various experiences and juxtaposing them in various combinations, where at first glance the seemingly mundane becomes crystallised into realisation of the most profound insight. I feel that I have arrived at that place where I can "love what I do, and do what I love"

In developing this portfolio I have discovered that I have an array of different roles that I can draw on in a host of situations - with academics in a range of disciplines and countries, tutors, and students. I have also become clearer about my interest in evaluation. I have a deeper appreciation of the need to validate and demonstrate outcomes.

In the coming year I am particularly interested to explore

- ways of obtaining meaningful data from students, particularly in a multicultural setting. For example, how do I know what a student means when they say "I learned about learning styles" in an evaluation questionnaire?
- different ways of allowing the learner to evaluate their own learning the question of what is actually being evaluated my performance, the student's learning or the learning environment
- evaluation questions that are meaningful in different cultural contexts measures of success for different stakeholders

Finally, through this process, I have come to value my diverse interest in many disciplines. As I get older I am able to steer my way through diverse needs, opinions and values and hold the tension of "both/and" in an ever changing dynamic.

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**Readers who wish to know more about the Fellowship Scheme are encouraged not only to visit the website but contact any of the five Fellows above with more specific questions.**

# Teaching Awards

## a. dressing the criteria

## b. airing your beliefs

By Peter O'Donoghue

Peter O'Donoghue was joint winner with Lynne Hunt, of the Prime Minister's award for University Teaching in December 2002. In the last issue of HERDSA News Lynne wrote about her approach to teaching.

Peter now contributes his personal look at teaching, which fits very nicely with the reflections of the five HERDSA fellows on addressing criteria about teaching, which appear in this issue.

*When I was nominated for an Australian University Teaching Award in 2002, I was asked to prepare a submission addressing ten selection criteria. Thus began a highly introspective and reflective journey into what, for me, constituted best teaching and learning (T&L) practice. Obviously, my circumstances are quite personal and not necessarily applicable to others due to the unique nature of each T&L encounter. I would like to share my experiences with colleagues by exploring the selection criteria. All too often, we do something intuitively which works well but it can be difficult to analyse and document, particularly in educational jargon. Nonetheless, such analyses are prerequisite to self-discovery through reflection and feedback, to validation of T&L objectives and outcomes, and also to sharing best practices.*

I began academic life as a trainee teacher over 30 years ago but followed the allure of a research career for 20 years. I worked as a postdoctoral fellow in Germany and then as a scientist in a government laboratory in Adelaide. I joined The University of Queensland in 1994 and rediscovered my lust and penchant for teaching. Despite my enthusiasm, I realised there was much to learn to become more effective and realise better

student outcomes. I used my scientific training to pursue knowledge, skills and experience in education through teaching grants, postgraduate projects, Faculty service and interaction with students and colleagues.

Essentially, I am a scientist employed to teach and research infectious diseases. My background allows me to provide vocational context within my teaching programs by invoking relevant case studies and topical examples. Microbiology has become fundamental to many science programs due to the deconstruction of conventional disciplines through the biotechnology revolution. More than ever before, students are required to understand biochemical and genetic processes which underpin life sciences, biomedical research and industrial applications. I consider it essential that students learn about the microbes themselves to understand how they interact with their hosts and cause disease as well as to appreciate the logic behind diagnosis, treatment and control.

Within universities, there has been a gradual transition towards problem-based learning, so integrative rather than platform curriculum models must be implemented. My roles in this transformation have essentially been those of "planner" and "presenter". I believe teaching must be planned to meet each particular learning circumstance and content must be presented in context. Successive cohorts of students appreciated my T&L efforts and circumstances led to my selection for a university teaching award culminating in my nomination for a national award.

The selection committee required nominees to provide documentation addressing ten criteria. My approach was to identify "forests" then "trees", that is, to provide a position statement and then give relevant exemplars

highlighting scope, quality and impact.

### Criterion 1: Interest and enthusiasm for teaching and promoting student learning

For every task, it is important to define outcomes as well as addressing approaches. I began by defining the scope and variety of my teaching and then outlined strategies to involve students as active learners. I am a utilitarian teacher, providing foundational and vocational education at all university levels. My workload includes over 250 hours of contact with some 1,500 students in 13 courses in four Faculties (medicine, dentistry, science and veterinary science). Classes range in size from 250-300 first year students, 100-160 second year students, 30-80 third year students, 10 graduate medical students and individual postgraduate students.

Each student group has different requirements so I tailor my teaching to facilitate appropriate learning outcomes. I use multiple modes of delivery: including lectures, seminars, readings, videos, tutorials, practicals, peer-assisted study sessions, problem-based and self-directed learning experiences. Lectures are integrated with practicals to link theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Problem-based learning is used to stimulate social interaction, activate knowledge, challenge concepts, construct meaning and encourage reflection. I make educational processes transparent so students become engaged and understand course imperatives.

Students learn best when they develop a rapport with course material. I am fortunate because microbes help sell themselves. They come from a hidden world and students appreciate



their unique intrinsic beauty. I reinforce this by using many props, including slides, photos, charts, videos, museum specimens, models and live material. Students have a morbid fascination for infectious diseases, especially those characterised by disfiguring lesions. Students appreciate honest and professional portrayals of disease states and we work together to overcome negative attitudes. Students diagnose infections during practicals to provide vocational context, introduce clinical reasoning and demonstrate links to other fields of biology. Students become most excited when they work in clinical context and make decisions affecting outcome.

Despite careful planning, courses can be destroyed by poor presentation. Students are quick to judge academics on the basis of their performance. Dissatisfaction detracts from desirable learning outcomes so teachers must enthuse and motivate students. With the information technology (IT) available today, students are surrounded by slick presentations of all things commercial. How can we think they expect anything less in the classroom? I model effusive, earnest, inquisitive behaviour directed towards course objectives. Classes are exciting and fun to attend. Enthusiasm is infectious and stimulates students to become involved but it must be genuine and sincere. A little charisma goes a long way!

