By Lindy Brophy

Feeling low? It might not be depression.

Some Perth people have been taking anti-depressants for years, only to find that they are suffering from a sleep problem, not a mental illness.

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) and depression share many symptoms, and practitioners say it is difficult to know whether the sleep disorder is part of depression or whether depression is a symptom of OSA.

A collaboration of UWA researchers including psychologists, a neuro-psychiatrist and respiratory and sleep physicians, are comparing the two conditions to be able to more accurately identify, diagnose and treat the disorders when they occur together.

They will also examine the efficacy of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy – used to treat OSA – in reducing depression associated with sleep disorders.

The diagnosis of depression in patients with OSA is confounded by the overlap of symptoms between the two disorders: excessive daytime sleepiness, fatigue, loss of interest, decreased libido, poor concentration and sleep disturbance.

“This increases the risk that depression may be overlooked or inappropriately treated,” said Professor of Psychology Romola Bucks. “It remains unclear whether OSA causes depression or is simply associated with it.”

David Hillman, Clinical Professor in Pulmonary Physiology and Sleep

Sorting out the sad from the sleepy

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Medicine, and an expert in sleep disorders, said he and his colleagues "frequently see patients who have very clear sleep apnoea but have borne the label of depression for several years.

“When they tried CPAP therapy and got a good night’s sleep, it was as if a cloud had lifted. Obstructive sleep apnoea was their problem, causing them to feel depressed. CPAP can work extraordinarily quickly and relieve the symptoms attributed to depression,” he said.

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea is the most common sleep disorder affecting Australians (about six per cent of the adult population). People with the disorder momentarily and frequently stop breathing while sleeping. In severe cases, they can have hundreds of ‘obstructive events’ (with the soft palate obstructing the airways) every night.

When they stop breathing, there is no oxygen going in, no carbon dioxide going out. The stress responses and lack of oxygen can put people at an increased risk of stroke, heart attack and diabetes. Sufferers are also more likely to have accidents during the day, including fatal ones, on the road and at work when they ‘nod off’, because they are so tired.

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure therapy (CPAP) is delivered through a sleep mask which keeps up a continuous flow of oxygen to the wearer.

Sleep disorders seem suddenly to have become the most talked-about and diagnosed medical problems of this century. Professor Bucks and Professor Hillman agree that the ageing population, coupled with our alarming tendency towards obesity, has accelerated the incidence of OSA and other sleep-related problems.

“As people age, their throat muscles become floppy and can obstruct the airways,” Professor Hillman said. “And problems can also develop among people who work out in the gym, doing heavy static weight training which results in a heavily-muscled neck. Those big lumps of muscle present a high risk of OSA.”

The team is recruiting volunteer patients from the sleep clinic at QEII to take part in a trial using CPAP therapy to determine its effects on depression symptoms.

To help define which symptoms to focus on, information about depression symptoms and sleep apnoea in the general population will be obtained from recruits in the Busselton Health Study. Professor Alan James, a respiratory and sleep physician, has been involved with the Busselton study since 1989. In 2009, he helped to set up the Busselton Healthy Ageing Study, which is collecting data from 4,000 ‘baby boomers’ (people born between 1946 and 1964).

“We are asking for information about sleepiness, sleep behaviour and depression, hoping to find what symptoms are common to OSA and depression and which symptoms are specific to each disorder,” he said.

Professor James said the collaboration, despite being spread across faculties, campuses and even the State, with work being done in Busselton, was very productive. “It has been exceptionally well organised by the study’s chief research officer, Peta Grayson, who brought all the protocols together. Dr Nigel McArdle, who works in the same area as David and me, has been invaluable in developing the protocol, carefully anticipating problems and defining CPAP outcomes.”

Sergio Starkstein, Winthrop Professor in Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences at Fremantle Hospital, brings his substantial experience in assessing depression in the setting of other illness to the study. He said it was not unusual for him to see a patient who had been referred to him for treatment for depression, who actually had OSA.

