Pharmaceuticals find Eureka favour

By Lindy Brophy

Eureka is the iconic shout of joy at the moment of discovery.

It was also immortalised in Australia on the Ballarat goldfields in the 1850s in the Eureka Stockade, a rebellion by miners who were pushing for fair pay, fair taxes and, intrinsically, democracy.

Pushing the boundaries is something that young medical scientist Kevin Pfleger is doing, in pursuit of that eureka moment of discovery of the perfect therapeutic drug.

Associate Professor Pfleger has achieved a milestone in that journey by winning a prestigious Eureka Prize.

He was recently announced as the nation's top Emerging Leader in Science.

Presented annually by the Australian Museum, the Eureka Prizes reward excellence in several fields of science, with prize money of more than $240,000.

Professor Pfleger leads a Molecular Endocrinology group at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research.

He is working on improving the way pharmaceuticals act on the human body, developing better therapeutic drugs with fewer side effects for a range of medical conditions such as prostate disorders and complications associated with diabetes that are becoming an enormous burden for the Australian community.

Professor Pfleger's research is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council, the Raine Medical Research Foundation and Dimerix Bioscience.

He is Chief Scientific Officer of Dimerix Bioscience, a spin out company commercialising the discoveries of his laboratory.

After the winners were announced on 6 September in Sydney, Professor Pfleger flew to Manchester where he is presenting his most recent findings at the Drug Discovery 2011 Conference.

At the age of just 34, he can now add Australia’s most prestigious science award to his award of WA Young Scientist of the Year 2009 and the selection of his work among the NHMRC's 10 of the Best Research Projects 2010.

Five other UWA scientists were short-listed for Eureka Awards, two individuals and a group of three: Winthrop Professor Steve Smith, from the ARC Centre for Excellence in Plant Energy Biology; Associate Professor Ben Corry from the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences; and the robotics team of Professor Thomas Braüni, Dr Adrian Boeing and Assistant Professor Kevin Vinsen.

Professor Smith focuses on understanding how plants grow under stressful environmental conditions, vital for world food production.

“I look at how plants grow in challenging environmental conditions such as heat, drought and salinity, how they recover after bushfires and how we can improve reforestation after mining,” he said.

Professor Corry is developing a new kind of material that could be used to make the desalination of seawater much cheaper – taking inspiration from studying channels in biological membranes.

He has shown that membranes containing specifically-designed continuous channels allow desalination to occur with much less energy.

Professor Braüni and Dr Boeing from the School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering, and Professor Kevin Vinsen from the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research, developed a robot for defence forces to use in dangerous work.

Their team (WAMBOT) was one of six finalists who competed for a contract with US and Australian defence forces.
What do three innovative students from the Business School and some bright ideas for iiNet add up to?

A cash prize, vacation work and an insight into what goes on at Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), a leading professional services firm.

UWA graduate Sam Gray, a senior consultant at PwC, created the university-wide competition to encourage graduates to consider management consulting as a career path.

About 250 students from UWA, Curtin, Murdoch and Notre Dame universities competed in *The Amazing Case*, where teams competed in a 24-hour case study based on real problems experienced by internet service provider iiNet.

“The first problem was a historical one,” Mr Gray said. “In 2006, iiNet bought Westnet which had a good brand and they weren’t sure whether to keep the original name or dissolve it. This problem was given to 56 teams of students and recent graduates one evening at UWA’s Business School. The students had 24 hours to develop a solution, presenting it with only five PowerPoint slides.”

After the solutions were presented, iiNet’s CEO, Michael Malone, outlined what iiNet actually did (they kept the Westnet brand) and why, then announced the six finalists.

“The finalists had three days to prepare an oral submission, during which time they had coaching sessions from professionals at PwC and a meeting with Michael Malone, who generously gave them plenty of time to ask him questions,” Mr Gray said.

The challenge for the finalists was to work out how iiNet could grow and expand without losing its strong customer service relationship. The company prides itself on having the best customer service reputation in Australia.

Solutions were presented to Mr Malone, iiNet’s David Buckingham and PwC’s Stephanie Allen and Jag Sanger. They chose the UWA team PSJ Strategy as the winner. Its members, Phillip Christopher (recently graduated from Economics and Commerce), Sara Schaus and James Hastwell (both in the fourth year of a combined Commerce and Engineering degree) each won $1,000 and vacation work with PwC, in their management consulting division.

PSJ Strategy’s recommendations included increasing sales and customer service with iiNet kiosks and shops; improving customer retention by offering discounts and new product trials; and recognising the difficulties experienced by customers moving house and making it as smooth as possible for them.

When Mr Gray was studying commerce and health sciences at UWA, he and three friends won a national accountancy competition by producing a business plan for Médecins Sans Frontières. This competition, run by the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia, was such a success that it inspired Mr Gray to initiate a similar competition to attract students to his chosen field.

His idea has since been taken up by other PwC branches around Australia and is in the pipeline to be run again next year. 
On a sunny winter’s day, the world came to UWA.

Nearly 50 visitors from four continents came in four delegations to the Crawley campus on Monday 29 August.

They came to find out about geothermal energy, to discuss the politics and power of China, to learn about mining governance and, for the Vice-Chancellor of a Pakistani university, to meet the people who are having an impact on some of his star students.