### **Criterion 2: Ability to arouse curiosity, stimulate independent learning and develop critical thought**

I challenge students to challenge science. Current knowledge is the compilation of theories, many of which have yet to be tested for reproducibility. We teach students hypothetico-deductive logic which underpins scientific methodology but often do so superficially or implicitly. I endeavour to be explicit and constantly stress that knowledge is not cast in concrete but rather prevailing theory based on observation and experimentation. I humanise science by using historical anecdotes of how theories were developed and how we often learnt from disasters. Challenge students to be critical but to go beyond

negative criticism and develop alternative explanations. They must add to scientific knowledge, not detract from it.

Students vary greatly in their independence depending on their stage of learning and confidence. I use small-group exercises (such as puzzles, games, quizzes, brain-teasers) to foster communication, challenge ideas, stimulate curiosity and build confidence. Some groups quickly develop camaraderie whereas others require considerable schooling to become active participants. Groups must activate prior knowledge, reassess it in the light of additional information and then formulate relevant learning objectives. These objectives form the basis for independent study and engender ownership. There is no ideal route or time to independence so teachers must be versatile and allow each group their own path and pace.

Postgraduate students are generally well motivated but rather undisciplined with regard to work habits, especially desk work. Most are unused to the rigid structure underpinning scientific methodology and often attempt to take short-cuts or develop procrastination activities in lieu of writing. These problems are overcome by building their confidence and communication skills. I negotiate schedules with individual students and adopt a de-constructionist approach to work; breaking down large jobs into smaller "do-able" components with specified time-lines. It is important to provide constructive feedback on draft material as quickly as possible and to arrange group sessions with students to discuss their work and develop peer networks.

### **Criterion 3: Ability to organise course material and to present it cogently and imaginatively**

The golden rule for course organisation is "be prepared!". Appropriate resources must be developed in timely fashion and careful thought must be given to their scope, sequence and schedule to provide substance, structure and effect. Teachers must have a holistic overview of the curriculum and know how their material relates to other

sections. I meet with each teaching team to review performance, resolve problems, schedule tasks and develop best practice. I ensure course material is contemporary, relevant and aligned with course objectives. I ensure that all teaching activities are integrated and not separate entities with different agendas. I give at least triple exposure to information but from different perspectives, e.g. concepts given in lectures discussed in small group tutorials and applied in laboratory practicals. I use discrete weekly themes within courses to structure material, demonstrate logic and provide focus.

I employ theatric devices (comedic and dramatic) to engage and involve students and have a repertoire of rehearsed and choreographed anecdotes. I write my own course guides, as most biology textbooks dismiss parasites in less than one chapter while most parasitology texts have far too much detail. The guides are not substitutes for lectures and the material is presented differently. They are greatly appreciated by students and we use them for preview and review. I archive all course material on an intranet site where students may download material at their convenience.

Laboratory practical sessions focus on developing diagnostic capabilities in students. The practicals are task oriented where students can obtain and practice descriptive skills (qualitative data), analytical skills (quantitative data) and interpretive skills (hypothetico-deductive logic or clinical reasoning). I use live material in practicals and make extensive use of videomicroscopy to show organisms to students (a picture can be worth a thousand words). I try to include other senses as appropriate and get students to touch specimens feeling for lesions, smell fomites for aromas and even taste impacted waters. Learning is experiential!

Universities offer many other resources to students but they need guidance in utilising them. I devise tasks which involve performing CD-ROM database searches, viewing multi-media products, visiting websites, finding research papers, obtaining pamphlets, attending research seminars, visiting

laboratories and other departments. I take final year students off-campus to visit diagnostic laboratories, hospitals and government utilities to give them vocational exposure.

#### **Criterion 4: Command of subject matter, including incorporation of recent developments**

Science is constantly changing as new information and technologies emerge. Teachers must keep pace with recent developments to demonstrate they are serious contemporary scientists. In my discipline (parasitology), I practice as a diagnostician. I identify parasites associated with clinical disease and study their morphology, transmission, pathogenicity, treatment and control. I remain contemporary by mentoring a postgraduate school working on emergent diseases and applied problems. My research complements my teaching by providing vocational context, technical skills, problem-based and self-directed learning experiences. I do not consciously distinguish between teaching and research activities because I believe they form a logical continuum, where current effort is based on prior knowledge.

Students must be taught "cutting-edge" science to be contemporary and relevant. I collaborate with many individuals and organisations throughout the world and ensure my students obtain local, national and international perspectives. While Australia is fortunate in that many tropical diseases do not occur here, I teach human and animal health to a broader Australasian community where serious diseases are endemic. Their importance is best highlighted to students when I demonstrate personal knowledge and show evidence of recent research.

Parasitology continues to evolve as distribution patterns change due to travel and globalisation, organisms become resistant to drugs, new species emerge as serious pathogens and control programmes become compromised. Studies have moved from organismal to cellular to molecular biology and exciting advances are being made in diagnosis, genetics, drug and

vaccine development. Students have unprecedented access to current information via electronic and print media and we must conscientiously keep pace with recent developments to remain credible. Each semester, I produce relevant resource packages using multimedia software and desktop printing to give the required level of coverage in lecture guides, practical books, videos, checklists and bibliographies. I consult with industry and government and have been widely interviewed by the media on topical public health issues. I use these interviews in courses to personalise my science and show its relevance to society. Students get immense satisfaction and gratification when they work on problems depicted in the evening news or current affairs programs.