“These patients tell me they have no energy, they can’t concentrate, they have no motivation, they want to sleep during the day. But they don’t say that they are feeling sad or anxious. And this is the clue that the patient may not actually be depressed but be suffering from OSA,” Professor Starkstein said.

Interestingly, these patients do not complain of insomnia, so they are not aware that their sleep is being disrupted hundreds of times every night.

Professor Starkstein said there was a chance that people with undiagnosed and untreated OSA could develop full-blown depression. “So it is very important to identify the two disorders. This study is designed to help us to do this.”

Dr Michael Hunter, the senior scientist and coordinator of the data collection team in Busselton, and Professor Matthew Knuiman from Population Health complete the study team.
You don’t need to re-invent the wheel – but if you must, don’t try to do it alone.

With the support of the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), researchers can tackle global problems with access to the experience, innovation and initiative of other researchers around the world.

Membership of WUN raises the international profile of UWA, but it also provides benefits ranging from co-authored publications and externally-funded grants to joint PhD supervision, postgraduate and early career researcher mentoring and access to specialist equipment and facilities.

Judy Berman, UWA’s Principal Adviser on International Research Networks and WUN Co-ordinator, said researchers were generally keen to establish international research collaborations, but it was not the norm to make a ‘cold call’ in seeking collaborators.

“A major benefit of UWA’s membership of WUN is that it provides a ‘legitimate’ mechanism through which researchers can initiate contact with potential international collaborators in a WUN partner university,” Associate Professor Berman said.

“Applying to the WUN Research Development Fund (RDF) requires a minimum three WUN member universities from across at least two continents. The WUN Coordinators act as ‘matchmakers’ – identifying researchers from their own institutions to participate in externally-initiated RDF applications, and facilitating a search for expertise from other members to join UWA-led RDF applications.”

In 2012, UWA was leading three WUN projects (Winthrop Professor Susan Prescott in Paediatrics and Child Health, Professor Linda Slack-Smith in Dentistry and Professor Mark Rivers in Ecohydrology) and involved in nine others, more than any other WUN member. A/Professor Berman said it was unlikely that most of these research linkages would have occurred without the WUN framework.

Thomas Wernberg (Oceans Institute) credits his engagement with WUN on climate change adaptation in kelps as significantly contributing to the success of his Australian Research Council Future Fellowship application.

Professor David Pannell (Agriculture and Research Economics) provided the opportunity for Dr Morteza Chalak, an early career researcher, to participate in a WUN-funded meeting at the University of Alberta (UA) last year. She met international researchers, established new research contacts and co-authored a paper on the economies of invasive species control which led to a successful application for a UWA Research Collaboration Award to work with three senior UA researchers on a new project.

Professor Robyn Owens, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), said external grant income with WUN partners had grown dramatically since UWA joined WUN in 2008. “In 2007 our external grant income with WUN member universities was $1,541,577, 1.04 per cent of our total grant income; in 2011 it had jumped to $12,394,433 representing 6.28 per cent.”

On top of increased funding and wider collaborations, WUN has been the catalyst for more publications.

“Since 2008, our items indexed in the Web of Science have risen by 31.6 per cent,” Professor Owens said. “When we look at the rate of increase in terms of collaborations with WUN partners, our publications have grown by 67.6 per cent!”

For more information about WUN, contact A/Professor Berman on 6488 8033 or at judith.berman@uwa.edu.au
Recently, I had the great pleasure of acknowledging our University’s highly cited researchers, and authors of highly cited papers, whose work contributed significantly to the recent and well-timed rise in UWA’s international status.

As you would be aware, just as we were about to begin our 2013 Centenary celebrations, we were named 96th among the world’s top 100 universities by the world’s foremost measure of research universities, the Academic Ranking of World Universities.

Highly cited researchers are measured by the international group Thomson Reuters (TR) by citations to their work. The group, whose website bears the motto ‘The right information in the right hands leads to amazing things’ identified 26 researchers from, or affiliated with, our University.