First to arrive were six United Nations representatives to see Winthrop Professor Klaus Regenauer-Lieb, Director of the Western Australian Geothermal Centre of Excellence. Ambassadors from Botswana, Tanzania, Gambia, Lesotho, Republic of Congo and Chile, all permanent representatives to the UN, had a long discussion with Professor Regenauer-Lieb about the potential for geothermal energy in their countries.

“Chile is interested in linking up with us for advice on geothermal energy,” Professor Regenauer-Lieb said. “The African nations have a lot of potential but finance is their problem.

“They said they were being asked not to burn coal but needed lots of energy for mining industries: what were they to do?

“I think this is an opportunity for the UN to do something about geothermal energy in Africa, and maybe the richer countries like Australia can help. Our research can help them to leap ahead, if they can find the funding,” he said.

UWA also hosted more than 40 government representatives from nine African countries on an AusAID mining governance study tour. They spent Monday afternoon at the Minerals and Energy Institute, sharing experiences of expansion in the mining, oil and gas industries.

These countries face the challenge of channelling the benefits of these industries to sustainable development and they came to learn from Australia’s long history of the same industries contributing to national growth.

Tim Shanahan, Director of the Institute, said some of the delegates showed interest in further study and requested information about courses offered at UWA.

The African visitors were in Perth for a big mining conference, Africa Down Under, and took the opportunity of extending their networks to include the university.

On Monday evening, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Winthrop Professor Krishna Sen, hosted a seminar in collaboration with the US Consulate General on the politics and power of China.

Will China Ever Rule the World? asked visiting scholar Dr Daniel Twining, an expert on US foreign policy and security issues. Staff and students from political science, international relations, law and the Confucius Institute joined consular, state and federal government representatives in the Senate Room to focus on the question.

Professor Sen said Dr Twining explained that while China was growing at an enormous rate, it was unlikely to dominate the world in the foreseeable future in quite the way that the US was dominant at the end of the Cold War and through to the early 1990s.

“He argues that while clearly the global balance of power is shifting, it is not drifting away from the US directly to China,” Professor Sen said. “Rather, power is becoming more dispersed and India, Brazil and the big European powers such as Germany all have significant roles to play in the emerging multi-polar world.”

And Professor Iqrar Ahmad Khan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in Pakistan, spent a few days at UWA, meeting academics from all the faculties.

His host, Winthrop Professor Kadambot Siddique, Director of UWA’s Institute of Agriculture, explained that Faisalabad University was a comprehensive university, with faculties of engineering, business and education as well as agriculture.

It is one of the top universities in Pakistan and UWA has joined UAF to help Pakistan with its long-term rebuilding after last year’s devastating floods.

Graduate students from UAF are already studying at UWA and Professor Khan hopes more students will come here. He met the Deans of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics; Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Sciences; and Education, as well as other academics and members of the executive.

“Professor Khan was most impressed with our work,” Professor Siddique said.
Johnathan Chee has swapped a career in semi-conductor materials in south east Asia for psychiatric nursing in Perth.

The 36-year-old is one of the first cohort of 16 nurses from UWA’s Masters of Nursing Science who graduate this week.

They have come from diverse backgrounds including commerce, marketing and public relations, biotechnology and teaching. Their education includes degrees in sustainable development, fine arts and business. The students’ first degrees were from Australian and overseas institutions including universities in Germany, UK, Indonesia, Kenya and the US. And their ages range from early 20s to 50s.

Masters co-ordinator Associate Professor Rosemary Saunders said the rich diversity made teaching the course an interesting experience. “Regardless of their backgrounds, they all expressed real passion for nursing, either because they had always wanted to be a nurse or had had an experience with the health care system that had made up their minds,” she said.

For Johnathan Chee, it was a combination of timely events. “Our family had already applied to come to live in Australia when I was retrenched from my job,” said the Singaporean-born former engineer.

“I had worked in semi-conductor materials for about 14 years, but the global financial crisis hit my company and I was retrenched in March 2009. Luckily, we received our permanent visas soon after, and moved to Perth in May of that year.”

“I was finding it difficult to get a job here because there is no semi-conductor industry here, so I started thinking about a career change,” he said.

“I just happened upon a career expo for health professionals and came across the Masters of Nursing. It was perfect timing for me, because just before we left Singapore, a friend had collapsed and died with a heart attack in front of me and it had left me wondering what I could do to help others, to do something for the wellbeing of the community.”

“This is what I had been looking for. “Although I liked my life as an engineer, I didn’t love it. But I do love nursing; it’s fantastic!”

Johnathan’s wife works as an administrator for an aged care company and, while he was studying, he worked part-time as a carer. “At first, it was just a source of income, then I grew to love helping them,” he said. “I really enjoyed my student placement in inpatient and community mental health and I’ve chosen to work in this specialty.”

“It’s not a popular branch of nursing because the rewards are not as obvious as they are in a general ward where you can see people getting better and walking out of the hospital in a matter of weeks.

“In mental health it can take a year, or even 10 years, for somebody to recover.”

He said he found the first six months of study very stressful and almost gave up. “But I give credit to my classmates. All coming from very different backgrounds, we understood the pressures we were all feeling, and we were able to support each other.”

Associate Professor Saunders said the nurses had done more than 800 hours of clinical practice over the two-year course including terms in acute, paediatric, mental health, community and rural sectors. Two students had completed a practicum in Tanzania as part of a government global health alliance.
Graduations: marking individual and institutional success

This week marks the end of the University’s 2011 Spring graduation ceremonies and the last Professor Alan Robson will attend as Vice-Chancellor.