#### **Criterion 5: Innovation in design and delivery of content and course materials**

We live in an information rich society with sophisticated technological aids for communication and data access. Nonetheless, we must provide structure to all this substance. I am a keen advocate of constructive alignment models which link curriculum objectives with teaching and learning activities and assessment criteria. Students are not well versed in educational paradigms so it is important they realise teaching is not an *ad hoc* whimsical process but rather an orchestrated series of interactions designed to facilitate learning. I translate educational jargon to students and explain teaching and learning models so they understand and appreciate course structures, learning objectives, resource issues, assessment criteria and grading systems. Engagement empowers students, facilitates self-determination, engenders ownership, generates enthusiasm and stimulates communication.

The information technology and biotechnology revolutions have created greater complexities in science than ever before, but they have also provided valuable tools to assist in science teaching and learning. Sophisticated multimedia products are becoming available but many

have simply repackaged conventional material without addressing formative intellectual processes and desirable learning outcomes. At present, I advocate a cautious approach to the internet as it is largely a "medium for mediocrity", being swamped by sites with unedited superficial material. Students must become discerning and apply stringent filters when accessing information. As an alternative, I provide intranet sites for each course where relevant information is readily accessible. I have developed interactive random-access taxonomic keys, image-banks, data-bases, mini-quizzes and career guides to provide diagnostic tools, complement course material and facilitate revision.

#### **Criterion 6: Participation in effective and sympathetic guidance and advising of students**

Students often have idealistic notions about higher education and employment. They require honest impartial advice about programs and courses, careers in science and university life in general. As a middle manager within the University, I am involved in student advising at three levels: for providing courses and careers advice at Faculty level; student counselling at School level; and pastoral care at Departmental level.

I advise prospective students at Expositions and Open Days and give public addresses promoting Science. I interview enrolling students and help them select courses, a process becoming more complex as increasing numbers now seek double majors or dual degrees to improve employment opportunities. I counsel undergraduate students and interpret School rules relevant to examinations, withdrawal, remarking and misconduct. I have a high level of contact with students experiencing difficulties and pride myself that we have always negotiated acceptable solutions.

Supervision of postgraduate research students is a particularly rewarding experience. I vest intellectual property to my students and lead them to accept ownership and responsibility. We meet regularly to discuss progress, negotiate milestones, provide feedback and contemplate

direction. I consider it imperative that they do not work in isolation but participate in collaborative ventures and group discussions to obtain a better perspective for their work. This promotes better project management, resource utilisation, multi-skilling, interdisciplinary networking and personal development. I lead postgraduate students to accept responsibility for their actions as professional scientists and sponsor their attendance at national conferences as part of their apprenticeship and social induction.

### **Criterion 7: Provision of appropriate assessment, including worthwhile feedback**

Educationalists recognise that assessment, to a large extent, drives student learning. It is imperative that assessment tasks are well defined, relevant and practiced. I make extensive use of formative assessment to foster generic graduate attributes such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills and IT competency. I criterion-reference higher cognitive level performances in summative assessment and, where appropriate, align criteria with professional standards in consultation with industry and vocational authorities. I assess for understanding within Bloom's educational domains (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) using a "SACK" alignment model (Skills, Attitudes, Concepts, Knowledge). In particular, I use "relational" assessment tasks involving "compare/contrast" questions so students develop interdisciplinary perspectives.

Students require timely and constructive feedback in order to progress or remediate learning. I give students the opportunity to discuss material in small non-threatening PASS (Peer-Assisted Student Study) groups to clarify conceptions, share knowledge and participate. I provide feedback on all assessment tasks including final examinations. All too often, students are given a cumulative mark or grade without knowing what they got right or wrong. I annotate all exam scripts with constructive comments and make them available for scrutiny.

### **Criterion 8: Ability to assist students from equity groups to participate and achieve success**

As student adviser, course coordinator and administrator, I interact with some 1,500 students annually. They comprise different genders, ages, races, religions and originate from diverse local, national and international communities. I endeavour to afford them equitable treatment in keeping with a personal and corporate code of conduct. While embracing student equity, I am nonetheless cognisant and appreciative of their diversity as ignorance can cause just as much offence as intolerance or bigotry.

The age spectrum of students in science is broad, comprising recent school-leavers and mature-age students. I assist students experiencing difficulties acclimating to university life by establishing peer support networks and by mentoring individual students. Students rapidly overcome their problems when they realise they are not alone and can share experiences. I pay particular attention to student demographics when forming groups so they are as cosmopolitan as practicable. I pro-actively address gender and sexuality issues, because parasites are not equally distributed between sexes due to differing physiological states, reproductive cycles, sexual and social behaviours. I ensure such discussions are not personalised or trivialised but are conducted sensibly and professionally.

I have found a major limitation to effective learning to be student language proficiency. I teach many students from non-English speaking backgrounds, including just as many Australians (ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) as international students. I identify students in need of help and offer them additional resources in the form of writing classes, IT courses and journal clubs to promote interaction and understanding. I believe we must foster greater human interaction within universities to counteract the solitary and impersonal consequences of the IT revolution.

### **Criterion 9: Professional and systematic approach to teaching development**

By training, scientists are methodical creatures so it is paradoxical to me that they do not apply the same logic to science teaching. Lecturers are generally recruited on the basis of their research performance and while most possess good communication skills, they usually do not have any formal training as teachers. Scientists tend to focus on course content and teaching issues more than on effective student learning. I recognised this paradox in myself so I actively sought training through teaching grants, training courses, curriculum development and student interaction.

When developing courses, I conduct component analyses with staff and students to define content, outcomes analyses with employers and graduates to identify desirable student attributes, and procedural analyses with colleagues to identify best practice. I then bring it all together in constructive alignment models linking curriculum objectives with instructional activities and assessment tasks. Similar alignment models have been used in curriculum development for physical, biological and earth sciences, including the FAST model (Foundational Approaches in Science Teaching). The resultant courses are very successful in practice. Participating teachers and students appreciate their holistic nature and transparent structure. Course evaluation highlighted strong student ownership, contemporary content, targeted assessment, relational thinking and vocational guidance.