In January, we conducted an audit of highly cited papers published last year and identified 58 UWA highly cited papers. This was a significant increase on the 39 highly cited papers identified in 2010 and more than double the 23 from 2009. Again, a wide spectrum of research was covered by these papers – from crop yield and weed management to an examination of the Leeuwin current and fatty liver disease.

Coincidently, around the same time we celebrated our research output, one of the first of UWA Gives Back regional projects completed a very successful trip to towns in the Mid-West of Western Australia (the site of the future Square Kilometre Array) where communities were encouraged to learn more about the night sky and the fascinating project being led by the UWA astrophysicists.

UWA Gives Back – our regional celebration of the Centenary – recognises the role of the people of WA, wherever they live, in the evolution of our University.

Many of our researchers carry out their work in regional areas of Western Australia and our University has a proud record of contributing to the development of the State through our research.

We must always aim to fulfil our mission to advance knowledge for the benefit of the communities we serve … and beyond our Centenary celebrations we will continue to encourage and attract the highest quality researchers who can continue to add to the sum of world knowledge for the benefit of us all.

Paul Johnson
Vice-Chancellor

Three jolly good fellows

Three UWA academics have been elected as Fellows of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

It is among the highest honours for national achievement in the field.

Susan Broomhall is Winthrop Professor of History in the School of Humanities. She has achieved wide international recognition for her innovative scholarship in the field of women and gender in early modern France and the Low Countries.

Professor Broomhall’s publications on women in the book trade, in medical knowledge and practice, in religion and in historiography, heritage and tourism brought a feminist analysis to the cultural innovations of the sixteenth century.

More recently her work has expanded to include families and households, poverty and social welfare, policing and work.

Winthrop Professor Philip Mead is UWA’s inaugural Chair of Australian Literature. His research includes history, criticism and pedagogy of Australian literature, literary regionalism, Shakespeare’s reception in Australia, and new developments in digital humanities.

He co-edited The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry, which shaped the accepted canon of Australian poetry. Professor Mead’s poetry and other creative writing has been published in journals including the Adelaide Review, the Age Monthly Review, Australian Book Review and Meanjin.

The University’s third fellow is Terri-ann White, Director of UWA Publishing. In 1999, Professor White was the inaugural director of the Institute of Advanced Studies, a post she combined for several years with her role in publishing.

She has made an outstanding contribution to contemporary Australian society and the humanities and is also a significant Australian author. Professor White’s creative writing includes a novel, a collection of short stories, edited books of poetry, biography and non-fiction.

Fellows of the Academy range from experts in Chinese languages to musicology and the environment.
The new Wesfarmers Chair in Australian History is itself making history.

It is the first fully privately-funded Chair in Australian History in the world. Wesfarmers, the giant WA-based private company with huge retail interests, announced its $5 million gift to the University last month as a joint Centenary celebration. The company celebrates 100 years of operation next year.

It might seem an odd choice of metaphor, but history has come a long way in those 100 years.

It is no longer the stuff of dates, battles and kings, and dry tomes gathering dust on the bookshelves. While it might have seemed more appropriate for Wesfarmers to fund a Chair in Natural and Agricultural Sciences or Business, its executive realises that history helps to “provide an enormously important perspective to current economic, social and environmental debates,” as its Managing Director, Richard Goyder, said at the ceremony in the Vice-Chancellery.

UWA Chancellor Michael Chaney is written into the history of both the University and Wesfarmers. The day of the announcement it was 30 years almost to the day since Dr Chaney had joined the company. (It is eight years since he left.)

“They are two organisations synonymous with the State’s economic and social development,” he told guests, who included five former directors of Wesfarmers, whom Dr Chaney calculated had 140 years of collective history.

The Chair will shape the future direction of teaching history in both schools and universities. It includes the development of a new Masters in Education (History) program for school teachers, to ensure that WA history retains a vibrant and important place in the State education system.

“It is vital for us to have a historical perspective on today’s national and regional debates,” Dr Chaney said. “On topics such as Indigenous issues, climate change, resource development, global food security, immigration and population, federalism and cultural and social policies.”

He said that, since 2009, when UWA won a nationwide bid to host the country’s second Chair in Australian Literature, the University had focused its efforts on establishing a Chair in Australian History.