During his eight years as Vice-Chancellor and eleven years as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Robson has attended more than 180 graduation ceremonies, and seen more than 65,000 students graduate. This represents around two-thirds of the entire body of UWA graduates!

Editor

Reflecting on almost two decades of graduation ceremonies, I’m struck by the substance behind the often used statement that ‘the strength of our University is built on its graduates’.

Beyond the outstanding personal achievement in the transition from undergraduate to graduate, or from graduate to postgraduate, there is significant benefit from wider community recognition of the highly-educated and highly-employable qualities of our graduates.

They leave the University in a wonderful position to contribute positively to communities locally, nationally and internationally. It’s a fact that nations with populations that are well educated are nations in which most people – even those who have not had access to higher education – enjoy greater prosperity, well-being and political and environmental stability.

Knowledge, curiosity, inquiry, enthusiasm and commitment are all hallmarks of our graduates and they also mark out the success of the University’s teaching and research programs.

Also striking has been the increasing imperative to fulfil the potential and aspiration of graduates to work internationally in a range of cultures, communities and careers. And again, the success of our graduates in all these areas increasingly builds our reputation as a high-quality global university.

Another wonderful feature of our graduation ceremonies is the occasional address delivered by a person of distinction who through success in a chosen field speaks from personal experience. And there is the very important valedictory address which brings a student voice to the occasion.

Over the years, these addresses have covered every manner of subjects. Overall, the main messages have revolved around our graduates’ determination to pursue excellence and be bold in their endeavours, backed by confidence in their abilities.

Above all, our graduations highlight the fact that the University’s motto – Seek Wisdom – is perhaps more relevant than ever to new generations of graduates facing a world where global knowledge has become the new currency.

Finally, I think there is something to be said for the US interpretation of graduation ceremonies as a ‘commencement’, recognising, amidst all the celebrations of completion, that this is really a beginning – not only of thousands of individual careers but also of the new energy and ways of thinking that our graduates bring to the various fields they enter.

Graduates spring into the world

Spring graduation ceremonies have a special feeling of new beginnings, surrounded as they often are by families of ducklings and flowering daffodils.

Just over 1,800 graduands are celebrating their degrees and diplomas at five ceremonies in Winthrop Hall this month.

Among them are the University’s first 16 nursing graduates (Masters of Nursing Science), 61 Masters of Education and 73 Masters of Engineering, in various disciplines.

Higher qualifications of PhDs are being conferred on 84 graduands, with a further 13 receiving doctorates in education, business administration and psychology.

With 138 Bachelors of Science and 136 Bachelors of Arts awarded, the Business School still retains the highest number of graduands from a single degree: 325 Bachelors of Commerce.
Michael Sheldrick was born 30 years after the last serious polio endemics swept across Australia and 16 years since the last reported case.

But it has not deterred the energetic Law student from campaigning to eradicate the disease in the rest of the world.

A polio vaccine, developed in the 1950s, wiped out the crippling disease in most countries but it is still endemic in four nations, three of them members of the Commonwealth.

Michael, a long-term justice fighter against global poverty, has been campaigning to get polio on the CHOGM agenda. He wrote to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard earlier this year and she agreed to meet him in Fremantle in March.

“We spent 15 minutes together,” Michael said. “She was impressed with our campaign and, in July, she wrote saying that at CHOGM 2011 the Government would work to encourage Commonwealth members in their commitments to the World Health Organisation (WHO), including through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.”

The End of Polio campaign is a grassroots campaign co-ordinated by the Global Poverty Project, in support of the efforts of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) by Rotary International, UNICEF, WHO and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The campaign is asking the Australian Government to contribute $50 million to the initiative and to encourage other Commonwealth countries to do the same, as the GPEI is $590 million short of implementing its 2011-12 strategic plan.

“It was an Australian, a Rotarian by the name of Clem Renouf, who first dreamt of a polio-free world and started to make that dream a reality,” Michael said. “It would be great if Australians could continue to play an important role in seeing this through.

“People in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Afghanistan are still suffering from this awful disease which can cripple and deform children and can reappear later in life, even after recovery.

“If we can wipe out polio, it will be the second human disease that has been totally eradicated, after smallpox.”

Michael became aware that polio was still a significant world health problem when he met a member of the Rotary Club of Crawley earlier this year. “The club had awarded me a youth scholarship based on my work with the Global Poverty Project and we got talking and he told me how he had suffered with polio as a young man, pulling up his trouser leg to show me the calliper he still wears,” he said.

Michael and a team of Rotaract volunteers, including fellow UWA Law student Tegan Smith, have organised The End of Polio Breakfast a month before CHOGM to raise awareness of the campaign and funds for eradication efforts.

The breakfast fundraiser is to be held at the Perth Convention Centre on Wednesday 5 October. Already, the WA Governor, Malcolm McCusker and Tonya McCusker, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson, and the former Premier Alan Carpenter have agreed to attend, bring along a table of people and support the campaign.

The campaign also has the support of eminent immunologist and former Australian of the Year, Sir Gustav Nossal, whose videoed presentation is on The End of Polio website. He talks about Australian mothers in the 1950s being so terrified of their children picking up the disease that “they would stop us going to the movies on Saturday or the swimming pool on Sunday” and of hospital wards full of children and young adults who spent years lying in “iron lungs” because their paralysis prevented them from breathing.