Teachers must participate in course development and review to remain relevant and topical. I regularly convene stakeholder meetings to contemplate direction, focus, resources, staffing, assessment, evaluation and student liaison. I obtain student feedback through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. I receive many suggestions regarding class organisation, problems with specimens and the relevance of assignments. Students alert me to new resources (esp. websites and multimedia software) and we evaluate them together.

It is important for teachers to communicate and share experiences. I participate in teacher training through our academic induction and tutor training programs and presenting

workshops on problem-based learning. Colleagues genuinely appreciate these courses as we introduce them to new methods, change their orientation from teaching to learning and show them they are not alone.

### **10: Participation in professional activities and research related to teaching**

I provide senior service to Department, School, Faculty, University, profession and community. Many activities relate directly to teaching and learning by facilitating resources, infrastructure, interdisciplinary liaison, industrial relations and public awareness. I strive to model corporate and community citizenship and serve on various committees, hold office with professional societies and act as spokesperson for health, industry and community awareness programs.

All universities have staff development programs and we should access these resources to promote T&L. I have been involved in several action learning projects examining the formative intellectual processes involved in the creation and manipulation of biological data sets for secondary, tertiary and postgraduate students. I attend local and national Teaching and Learning Conferences and speak on issues

involved in studying biosciences. I act as examiner for internal and external postgraduate theses and serve on two committees for international exchange programs. I provide vocational training for practitioners, researchers, diagnosticians and technicians and assist industry comply with national standards.

I am fiercely loyal to my discipline and seek to promote government and community awareness of emerging parasitic diseases. I have made representation to government through an Occasional Paper to Ministers to improve education in health sciences and contributed to the recent State of the Environment Report. I promote parasitology through media coverage (consultant for two television programs) and community education (public exhibitions). I believe scientists must develop interdisciplinary awareness and see their science as part of the larger community.

### **Concluding remarks**

Academics are appraised on the basis of their teaching, research and service portfolios which attempt to provide holistic coverage. It is often difficult to differentiate between these activities and it was hard to address ten T&L criteria with considerable overlap. My responses summarised my current situation with some historical background but with a heavy

emphasis on personal motivations. In essence, addressing (or dressing) the criteria was much a case of "show-and-tell" by baring (or airing) personal beliefs. Institutionally, I help provide quality programs in science whereas personally, I share with students my fascination for a remarkable group of micro-organisms affecting human and animal health. My core business is that of sharing information and I am constantly learning new and exciting ways to do so!

*Peter O'Donoghue is Reader in Parasitology in the School of Molecular and Microbial Sciences at The University of Queensland (UQ). He won an Award for Excellence in Teaching at UQ in 2000, an Australian University Teaching Award (in Biological Sciences, Health and Related Studies) and was joint winner of the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year in 2002. He teaches foundational biology, preclinical microbiology and vocational parasitology in undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education courses. He is a middle-level manager and sits on several Teaching and Learning Committees. He conducts research on protozoan parasites, particularly those implicated in zoonotic disease and the contamination of water supplies.*

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## **The National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (Australia)**

The National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education is a new initiative, which is part of the Australian government's *Backing Australia's Future* reform package for higher education.

The Institute will be overseen by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) and be run by professional staff with expertise in learning and teaching in higher education. The AUTC will continue to advise the Minister on the allocation, management and outcomes of any grants scheme and activities administered through the Institute, including the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT).

The Institute will receive \$21.9 million per year from 2006, which will comprise \$2.5 million for administration and \$19.4 million for grants and other activities. Funding will be allocated from existing programme funds to establish the Institute in 2004.

Comments and queries can be sent to [learningandteaching@dest.gov.au](mailto:learningandteaching@dest.gov.au)

Extracted from the web site: [www.dest.gov.au/highered/learning\\_teaching/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/learning_teaching/default.htm)

# HERDSA2003

## *Learning for an unknown future*

### The Conveners look back

By Helen Matthews & Rod McKay

While there may have been a chill in the Christchurch air, we look back on the conference as a time marked by warm collegiality and active dialogues of the 230 delegates to HERDSA2003.

For us, the conference began about eighteen months earlier when a group of HERDSA members from Christchurch and Dunedin brainstormed our views about what we thought this conference should be like and decided it must be challenging, inclusive of people and the themes embodied within HERDSA, and friendly with a balance of social and intellectual opportunities. We saw the Conference as an opportunity to reinforce the synergies and interdependence of Research and Development in Higher Education and, particularly, for the Society. While this is in a sense a process of reinventing the wheel it proved to be very valuable for clarifying our thoughts and coordinating our actions throughout the whole conference process.

The conference theme *Learning for an unknown future*<sup>1</sup> emerged at the initial stage, and, from our perspective, proved a well-chosen organising focus for the way it was reflected in many conference contributions. We liked it for its possibilities: learning at the core, room for creativity and imagination, research potential and relevance and something fundamental to everyone.

The theme was also central to the way we saw keynote sessions contributing to the vitality of conference discussion. We are very grateful to Professor Janet Donald (opening plenary), Professor Mike Prosser, Professor Denise Kirkpatrick

and Professor Linda Tubiwai Smith (research plenary), and Professor Ron Barnett (concluding overview) plenary, for not only their Keynote presentations but also their active participation in the conference and their willingness to share their perspectives on learning for an unknown future in many informal discussions. Their early readiness to agree to join us, and the coherence they offered, did much to set the tone for the conference as a whole.