Krishna Sen, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, said the post would be advertised internationally in the hope of appointing a leading historian within six months.

“The new Chair will help provide decision-makers with critical analysis tools to tackle future challenges, guide public policy, meet environmental challenges and respond to the political, economic, social and cultural expectations of the State’s Indigenous and non-Indigenous people,” Winthrop Professor Sen said.

Len Collard, Indigenous elder and Professor in the School of Indigenous Studies, delivered a welcome to country at the ceremony. He smiled when he mentioned his people’s “ultimate historical connection” to the State.

Before playing the didgeridoo, Professor Collard presented Dr Bob Every, Chair of Wesfarmers, with a welcome stone, decorated with Noongar artwork. “This stone says congratulations and well done,” he said.
A protein in cow’s milk could save the Australian Government billions of dollars in the future, by keeping elderly people on their feet.

It is a long journey from the dairy farm to the Treasury, but if UWA researchers can determine the mechanisms for the benefits of the natural milk protein, this could be used as an alternative to other therapies to help maintain the health of old muscle and prevent elderly people from becoming frail and dependent.

NatraGuard, the commercial name given to the protein, has already improved the muscle mass of mice, in the early stages of an ARC Linkage project between UWA, the dairy company Murray Goulburn and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

Professor Miranda Grounds and her UWA research colleague Dr Tea Shavlakadze, with PhD candidate Zoe Soffe, in the School of Anatomy, Physiology and Human Biology, have a world famous laboratory where mice and their muscle development from birth to very old age is studied at the cell and molecular level.

“We know that as humans and mice age, their muscle mass and function deteriorates,” Professor Grounds said. “We want to work out at precisely what stage critical muscle changes occur, so we can recommend when people need to supplement their diet with the natural milk protein.

“Aging is very expensive for a country. When elderly people lose muscle function, they become frail, less stable and more easily trip over. When they fall and break a bone their bodies are slow to heal and when a fall requires bed rest, they lose more muscle and can lose their independence, with very high health costs,” she said.

Dr Shavlakadze said that over the next 40 years, the number of Australians over the age of 85 would have quadrupled to about 1.8 million. “Climate change and ageing have been identified by Treasury as the two biggest problems for Australia in the future,” she said.

The researchers said it was universally accepted that exercise was one way to maintain muscle mass, and the benefits can be enhanced by nutritional supplements.

“Many elderly people already take supplements often with little or no scientific justification. And this is where Murray Goulburn comes in. If we can isolate a concentrate from milk that is very beneficial for muscle mass, this will become a very useful product for helping to prevent muscle wasting,” Dr Shavlakadze said.

“However, in order to use any supplement for therapeutic purposes we need to know the exact molecular basis for the benefit and any side effects.”

She is working on the molecular events responsible for muscle growth and wasting, particularly protein breakdown. Professor Grounds’ expertise is in the cell biology and Zoe’s work is now focussed on defining the benefits of different kinds of exercise on very old muscles.

Professor Grounds looks forward to a result that will benefit rehabilitation at any age, with applications to sports medicine as well as the ageing population.

The Office of Industry and Innovation’s Simon Handford is working with the research group to facilitate the partnership with Murray Goulburn and the Victorian Government.
Universities tend to breed interesting characters but surely the most unusual is Macca, the pig with his own Facebook page.

Macca, a black piglet, is the pet of 122 children at Unicare Early Childhood Centre in Parkway.

The year-old porker is fully-grown but no bigger than a large dog and a lot more docile than most year-old pups.

The children love walking around the campus with him and he roams free around the centre’s yards most afternoons.

“He loves sticking his nose into the children’s paints,” said Christine Koba, the centre’s environmental educator.

“We have a very strong environmental ethos here, driven by being in the grounds of a University and our beautiful surroundings,” she said. “We teach the children to take responsibility for the natural and the built environment.”

This includes caring for the vegetable gardens, the community of chooks, who lay eggs which are then used in the centre’s food preparation, and of course, the on-going care of Macca.