“Total eradication of polio is within reach,” Michael said. “The movement has already made great progress. It would be tragic if, after coming so far, our generation fell at this last hurdle.”

To sign The End of Polio petition or to book a place at the breakfast, go to www.theendofpolio.com
Although he won’t be doing much teaching, UWA’s newest Dean looks forward to influencing the next generation of business men and women.

Winthrop Professor Phil Dolan took over as Dean of the Business School a month ago and already has had many discussions as he works on his vision for the faculty.

“There won’t be any major surprises. There are a number of things I want to consult with my colleagues about before I go public with my ideas,” he said.

Professor Dolan comes to UWA from Macquarie University where he was Head of the Department of Applied Finance and Actuarial Studies.

“I loved teaching at Macquarie but, apart from the odd guest lecture, I won’t be doing any teaching here. This job involves a lot of travel and external meetings, often at short notice, so it’s not fair to the students if I take on the teaching of a unit,” he said.

“I was very fortunate as an undergraduate at Macquarie to have very good, committed teachers. So I used my time on the staff there to put something back into the system. I have had students thank me and I have told them the best way to thank a good teacher is to do the same for somebody else when the time comes.

“That way each generation contributes to the next.”

Professor Dolan followed his undergraduate degree in mathematics with an MBA at the University of New South Wales and PhD at Stanford. He then spent 13 years working for Macquarie Bank, holding the positions of Associate Director and later Division Director and Head of Investment Research and Development in the asset management division, before heading back to academia.

What brings him to UWA? In short, the reputation of the University and the Business School in particular. “When I told one of my former Macquarie Bank colleagues that I was coming here, he noted that the strong WA economy seemed to be drawing people in from around the country, and education is no exception.”

He said former Dean Professor Tracey Horton had done a tremendous job, building excellent links with business and a high quality board, housed in a great building.

“The School is positioned very well,” he said.

He likes the idea that business students have formed their own community at the southern end of campus, in their new building. Small groups of them work around tables in the study areas that overlook the atrium. “I see them literally outside my door as I walk to and from my office and I occasionally stop and ask the students what they are up to, how they are going.

“I like to ask them where they’re headed and hear their aspirations. This building helps them to work together in teams, which is something they will need to be good at when they leave here.

“With the pace of change in the business sector, they may find they have three or four distinct careers while in the workforce. The Global Financial Crisis showed that the world can move beneath you: some financial markets and products that were huge just don’t exist any more. You need to learn to adapt as the world moves.

“Teaching the students fundamental longer-term research skills is important, and you also need to arm them with focused technical skills to go out and get a job the day they graduate.”

Professor Dolan said he was happy to be in an environment where standards were so high. “UWA attracts high quality students and they push each other because they are bright and competitive.

“It’s great to genuinely have a chance to have an impact on their lives.”
Hurricane-force wind was more of a problem than the cold when biogeochemist Greg Skrzypek spent six weeks in the Arctic Circle recently on climate change research. But even the wind paled into insignificance when polar bears started patrolling the area around the Hornsund Polish Research Station on the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard. While Assistant Professor Skrzypek was at the station, a polar bear attacked and killed a British schoolboy on another part of the island.

“The first thing we learnt to do when we arrived at the station was to fire a rifle,” he said. “And we always had to carry a loaded rifle with us wherever we went.

“One day we saw a bear playing in the water near the station, then he jumped onto our boat and kept jumping up and down. We had to go out and stop him because his enormous weight would have smashed the boat. So we fired blanks and frightened him off. But he stayed in the scrub 200 metres away for two days, watching us. We had to keep an eye out for him, and keep our rifles handy.”

Professor Skrzypek is one of the chief investigators on an international project in collaboration with the University of Wroclaw in Poland (his alma mater) looking at the influence of nitrogen sources on tundra vegetation and, ultimately, on the global carbon balance. “Arctic and sub-arctic regions play a key role in that balance,” he said. “Put simply, if there is insufficient nitrogen for the Arctic lichens and mosses to grow, they will not be absorbing carbon, so the global balance will change.”

He said big colonies of small seabirds called ‘little auk’ are likely to be moving further north following shrinking sea ice, because the major component of their diet is associated with the ice front. “The little auks have a significant impact on the ecosystem. There are tens of millions in the Arctic region, mainly on Svalbard and Greenland, and they live for up to 16 years. Their droppings have provided nitrogen for the growth of plants but if the little auk leaves the area or it is driven to extinction, availability of nitrogen will become a significant limiting factor for tundra plant growth.

“Ecosystems in warmer climatic zones have more significant carbon cycling but not necessarily storage capacity due to quick turn over. In contrast, decomposition is very slow in the Arctic region, therefore even the accretion of biomass is slow. The Arctic is an important global carbon sink.

“Our aim is to work out the influence of various nitrogen sources, including rain and nitrogen-fixing algae, so our study can contribute to the improvement of global climate models. Carbon storage in the Arctic can be depleted in the future and we hope these models will help us to understand what is happening in the global system.”

Working with Professor Skrzypek are a botanist Professor Wojtun from Poland who has a long-standing collaboration with UWA, and a climatologist, a soil scientist, an algologist (specialist in algae and bacteria) and a chemist. The station, 1,500 kilometres from the North Pole (77°N) is run by the Polish Academy of Science and is one of the most northerly bases operating all year around, apart from a Norwegian one on the other side of the island.