Academics on both sides of the Tasman, as elsewhere, are learning to adapt to the challenges of research assessment exercises, and for many opportunities to attend conferences are linked to requirements to present refereed contributions. Early on we decided to share out duties with the Dunedin team undertaking the publications and refereeing procedures – all presenters will have corresponded (several times, in some cases) with Carol Bond and Philippa Bright during the submission and refereeing processes. The work here mushroomed beyond our earlier expectations (in some cases due to contributors unfamiliarity with refereeing requirements), and it also became clear that refereeing adds an order of magnitude to the challenges of managing conference deadlines. The robustness of procedures is critical to the reputation of the Society, and the standing of our Conferences; perhaps academia will soon become used to operating in these emerging assessment regimes and, hopefully, conference refereeing procedures will become more manageable with experience. On the positive side, it was heartening to have so many members offering to act as referees.

In his final summation to the conference Ron Barnett suggested that key goals for learning in an uncertain world of complexity and change are courage, resilience, openness, engagement and stillness. To us, these make fitting conclusions to the initial brainstorming sessions that now seem so long ago.

There are a myriad of logistical items associated with the organisation, and the conference would not have been possible without the steadying influence, constructive advice, and calm support we received from the Conference Office at the University of Canterbury. The generosity of our main sponsors made the conference possible and was critical to its success. We gratefully acknowledged the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (who also provided the opening venue), the University of Canterbury and the University of Otago for their support.

But most of all, we thank the members – and new members – of HERDSA who came together in Christchurch to make HERDSA2003 a success.

Now it is time to look forward to Sarawak for HERDSA2004. We send our best wishes to Frank and his team.

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The conference organisers gratefully acknowledge *The University of Learning (1998)* by John Bowden and Ference Marton as their source for the theme title.

# HERDSA2003

## Prizes & Awards



### The Edith Cowan University Prize for the Best Paper on Authentic Learning

The prize was awarded to Frank Lyons from the University of Portsmouth in the UK for his paper entitled "Customer-led learning environments: industry-university partnerships".

### The Taylor and Francis Prize for the Best Paper by a New Researcher

The prize was shared between two people, Veronica Cahyadi of the University of Canterbury and Frank Gemmiti of the University of Western Australia.

Veronica's paper was entitled "The Effect of Interactive Engagement Teaching Method to Student Understanding of Introductory Physics at the Faculty of Engineering, University of Surabaya, Indonesia".

Frank's paper was entitled "Did Human Biology students use, recommend and benefit from computer-based assessment?"

Three Travel Grants were made to Postgraduate Students to enable them to attend the conference. The students were: Marguerite Cullity from the University of Melbourne, Nicola Parker from the University of Technology, Sydney and Annette Hyland from the University of Otago.

**I asked Frank Lyons to write about the programme of work-based learning that he directs at the University of Portsmouth in the UK. Here is what he had to say.**

### Working with work-based learning

The Edith Cowan University prize for the best paper on an authentic learning environment was presented to Frank Lyons at the 2003 HERDSA conference in Christchurch. Frank is a leading UK expert on work-based learning, accreditation of prior and experiential learning, learning contracts and reflective practice. Since 1991 he has been developing customer-

focussed approaches to learning in the workplace. These programmes have involved undergraduate and postgraduate study in fields including sales management, applied bio medical science, community justice (probation), flight testing, early years education, information operations, logistics, business, computing and engineering. More than 150 companies have sponsored their students on programmes managed by Frank.

His prize winning paper outlined: the pedagogic thinking underpinning work-based learning and two variants of the model, individually designed learning contract managed degrees and a Masters degree developed in collaboration with a corporate university. The paper reports on the new working procedures introduced in the face of the uncertainties involved with these programmes. The paper concludes with a summary of the lessons learned by the University about sharing responsibilities and achieving cultural understanding with its new industrial partners.

### Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning involves the knowledge and understanding gained through development projects at work, in-company and equipment training courses, attendance at professional conferences, independent research and learning new job roles. Where companies are receptive this

work-based learning can involve leading edge projects that can be of significant commercial value to the companies at which the students are working. In work-based degrees students design, manage and deliver their new learning within the contract framework. As self-directed students they are faced with a number of real quality management tasks for which the learning contract serves as the management tool. The learning contract includes details of the new study that is intended, although contract curriculum development is an iterative and open-ended process. Through drafting and redrafting learning plans, managing their learning and evaluating their learning outcomes, students engage in a sequenced experiential and problem based learning process. With the assistance of company mentors and university tutors they define their learning needs.

### Charlie and Hants and Sussex Aviation

Charlie had a Higher National Certificate and worked as a Test Engineer for a medium sized company that specialises in the servicing and repair of aircraft engines. Charlie's career progression was blocked by his lack of professional experience and caught in the "catch 22" situation that promotion opportunities were blocked by his level of qualification. His employers were faced with the problem of maintaining its market share in a situation in which new technical developments in the construction of engines, involving the use of new materials meant new licences to work on new engines were required to win contracts. The solution to Charlie's and the company's problems was Charlie's





work-based degree in Engineering Studies. Through this degree Charlie developed company proposals for new work procedures, wrote a successful Civil Aviation licencing bid and developed a new testing method that resulted in major investment in his company by the American aircraft engine giant Pratt and Whitney.

## Leadership in work-based learning

Frank has provided consultation to many UK universities enabling them to establish their own work-based schemes and has become known internationally through conference papers in Australia, Thailand, South Africa and the USA. He has contributed to UK Government advisory panels and was commended in the Dearing Report (1997). In 2003 he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship and was visiting fellow at Edith Cowan University.