“A lot of the children here have come from overseas and both of their parents are studying or working at the University, so they don’t have much time outdoors. But we do a lot of our activities outside under our shady trees and surrounded by gardens, bush and nature.”

Macca is affectionate and Christine says he is very clean. “He would choose a shower to a mud bath any day, if he could,” she said. “The reason pigs wallow – in mud, sand or water – is that they’re trying to get cool, because they don’t sweat.”

The pig’s hygiene routine is exemplary. He washes his snout in one bucket, drinks from another and bathes in another small trough.

He eats horse muesli (which includes lots of lupins), carrots, weetbix, the vegetable peelings from the centre’s kitchen and as much grass as he likes.

“When he’s out walking on campus with the children, he’s always leading them to the best grass and puddles,” Christine said.

Macca is on the larger side of miniature. “We wanted a miniature pig but there are actually no miniature pigs in Australia. Macca is the offspring of the breeder’s smallest boar and smallest sow.”

Macca was chosen as a pet for Unicare because of the educational benefits for the children. They learn to care for an animal and they learn more about the world around them.

“We chose a pig for a pet because it’s a bit different from a dog or a rabbit. Lots of children will have these at home or will have seen them. But very few of them will ever have a pig as a pet,” she said.

You can help Unicare look after Macca by ‘liking’ him on Facebook. “When enough people like him, we hope to be able to get a sponsor to help us pay for his food and vet bills,” Christine said.

Find Macca at www.facebook.com/Maccathepig

(See also page 20.)
The universally-accepted image of a social worker is somebody working at grass roots, responding to the needs of vulnerable people who are struggling with a myriad of problems.

We don’t expect to see them mixing it with the suits in the boardroom.

But that is exactly where many social workers end up, drawing upon social work knowledge, skills and values to influence the governance of corporations, institutions … and universities.

“A lot of social workers are in positions of leadership,” said Sue Bailey, Assistant Professor in the Discipline of Social Work and Social Policy. “In WA, one of the most visible is Jan Stewart, CEO of Lotterywest. Social workers are experienced at understanding and then negotiating the contexts in which individuals live and work – and leadership comes naturally from that.

“The skills, knowledge and values of a social worker can be used to influence policy, inform practice and change people’s behaviour.”

Their social work colleague Kanau Sion trains social workers at the University of Papua New Guinea. He also specialises in leadership and management and serves on several professional boards and committees in his native PNG.

Sion submitted his PhD at UWA last year and was supported by an Australian Leadership Awards Scholarship (ALAS). He was then successful in attaining a prestigious Australian Government Prime Minister’s Pacific Award and under that scheme, Sion has spent three months with A/Professor Bailey.

“When Sion approached us about the leadership placement, I immediately thought of Gina,” she said. “I had worked with her before and I knew that he would benefit from her experience and leadership.

“In PNG, the Chief Secretary is a social worker, as are many leaders, including politicians,” Sion said. “PNG is very culturally challenging, with issues of child labour and domestic violence and many different indigenous peoples living together. It poses a big challenge for social workers and we need to provide good leadership. I have learnt so much from Gina.”

A/Professor Bailey said some social work students, particularly Masters students, wanted to develop knowledge and skills for change with the idea of working in big organisations. “Applying social work values and ethics provides guiding principles which are important for effective leadership,” she said.

Most social work graduates (especially Masters graduates) from UWA are offered employment before they finish studying.

“It’s because they have the knowledge, skills and values important for good governance, particularly in responding to people,” she said.
More than 50 years ago, Lesleyann Watson enrolled at UWA. She graduated for what her family hopes will be the last time last month.

The 70-year-old journalist and writer was thrilled to be invited to join the procession and sit on stage during the Arts graduation ceremony, the first Centenary ceremony, on 6 March.

A year after starting tertiary study, the young arts student dropped out in 1961 because she couldn’t afford the fees. She worked as a radio script writer, moved to Melbourne and met and married her husband Dennis Lingane over the next few years.

She returned to UWA 15 years later after living in Europe and having a son. Part-time study over 10 years led to a BA Hons in 1986.