It has a permanent crew of about 10 people, to maintain instruments, run a weather station and take part in global seismic and magnetic global monitoring.
networks. The team swells to 25-30 in summer.

“A supply ship comes twice a year, so there is not much fresh food,” Professor Skrzypek said. “A ship came about two weeks into our stay and we all stopped work to spend 24 hours unloading the supplies.”

He and other members of the expedition took samples of the vegetation and did some processing in a small laboratory at the station but Professor Skrzypek has brought hundreds of samples back to UWA to be analysed in the stable isotope laboratory, West Australian Biogeochemistry Centre at the School of Plant Biology.

“Sometimes we went out on overnight treks and would stay in a small hut,” he said. “One day we arrived at the hut to find the inside completely destroyed by a rampaging bear. Somebody had neglected to bar the door properly and a bear had obviously come inside and overturned and smashed everything, giving us a good example of its strength and power.”

Professor Skrzypek said floating ice packs presented another problem.

“It was summer, and the fjords were clear of ice so we chartered a boat to get around the island on our way back home. It was a 30-hour trip to the north of the island where the little airport was. On our way there, we found huge chunks of ice in the fjord, barring our way to the airport, which is exceptional for August. It took us several hours to find a way and sneak through, then get close enough to the shore to launch an inflatable raft to take us to land. We only just made it to the airport in time to come home.”
Agricultural sciences spread across the pages

From dung beetles to elegant writing: four new books (and a French adaptation of one of them) were celebrated last month by UWA staff.

The books were all written or edited by academics in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences.

As e-books take the world by storm, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Robyn Owens told the gathering that she still considered an ‘actual’ book a beautiful thing to hold.

One of the recent publications, Scientific writing = Thinking in Words by Emeritus Professor David Lindsay, is indeed a thing of beauty, with a cover illustration by Professor Lindsay’s daughter Kate.

After 11 years of running workshops on scientific writing, Professor Lindsay said the book was more about thinking than writing. The cover shows a brain made up of words spinning around, then coming out in a thin stream into a pen.

“Anybody who uses the principles in this book will never be accused of waffling,” he said. Professor Lindsay spent many weeks on Skype with French colleague Pascal Poindron to perfect the French adaptation.

“Writing is the same the world over, regardless of the language,” he said. “The most important part is getting the logic of things right.”

Evolutionary biologist Winthrop Professor Leigh Simmons has published Ecology and Evolution of Dung Beetles.

“Dung beetles have been a subject of research since before Darwin,” Professor Simmons said. “They are characterised by extreme variations and Darwin used them to describe natural selection.”

He said the beetles had an acute sense of smell; a very elaborate parental care system; and they could use polarised light from the moon at night to find their way around.

“They are found on every continent except Antarctica and there is no better group with which to study biodiversity,” he said.

Professor Simmons’ book brings together the collective knowledge about dung beetles, with the help of co-editor James Ridsdell-Smith.

Winthrop Professor David Pannell’s book, Changing Land Management: Adoption of New Practices by Rural Landholders, looks at what drives or inhibits farmers to change their land management.

“It is useful for scientists, policy makers and environmental managers,” Professor Pannell said. “The book is the culmination of a long journey to get this research into the hands of the practitioners.”

Geographer Professor Matthew Tonts and economist Associate Professor Abu Siddique edited Globalisation, Agriculture and Development: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific.

It brings together agriculture, economics, sociology and geography to revisit old questions about agriculture and economic and social development and wellbeing.

Bigger prize pool for smart ideas

It seems everybody who owns a smart phone loves a new app.

The competition to design and develop a new application for a mobile device has suddenly ballooned in value.

From a $15,000 cash prize, a tablet or mobile device to the value of $1,000 and $5,000 worth of professional services, as reported in the last issue of UWAnews, the prize pool is now at least $150,000.

More sponsors have come on board, hopeful that this competition, run by Univation, will unearth some great ideas and talent in WA.

Univation is an annual event for UWA and Curtin, Murdoch and Edith Cowan universities to attract investors to help commercialise their research.

Submissions to the Univation 2011 WApp Awards close on 7 October. The finalists will be invited to present their ideas during the Univation convention at Burswood on 2 and 3 November.

For more information, go to www.univation.com.au/wapp
Good work and great photos

Images from Africa are always compelling. And when they are accompanied by a good story, they are irresistible.

UWA Arts student and St George’s College resident Jarrad Seng has combined both in his first solo photographic exhibition, Portraits of Tanzania, opening in Fremantle next month.

Jarrad picked up a digital SLR camera for the first time just two years ago and quickly became a talented photographer. His work has brightened the pages of UWA News in several issues.

He conceived an idea for a photography and volunteering project that would go towards his Arts degree, and his enthusiasm for the benefits it would bring to his future career in the arts and creative industries resulted in funding from the Vice-Chancellor and UWA’s Study Abroad.

He set off for Tanzania in the company of his faculty student adviser, Elizabeth Oliver, who was on her way to spend her holidays working, as usual, at the school of St Jude. He stayed at a volunteers’ hostel and spent six weeks working for three non-government organisations: an orphanage, a women’s development school and a day school which provides free education for children from poverty-stricken families.

Along the way, Jarrad photographed the locals, both the people and the animals of the Serengeti.

Capturing images of lions, leopards and zebra, and the wildebeest migration and meeting nomadic Maasai people was only part of the story. “I became obsessed with the idea of what it means to help people and commit your life to making change,” Jarrad said. “How do you make that decision to sacrifice your lifestyle in favour of one dedicated to helping others?”