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**I also asked the other award winners to write their impressions of the conference and they kindly agreed.**

## Impressions of the Conference by Award Winners

### Veronica Cahyadi

I feel that the recent conference has been valuable to me in the following ways:

1. I was able to present my paper for which I expected to get some constructive feedback. I did get some feedback, among which was very encouraging. I was a bit disappointed by my finding about the students' attitudes in my study. I was relieved, however, when other participants confirmed it from the similar finding in their institutions.
2. I had a chance to meet an academic who has been doing the same things that I am about to implement in my class this semester. The approach is relatively new in here. However, from our discussion I feel that I will be on the right track. It gave me an encouragement and motivation to proceed with my plan.
3. Overall, I was impressed with most of the speakers in the round-

table discussions. I was fascinated by their enthusiasm when they presented their research papers. Their commitment to their endeavour to improve student's learning and understanding made me feel that I was not alone in this higher education area.

I look forward to attending the next year conference in Sarawak.

*Veronica came to the University of Canterbury as a teaching and research assistant. Her main task is to help improving the teaching in 100-level physics courses.*

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### Frank Gemmiti

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Western Australia (UWA) with a short history in university teaching and related research. My short history in university teaching encompasses a year and a half of class-tutoring for a first-year Human Biology course and four guest lectures for second-year and third-year Anthropology courses. The Taylor and Francis Prize for the Best Paper by a New Researcher was awarded to me for my paper on research I conducted as part of a year-long teaching development programme offered to a highly limited number of UWA postgraduate students. Although my postgraduate research is virtually unrelated to the endeavour of improving university teaching, my attendance at the HERDSA 2003 Conference was the culmination of a strong desire to join an international community devoted to self-reflection in teaching practice.

My research paper for the HERDSA 2003 Conference documented my evaluation of a computer-based assessment system implemented in first-year Human Biology at UWA. In my paper I state that rising use of computer-based assessment within universities worldwide may reflect staff attempts to utilise the powerful efficiency of computers for managing a rising student intake. Also in my paper I address the concern over computer-based assessment that computer software may limit the assessment of higher-order learning. Although practicalities limited my attendance at the HERDSA 2003

Conference to the opening day, I came away from the address of invited speaker, Janet Donald with a stronger sense of the importance of examining whether computer software will limit the assessment of higher-order learning. Janet suggested that an effective response to the challenge of preparing students for an uncertain future is to provide students with increased training in learning strategies. Teachers were encouraged to design more student-active, problem-based lectures. I suggest that teachers seek to utilise the efficiency and versatility of computer software in a lecture to conduct formative assessment. A potential software limitation on higher-order learning can be supplemented with an immediate dialogue between lecturer and students.

John Dearn presented a symposium entitled, "Preparing Academics for Teaching in Australian Universities". Results were presented that indicated that academic staff in many Australian universities barely attended voluntary teaching development programmes the universities offered. I was prompted to reflect on what I believe would be a general situation among Australian postgraduate programmes. Postgraduate students are given opportunities to teach with voluntary participation in teaching development programmes. I am aware of many postgraduate students who undertake relatively heavy teaching loads without formal training. I was fortunate enough to receive a highly limited place in a paid teaching development programme offered to UWA postgraduate students. However, like many postgraduate students I know, I am receiving a HECS-exempt postgraduate research scholarship that entitles me to four years of university funding under the Australian Federal Government. Funding refers to monies for research privileges, not income. My participation in a teaching development programme does not entitle me to an extension of time for receiving university funding. Consequently, I can envisage that a postgraduate student would avoid participation in a teaching development programme. Today's postgraduate students are tomorrow's university teachers and if tomorrow is supercomplex and uncertain,

shouldn't postgraduate programmes officialise the development of flexible teaching skills? Perhaps Linda Conrad, presenter of the symposium entitled, "Five Ways of Enhancing the Postgraduate Community", would be interested in following up the issue of, "The Climate of Teaching Among Postgraduate Students". Of course, the issue is open for discussion from all members of the HERDSA community.

In close, I found attendance at the HERDSA 2003 Conference a thoroughly rewarding experience on a professional level, as the above examples should indicate, and also on a personal level, having received overwhelming hospitality and support from all delegates and members of the conference committee who I met. I express sincere appreciation for the Taylor and Francis Prize and for the knowledge that, to reiterate my opening remark, I have indeed joined an international community devoted to self-reflection in teaching practice.

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### **Marguerite Cullity**

Marguerite Cullity is an Education Ph. D. student at the University of Melbourne. Prior to starting her doctoral studies she worked as an educator within an alternative entry program (AEP) for mature age students and as an academic skills adviser. It is her interest in alternative entry to higher education and mature age student learning that encouraged her to research the "nature and the consequences of alternative entry programs for mature age students" - the title of her doctoral research.

Her research study was conducted at four Australian universities that hold AEPs for mature age learners, and at each institution she interviewed ex-AEP students and current staff. An initial thematic analysis of data reveals deeply held staff assumptions about the characteristics of mature age learners, teaching and learning practices conducted in AEPs, and the rationale for and against conducting program evaluations. In addition, the analysis has revealed consistent and firmly held student views about the need for them to develop their academic reading, writing and presentation practices and to develop confidence in themselves as learners.

It was with much interest and pleasure that I recently attended the HERDSA 2003 Conference: "Learning for an Unknown Future" held at Canterbury University, New Zealand. The keynote speakers (Janet Donald, Michael Prosser, Denise Kirkpatrick, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Ronald Barnett) all addressed teaching, learning and research issues regarding future challenges within higher education. We, the delegates, were encouraged to consider and embrace ways in which to address these challenges and contribute to higher education andragogy and research. In addition to keynote addresses, conference presentations included symposia, round tables and workshops. These presentations included topics related to: staff development, indigenous education, NESB postgraduate students, international education, distance and on-line education, course experience and student satisfaction, research issues, and teaching and learning practices. Many of the presentations reflected on educator roles and or current higher education practice, and they were helpful in stimulating discussion about teaching and learning outcomes and future actions.