Mrs Lingane began studying for her Masters part-time, then swapped to full-time study to graduate with an MPhil in 1990.

When she and her husband retired, they moved to France where Mrs Lingane studied French language and culture for 12 months, receiving a Diploma from the University of Lyon.

Further studies in French lured her back to UWA when they returned to WA, even though it meant driving the 600km round trip from Bridgetown every week of the academic year.

On 6 March, Mrs Lingane received her postgraduate Diploma in Modern Languages with high distinction.

“We thought that was the end,” Mr Lingane said. “But Lesleyann has always loved the idea of studying at the Sorbonne and when she saw Associate Professor Marie-Eve Ritz’s canary-yellow academic gown from the Sorbonne, there was a gleam in her eye!”

UWA’s Centenary year is also a year of milestones for the Lincoln family.

Frank Lincoln, an honorary research fellow in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry, celebrates a 60-year relationship with the University this year, while his daughter Cathy celebrates her 50th birthday.

Both of them marked this special year at the graduation ceremonies when Frank watched Cathy receive her PhD.

Cathy graduated for the first time from UWA with a medical degree in 1987. She now works as a forensic physician on the Gold Coast and is Deputy Director of the Queensland Health Clinical Forensic Medicine Unit.

Her father began his studies at UWA as an undergraduate in 1953, and continued as a graduate student with a part-time position on staff. He graduated with a PhD in Chemistry in 1967 and was appointed to a permanent staff position shortly afterwards. He retired as a senior lecturer in 2004, but continues his inorganic chemistry research after 60 years on the same campus.

The younger Dr Lincoln works in clinical forensic medicine, which includes the area of sexual assault. In her thesis, based upon research conducted in WA and Queensland, she has addressed the issue of genital injury and medical evidence in sexual assault trials, to assist the courts in their understanding of its significance in relation to consent.

She was supervised by Winthrop Professor Ian Jacobs and Associate Professor Alison Ward (Oxford University).
It was a stroke of luck that the 100th anniversary of the first meeting of UWA Convocation fell on a public holiday.

Gathering 100 graduates to be photographed on the steps of St George’s Hall in Hay Street on a working day could have been an insurmountable challenge.

At 4pm on 4 March 1913, the inaugural meeting was held in the pretty little hall, around the corner from the Irwin Street campus, with the Chancellor Sir John Winthrop Hackett in the chair. All that remains of the hall is the façade, steps and pillars, which were restored when the Perth District Court was built behind it in 2008.

The historic photo shoot was a successful joint project of Convocation and the UWA Historical Society. UWA graduate Manny Tamayo mounted a stepladder in the middle of the road while others directed what little traffic there was around him.

Convocation’s Pauline Tremlett and UWAHS’s Joan Pope brought the event together in a very short time and were delighted with the enthusiastic response from members of Convocation.

“I received some lovely letters from overseas from people wishing they could be part of it,” Pauline said.

Before the graduates let go their golden balloons and Manny fired off the historic shots, Joan Pope read out the letter that was sent on 25 February 1913, inviting people to attend the first meeting of Convocation to elect a warden.

The crowd gave three cheers for their forbears, the re-enactment providing some holiday entertainment for onlookers gathered on the other side of the street.

Graduates who gathered for the photo included recently-retired judge Christine Wheeler, Centenary Chair Sue Boyd, former head of Trinity Alec O’Connell, State Government Ministers John Day and Michael Mischin, former Premier Bill Hassell, Cathy Tang, Di Dixon, Fran Pesich, Reg Appleyard and Allan McKinley.

Fittingly, there were also three wardens in the photo, including the current one, Warren Kerr (elected after the photo was taken).

Dr Pesich, President of the UWAHS, said the gathering was happy and friendly “without the pomp and ceremony often linked with the University.

“We recalled a time when there was no such thing as a UWA graduate and Convocation was comprised of graduates from overseas and interstate, a determined community prepared to pay 100 pounds (more than $10,000 in today’s money) to become a member and support the new university,” she said.