So those people became part of his photographic story too.

It is a joyous exhibition and one that will continue his support of the three NGOs with whom he worked, as proceeds from his exhibition will go to them.

Jarrad thanked the Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson, the Goodwe Foundation, St George’s Chapel, and Elizabeth Oliver and Taul Harper from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for their support.

Portraits of Tanzania opens at Kulcha in Fremantle on Thursday 6 October at 6pm.

To read more about Jarrad, see his images and donate to his cause, go to http://portraitsoftanzania.pozible.com

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Marketing our universities

The one constant in the higher education sector is that it is always changing.

And in such a dynamic field, it is always good to meet and share ideas with other like-minded professionals … which is just what more than 200 university staff from around Australia will be doing at UWA this week.

The Universities Australia Marketing, Communications and Development Conference theme is Connect—Engage—Retain and reflects the significance of the key roles that marketing, communications and development play in our universities and higher education organisations.

It is held biannually around Australia and this year, WA is hosting the conference, organised by representatives from all five WA universities including staff from UWA’s Public Affairs.

One of the draw cards is advertising guru Todd Sampson, CEO of Leo Burnett, one of Australia’s leading creative advertising agencies and a regular on ABC TV’s The Gruen Transfer and Channel 10’s 7pm Project.

Tricia King, Pro-Vice-Master for Student Experience and Director of External Relations, Birkbeck, University of London, will share her experiences of student recruitment and retention, managing alumni and fund-raising.

Brand management is the focus of Dr Jan Hofmeyr’s contribution. South Africa-based Dr Hofmeyr developed The Conversion Model, which measures the commitment of people to their current choices and closeness to conversion. It has been successfully applied to more than 350 products in more than 200 countries over the past 20 years.

Vice-Chancellors from the University of Canberra and the University of South Australia are also presenting at the conference. Professor Stephen Parker (Canberra), a barrister and solicitor, is speaking about the concept of Omniversity, while Professor Peter Høj, a scientist, will talk about leadership in times of challenge and change for universities.

Our Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bill Louden presents the first paper of the three-day conference with a topic close to his heart, social inclusion as part of universities’ responsibilities to their communities.

And former Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Seares gives the views of donors and recipients in a study of philanthropy in WA.

Delegates will also visit the campuses of WA’s other public universities.
Readers help the worlds’ children again

Children suffering from the famine in Africa will benefit from the sale of thousands of books on the campus last month.

The Save the Children booksale raised $240,000, just shy of its record profit, set last year. Funds will help children in Australia and in other parts of the world as well as in Africa.

The six-day sale in the Undercroft attracts bargain hunters, serious collectors and families, with many children already enjoying their new books as they follow their parents back to their cars.

ABC Radio 720 broadcast from the sale on Saturday morning and the boy scouts did a roaring trade in barbecued sausages.

The University branch of Save the Children thanks the University community for its support and is already collecting books for next year’s sale.

Physiotherapists are at the front line of caring for people with disabilities.

UWA’s Centre for Musculoskeletal Studies recently had 22 neurological physiotherapists from around Australia and overseas doing postgraduate studies, and they took time out from their work to support people with disabilities.

They joined more than 20,000 people across the country at a DisabiITEA to raise awareness of the campaign for major reforms to Australia’s disability policies.

These reforms, which will improve the opportunities and experience of Australians with a disability (and their families and carers) are under way. The Federal Government is working towards making funding more equitable and easier to access.

“Our staff and students have been passionate supporters of this campaign,” said Professor Barbara Singer. “Even though the government has pledged support for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, there is an ongoing need to make sure that the recommendations from an extensive consultation process are not watered down and that the scheme is introduced along the lines recommended in the Productivity Commission’s report.”

Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, was a guest of UWA’s Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) on 1 September, speaking about the future of disability policy in Australia.

The lecture was co-sponsored by the IAS, Equity and Diversity at UWA, and the WA Disability Collective.
The Cancer Council’s Relay for Life has become the Student Guild’s second biggest fundraiser, after Prosh.

Last year, UWA was the first university in Australia to host the event, raising more than $100,000 with 30 teams walking, jogging, running and dancing around the Oak Lawn for 24 hours.

Students who are part of the Guild’s Volunteer Hub are organising the second Relay for Life on the weekend of 15 and 16 October. Volunteer Emma Yole said she hopes the event will attract 50 teams this year and raise up to $150,000.

“The Guild is arranging for the refectory to be open for the entire 24 hours, as it was last year,” Emma said. “We will have live bands, a DJ who will entertain for most of the 24 hours, possibly a volleyball court and Midnight Madness, when teams can do lots of crazy, creative things.

“We will also have the Candlelight Ceremony, as we did last year, around 8pm, to remember loved ones who have died or survived cancer – the whole point of the event.”

Emma said the organisers were keen to co-opt cancer survivors to take part. “They get to do the first lap then enjoy a VIP afternoon tea,” she said. “If you are a survivor or know somebody who would like to be involved, please contact Sophie Rudling at 20497023@student.uwa.edu.au

Teams, of 10 to 15 people, are expected to raise at least $1,000 each before the Relay and they can raise more during the event with entrepreneurial activities such as selling glow sticks at night.

To find out more about UWA’s Relay for Life, go to www.relayforlife.org.au/ or contact Jeremy Brown at 20247913@student.uwa.edu.au

A group of people living with lung disease surprised themselves by making beautiful music – powered by their lungs.