As any delegate will relate the conference had many lighter/fun moments and one of the highlights was the dinner at the Grand Chancellor Hotel, the band that played on and the talented Andrew Sisters! The evening provided delegates with an opportunity to revel in past memories of music and song and to reveal their dancing expertise. The conference ended with a bus trip to nearby vineyards and here we extended our vinicultural knowledge and partook in the odd glass or two of wine.

*Marguerite's paper was entitled 'Metaphors that Reveal the Assumptions Underlying the nature of Alternative Entry programs for Mature Age Students.'*

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### **Nicola Parker**

The latest HERDSA Conference was a great learning experience and lots of fun! We had bright crisp weather and snow to enjoy, and many of us took advantage of the crystalline beauty of the South Island blanketed

in white either before or after the conference. Those who travelled on the Trans-Alpine railway vowed that it had been a lifetime, not just a conference, highlight!

Down from the lofty slopes of the Southern Alps the conference opened at the modern campus of Christchurch's Polytechnic Institute of Technology with a range of speeches, including one from a current minister, and a traditional Maori welcome. The following morning we moved to the calm and grassy seventies-style campus that the venerable Canterbury University now occupies, which provided a well organised and restful backdrop for the next two and a half days of conversations.

The Roundtable sessions came thick and fast. There was such a wide variety of papers to choose from that it was easy to feel that you were missing out on something equally important in another room. The format of ten minutes from each presenter in turn, and then moving into separate discussion groups meant another hard decision. Sometimes I have to admit to trying to listen to three equally interesting discussions simultaneously. Such are the dilemmas of being spoilt for choice.

The conference dinner was a great success. Thoughtfully organised and on a large scale with good selection of buffet food, wine and even a gift, it gave us all a chance to converse with people we may not yet have met over food and wine. The entertainment had a many either dancing in their seats, in conga lines and even performing on stage. Definitely a chance for us all to unwind! At the close of the conference New Zealand's Maori culture was again enjoyed, when we were treated to a particularly good song and dance finale to proceedings.

From my personal perspective, the dominant impression I was left with is the sense that "Learning for an Unknown Future" requires all of the many and various aspects that were presented to us in Christchurch, and were drawn together in Ron Barnett's closing keynote address. However, it also requires the negotiation and clarification of how disciplinary demands of content (including subject related processes) as well as the demands on learners as "beings" can

be most fruitfully balanced. This was a complex, and controversial problem with very different perspectives emerging in Christchurch, but it is a fascinating one! I look forward to attending subsequent conferences to see how this conversation unfolds.

As a postgraduate student presenting my research as a work-in Progress report I enjoyed the supportive learning atmosphere and gained lots inspiration, shared ideas and differing perspectives. There were so many people that I didn't have a chance to talk to. This is yet another good reason for attending the next HERDSA conference in 2004. As a recipient of HERDSA's postgraduate travel award I would like to take this opportunity to thank the HERDSA community in print. Your support to those of us at the early stages of our own learning curves has enabled me to gain important exposure to the expertise and conversations that inform us all. Special thanks too go to the Christchurch organising committee for the gift of time you gave to us all. Finally thank-you to

my supervisor Professor Mairead Browne for her unstinting support and encouragement.

*Nicola's paper was entitled "Processes and Meaning in Individual Postgraduate Assignments: the Effects or Affect?"*

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#### **Annette Hyland**

Recipient of the \$500 HERDSA Postgraduate Travel Award to assist a local student, Annette Hyland, said she was grateful for the opportunity to participate in a round table session. "The organising committee is to be congratulated for arranging such a rich and varied program", she said. "There was always something going on that interested you".

"The atmosphere was great too. The conference format gave so many people opportunities to share what they were currently researching. You didn't have to rely on networking between sessions to discover what others were doing. At one stage I wondered if there was anyone there

who wasn't presenting!" she joked. "But that's what a conference should be like in my view – everyone sharing information and ideas, not just a few learned academics expounding their views".

The paper Annette presented, "To Teach Online or Not? The Decision Facing University Teachers", identified personal, university and societal issues that influenced academic staff from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Otago in deciding whether or not to teach online. "Working with them to develop learning materials for distance students, I was in the perfect position to investigate this topical issue at a departmental level", she explained.

Annette hoped HERDSA would continue to encourage postgraduates saying, "The conference certainly proved to be a great learning experience for me, benefiting both my research and me personally as a researcher".

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## **New Generation EdNA Online : a Collaborative Enterprise**

<http://www.edna.edu.au/edna/page1570.html>

EdNA Online is one of Australia's largest education and training resources and since 1996 it has been providing the education and training community with online access to quality assured information and tools and services to support teaching, learning and research. The new generation EdNA Online provides a host of new features and services including distributed search, MyEdNA personalisation, online community spaces for education and training groups, and web services in XML/RSS format for EdNA Online content including news, newsletters, noticeboards, search and browse.

A paper discussing the development of the new generation EdNA Online is available at <http://www.educationau.edu.au/papers/edna.pdf> (Re-engineering the national online services (EdNA Online) for education and training in Australia)

# HERDSA2004 Conference in Malaysia

By Barbara Stauble & Frank Sheehy

The HERDSA 2004 conference will be held at the Sarawak Campus of Curtin University of Technology located in the town of Miri in north eastern Sarawak. The campus is a branch campus of Curtin University of Technology and commenced operations in 1999 following an invitation to establish the branch by the Malaysian Government in 1998.

Phase One of the purpose built campus was officially opened in September 2002 and is located on 1250 acres of landscaped peat forest woodland on the northern side of Miri, on the road to neighbouring Brunei.