Winthrop Professor Jane Davidson from the School of Music helped the group explore the relationship between singing and breath control at an uplifting workshop in the Callaway Auditorium recently.

Participants in the workshop were from the Lung Institute of WA’s self help group, LIFE, which organises a range of social and educational activities for people living with diseases such as emphysema, bronchiectasis and asthma.

Professor Davidson gave a hands-on demonstration of how controlling the air flow in the chest, throat and lungs influences the singing voice. The singers were encouraged to place their hands on their abdomens and feel the sound vibrating in them. Many were pleasantly surprised at how long they could hold a note after just a short amount of coaching from Professor Davidson.

She said that while singing would not necessarily increase lung function, greater breath control could only be regarded as beneficial.

One of Professor Davidson’s research interests is the health benefits of singing and she is investigating singing interventions for older people, especially those facing social isolation.

LIFE co-ordinator Jenni Ibrahim said the purpose of the workshop was for people to enjoy the sensation of singing and breathing in a different way, with an emphasis on participation.

“UK researchers found that people with chronic lung disease who enjoyed a community singing program said they felt better. They enjoyed the physical sensation of singing, were more relaxed and learned something new about breathing. They saw singing as a very positive experience,” Dr Ibrahim said.
There’s no such thing as a free morning tea.

At an event organised by Finance and Resources to promote Fairtrade accreditation for UWA, the Fairtrade tea, coffee, sugar and drinking chocolate was free.

But in return, the staff from Human Resources, Facilities Management (including the Sustainable Development unit), Financial Services and other areas, were asked to ‘trade’ their thoughts on Fairtrade.

Of the 58 people who responded to the survey, 50 were in support of UWA pursuing accreditation and eight ‘didn’t mind either way’. Respondents thought the most important reason was that, as a big organisation, our collective actions could make a real difference.

Office supplier Corporate Express donated the tea, coffee, drinking chocolate and sugar so guests could sample what they would be drinking if they agreed to buying Fairtrade products from the company.

Fairtrade has helped more than six million people worldwide in 58 developing countries to get a fair and stable price for their products. Teams in Sustainable Development and Strategic Procurement are working towards Fairtrade accreditation for UWA.

The Science Library Café already buys and serves only Fairtrade drinks and they are also available at other Guild outlets on the Crawley campus.

The Finance and Resources team behind the idea would ideally like to see Fairtrade products in every office kitchen on campus, as well as in the cafes.

Director Gaye McMath addressed the 150 people who gathered for morning tea in the lobby of the Ken and Julie Michael building.

She said Fairtrade accreditation for UWA would demonstrate our commitment to social and environmental sustainability, by paying due consideration to the impact of our purchases.

She told the story of going to buy her son Oscar a hot chocolate recently. “I was told it was going to cost $5.95 and it wasn’t even a Fairtrade product,” she said. “Now I’m lucky that I can afford to pay that for a hot chocolate, but what message does that send to my son? So I said, no thanks, and we walked away.”

Fairtrade supports the sustainability agenda within UWA’s Operational Priorities Plan, the UWA Sustainable Development Plan and the Strategic Procurement business plan.

Staff supporting the move who put on the morning tea included Rob Shannon, Antoinette Maynard, James Morgan and Lynsey Fitzgerald from Financial Services, Annette Black, Associate Director Finance and Resources, and Trish Howard and Jamie Steger (on work experience from Shenton College) from Sustainable Development (FM).

Diversity funds for setting wrongs right

Is there a need for more fair equitable action in your part of the campus?

Have you identified a diversity or equity opportunity in the context of New Courses 2012, but need some development funds? Consider applying for a Diversity Initiative Fund grant.

Applications for assistance from the UWA Diversity Initiatives Fund are invited from individuals, groups, schools or faculties seeking funding to assist in the development of targeted diversity initiatives that will enhance equity for students and or staff.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide financial assistance to new projects that aim to enhance educational and employment access, participation and outcomes for groups of students and staff identified as priority areas of focus:

• Women and men in non-traditional areas
• Cultural and linguistic diversity
• People with a disability or medical condition
• Indigenous Australians
• Flexible work practices and life balance
• Sexual orientation and gender identity
• Family and carer responsibilities

Over the past 15 years, the Diversity Initiatives Fund has kick-started many UWA projects and initiatives that are still in place. Often it is staff or students at the local level who can best identify an initiative that will meet a particular need or fill a gap in their area, and frequently it has relevance for the wider campus.

Applications for funding close on Friday 4 November, and all applicants will be notified by late November. Successful applicants are expected to complete their project during 2012.

An application form can be downloaded from the Equity and Diversity web site at www.equity.uwa.edu.au or by contacting Robyn Barbiell on 6488 3873. Applications should be sent to DIF Applications, Equity and Diversity, MBDP 350.
NOTICES

WARREN JONES ORATION
The Decade Ahead – Challenges for Australian Health and Medical Research

Professor Douglas Hilton
Director, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research
Tuesday 20 September
6pm – 7.45pm
The University Club Auditorium
Admission is free
Call Jacky Jarrett at Fremantle Hospital for more details:
9431 2133 or jacky.jarrett@health.wa.gov.au

Professor Hilton has spent his career working on the molecular regulation of blood cell production and function. Warren Jones was Chairman of the Board of Fremantle Hospital and established the Fremantle Hospital Medical Research Foundation. This annual oration honours his contribution.

CLASSIFIEDS

TO LET

MOUNT LAWLEY: A spacious two-bedroom apartment (98m2) in Mount Lawley, for lease from 4 December 2011. The apartment can be rented fully furnished or empty, as required. A year’s or six months’ lease is preferred, but offers of shorter leases will be considered.

Floorsboards, a newly renovated bathroom, a beautiful fifth-floor view to Perth CBD and public transport at the doorstep. Call 0413 491 342 or email danijela.kambaskovic-sawers@uwa.edu.au.

MUTTON BIRD (between Albany and Denmark): two-bedroom apartment (98m2) in Mount Lawley, for lease from 4 December 2011. The apartment can be rented fully furnished or empty, as required. A year’s or six months’ lease is preferred, but offers of shorter leases will be considered.

Floorboards, a newly renovated bathroom, a beautiful fifth-floor view to Perth CBD and public transport at the doorstep. Call 0413 491 342 or email danijela.kambaskovic-sawers@uwa.edu.au.

CLAREMONT: Pleasant room and bathroom available in Claremont. Share kitchen facilities. Close to public transport and the Claremont town centre. There is storage space for a bike and even a small car. WiFi available. Academics or graduate students preferred. $200 per week. Please phone Susan: 9383 4362

QUINDALUP: A charming, recently renovated, fully self-contained redbrick cottage only 400m from beautiful Geographe Bay and 2km from Dunsborough township. Located at the end of a private road, this cottage offers privacy and security, a lovely natural vista out over Toby Inlet Reserve, and is a great cottage for all seasons. Please go to www.quindalup.net.au for further information.

PROMOTION BRIEFS

Winthrop Professor Richard Read
School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts
Professor Read is an internationally recognised art historian with expertise in the relationships between literature and the visual arts, the history of art criticism, 19th and 20th century European and Australian art history, contemporary film and the history of complex images in global contexts from the late medieval ages to the present time. His book The Reversed Painting in Western Art has won a ARC Discovery Grant for integration of two thousand images discovered in major American and European collections and libraries into an innovative web-based database. Professor Read hopes to assist in the development of the UWA Cultural Precinct, the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, the Institute of Advanced Studies, the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of the Emotions, the Centre for Islamic Studies and other UWA Centres, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art and the Art Gallery of Western Australia to bring together joint projects in the future.

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Unexpected Professional Skills Development

Imagine the scenario of civil unrest in the streets of Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

Public acts of violence have reached the stage of overwhelming the civilian police force, forcing them to call upon the Australian-led armed forces stationed there. A team of soldiers is deployed, protected by riot shields, body armour and a variety of non-lethal weapons. They move forward in a highly disciplined and practised fashion, pushing the rock-throwing crowd back, identifying, subduing and arresting the ringleaders.

Now imagine those same soldiers as a cook, accountant, student, lawyer or engineer.

I recently had the opportunity to witness the above scenario (in simulation) while visiting the Solomon Islands as a guest of Defence Reserves Support, the division of the Department of Defence that supports the relationship between Reservists and their employers.

I was part of a group of employer and professional organisation representatives taken to Honiara to see first-hand the work of members of our organisations who are currently on active deployment with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

What particularly struck me about the Public Order Management demonstration was the obvious personal characteristics being displayed by the soldiers: discipline, confidence, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making under pressure (and under fire!) and a culture of looking after one’s colleagues.

These characteristics represent many of the professional attributes that we expect to see in all professionals, regardless of discipline.

The RAMSI mission, Operation Helpem Fren, is providing organisational and police support to the Solomon Islands government to help them re-establish a stable and secure government system, police force and judiciary.

The role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is to support RAMSI in the maintenance of law and order.

It is obvious that the defence force personnel are well liked by the local people, regarding them as friends who came to their assistance when they needed it and who are sticking around to help them get back on their feet.

Around 80 per cent of the ADF personnel are Reservists and at the time of my visit most of those were currently from the 13th Brigade, which is the Western Australian reserve brigade headquartered in Perth.

My visit to the Solomon Islands was made possible under a program called Exercise Boss Lift. I was nominated for this particular Boss Lift by Captain Adam Crowle, a Perth-based mechanical engineer and Officer in the Royal Australian Engineers (13th Brigade).

Captain Crowle perfectly illustrates my point about development of professional skills. He is nearing the end of his four-month deployment. His job in Honiara is to run the administration of all deployed troops in the Solomon Islands. He has a staff of five people and is responsible for their welfare. He also handles public affairs, media, some financial functions and coordination of visits by military and civilian dignitaries.

Since graduating as a mechanical engineer, Captain Crowle has worked in the oil and gas and water services industries. He says the leadership skills he has gained in the Army revolve around a culture of achieving a common goal, where everything must work correctly or lives may be lost. Time management, the ability to handle multiple tasks at the one time, and the ability to direct and encourage others are crucial skills developed in the military environment. These skills are also crucial to management of engineering teams, but they are likely to be developed much earlier in staff who are also members of the armed forces reserves.

I was not sure what to expect when I embarked on this visit. I was astounded by the dedication and confidence of these young people and have come away with the certainty that any organisation that supports its young staff in their defence force reserve training and deployment is not only supporting a fundamental part of the nation’s defence force, but will see enormous benefits resulting from the accelerated development of professional skills in its staff.

I encourage managers who have Reservists on their staff to learn more about what they are doing and to support them in every way possible.