Details of the campus can be found at [www.curtin.edu.my](http://www.curtin.edu.my)

The theme for the 2004 HERDSA Conference is:

**“Transforming knowledge into wisdom: Holistic approaches to teaching and learning.”**

Sub-themes will include:

- Integrating complex knowledge and generic skills into the curriculum
- Building bridges between disciplines
- Changing roles of academics
- Transnational education

The 2004 Organising Committee are now at work refining the themes and identifying and contacting potential key note speakers. A conference web site is under construction and will be linked both to the HERDSA main page and Curtin Sarawak.

To ensure a professionally rewarding conference, plans are being developed for both pre- and post-conference workshops. As this will be the first occasion for the HERDSA conference to be held in a country belonging to the ASEAN region, tour packages to the magnificent natural attractions of East Malaysia will be available. To whet members' appetites further some details of Miri and Sarawak follow.

Sarawak, on the north-western part of Borneo Island, is the largest, and may be considered the richest, of the 14 states/territories in the Federation of Malaysia. Miri is a forward-looking, developed, and safe city with modern infrastructure.

Originally an oil town, Miri is now more renowned for its natural attractions and heritage and is becoming increasingly popular as an adventure/ecotourism destination. Miri enjoys warm equatorial weather with plenty of sunshine all year round. It is well serviced by road and air links and caters for regular flights to Kuching (the state capital) and Kuala Lumpur (the national capital) where travellers get connecting flights overseas.

With a population of 230,000 people, Miri is the second biggest town in the state of Sarawak. Miri is a busy, prosperous town with a potpourri of different races and cultures comprising most of Sarawak's indigenous groups. Bahasa Malaysia or Malay is the national language, however, English and Chinese are widely used in tourism and business. The people of Sarawak have a reputation for their warmth, friendliness and hospitality

Miri's most famous landmark is the grand Old Lady on top of Canada Hill, the first well to strike oil in 1910. These days production is offshore and some of the platforms can be seen from Canada Hill. The town's rapid growth has meant the opening of several modern shopping malls, and dozens of lively restaurants, pubs and bars.

As a modern seaside town that still preserves much of its rich cultural heritage, Miri is a charming blend of traditional and modern way of life. Exotic jungle produce can be found at various native markets (e.g. opposite the main bus station), while local handicrafts that serve as a colourful symbol of Sarawak's cultural diversity

can be admired and purchased at the Miri Heritage Center.

Miri is also the gateway to the northeast region, rapidly becoming Sarawak's most popular tourist area. It is within easy reach of national parks, huge rivers, heritage and adventure travel destinations and some of the best scuba diving in Borneo.

The Mulu National Park is just 40 minutes away by light aircraft; Niah Caves are less than two hours drive away and you can reach the world's most biodiverse site at Lambir Hills in just 25 minutes. Half a day away by longboat or four-wheel-drive is Loagan Bunut, a unique expanding and contracting lake that is a bird watcher's paradise. From Miri you can also reach the Bario Highlands by air in 40 minutes or travel by boat up the mighty Baram River and visit longhouses along the way.

Miri's international airport, just 15 minutes from the town center, has frequent flights to Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu in Sabah and all of Sarawak's major towns.

The Organisers of the HERDSA 2004 conference look forward to meeting their colleagues in July next year in Miri and will keep all members updated on conference developments via Roger Landbeck's frequent bulletins on the HERDSA email list.

*Barbara Stauble and Frank Sheehy are co-convenors of the HERDSA 2004 Conference*

*Barbara is an Associate Professor of Physics and Frank is an Associate Professor of Education*

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# **Forthcoming Conferences**

## **EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING 2003**

**A conference for University Teachers**

**6 - 7 November 2003**

**Queensland College of Art, Griffith University  
(Southbank Campus)**

**Register online at <http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/gihe/whatson/etl/>**

Each year, Griffith University, The University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology jointly host the Effective Teaching and Learning Conference, with one university taking responsibility for its coordination for a two-year period.

In 2003 and 2004, the Effective Teaching and Learning Conference will be held at Griffith University's Southbank Campus. The Griffith Institute for Higher Education will convene the conference, with assistance and input from a small committee.

The conference is intended primarily for staff from the three sponsoring universities, but staff from other universities in south-east Queensland and further afield are warmly welcomed.

Staff from all academic, support and administrative areas are invited to attend and to submit abstracts to be considered for inclusion in the program.

There is no specific conference theme this year. Instead, participants are encouraged to draw on their own practice (and imagination) to submit abstracts that show:

- a clear focus on teaching and learning at university level;
- evidence of a sound scholarly underpinning for the theme of the paper, regardless of whether the paper is essentially empirical, developmental, theoretical, a critical review or a position paper. Papers that appear to be primarily descriptive or "show-and-tell" may have difficulty in being accepted into the program;
- clarity and cogency of expression in both the Abstract and support materials; and
- broad appeal to conference participants.

Paper sessions will be of 30 minutes duration. This will include time for questions. Workshops, panel and facilitated discussion sessions will be 45 minutes long.

# **Forthcoming Conferences**

## **LAS 2003 Conference**

**Second and final call for contributions**

**to the**

**Language & Academic Skills in Higher Education  
(LAS)**

**Annual Conference**

**at**

**Flinders University**

**24-25 November**

In response to many requests from prospective authors for more time, we have extended the deadline for fully refereed papers to **29 SEPTEMBER**. There should now be no more excuses for not having enough time to "write that paper"!! This extension of course impacts on most other deadlines, so I draw your attention to the new dates on the web site at <http://www.flinders.edu.au/SLC/LAShome.HTM>. One of the critical areas in which this extension may have some impact is the refereeing process. It will put greater pressure on referees to get their reports back on time. Having said that, we are still looking to add to our list of referees, so please assist us if you can.

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