“It was a special moment to reflect on what the Perth community can achieve.”

Graduates let go
Fresh from the cowboy city of Calgary, Professor Paul Plummer might seem eminently suited to working in regional Western Australia.

But contrary to popular belief, UWA’s new Professor of Regional Cities says that Cuban-heeled boots and Stetsons are generally only worn in the Canadian city during the annual summer tourist attraction, Stampede.

“The rest of the time, we hide indoors from the ice and snow!” he laughed.

And far from the cowboy image, Professor Plummer interrupts his talk about quantitative statistics to extol the beauty of Perth’s beaches, sunsets, birds, weather, trees and Kings Park.

The English-born and US-educated geographer is an expert in regional development. His position in the School of Earth and Environment is supported by the WA Regional Cities Alliance: Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Albany, Broome, Port Hedland and the shire of Roebourne.

The partnership will engage in research on economic, social and infrastructure issues in the member cities. When it was announced at the end of 2011, observers remarked that it was one of the most significant milestones in regional research and policy development in Australian history.

“We will provide geography-based and evidence-based research on which the Alliance can base their policies,” Professor Plummer said.

“This is the start of a five-year plan and we begin with looking at the resilience and sustainability of these cities by studying the population and their position in the urban hierarchy; the competition for employment; the social and economic issues; and the amenities that attract people to these cities.

“We are asking who are their markets, what are their services, how their geography has changed over time and what drives local growth.”

Professor Plummer wants to find out how each city fits in with the overall development of the state and how it relates to other regional cities and globally.

“I do a lot of quantitative statistical work but you do need to go to these places and meet the people and see how the cities work,” he said. Over the past few years, as an Adjunct Professor in the School’s Centre for Regional Development, he has already visited Geraldton, Port Hedland, Bunbury and Roebourne. The others will soon be added to the list.

“WA is a good case study for regional development because it is quite different from many other places. For example, the conventional idea of a labour market doesn’t apply, because of the fly-in-fly-out labour force.

“So we’re faced with the questions of what to do when we don’t know? And how do we build models? It’s a bit like the demand for buggy whips in the days of horse-drawn carts. The producers would have thought they had the market sorted, then all of a sudden, along came the internal combustion engine and the whole picture was changed!”

The members of the WA Regional Cities Alliance represent focal points for the national economy, and their communities will play a vital role in the 21st century. The UWA-WARCA partnership will be able to present evidence-based policy to State and Federal Government.

While benefitting the communities and the State, it will also provide an advantage for students who can do real research on location.
No institution exists alone and the Centenary is a great opportunity for UWA to acknowledge the part in its history played by the people of Western Australia, near and far.

UWA Gives Back is a regional celebration of the Centenary with staff and students going out into the regions throughout the year, engaging with school students, local communities and industries.

They will explain research happening at UWA and how it can benefit the people of WA; they will enthuse high school students about tertiary study and encourage them to come to UWA; they will become involved in local projects including agriculture, urban planning, arts productions and teaching programs.

All the faculties and the Student Guild are taking part, covering every part of the state from the Goldfields to the Kimberley.

The first forays were by the Faculty of Science (Life and Physical Sciences) to the Mid-West in late March and the Guild Volunteering Hub to the South-West in early April.

Astrofest inspired the locals of Mt Magnet on 22 March with an inflatable planetarium, night sky tours, glow-in-the-dark water rockets, an astrophotography exhibition and, of course, lots of telescopes of all shapes and sizes.

The Mid-West is becoming a global hub for astronomy with part of the Square Kilometre Array being built there and several new radio telescopes coming online in the Murchison.

“We leave behind people who know more about their night skies and the radio astronomy happening right on their doorstep ... Maybe one of the students we worked with will go on to study science and make an important discovery.”

In a two-week tour of Carnamah, Morawa, Meekatharra, Mt Magnet, Kalbarri and Jurien, staff from the UWA-based International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research, Aspire UWA, SPICE and Scitech worked on connecting communities with the night sky and switching school students on to science.

With the School of Indigenous Studies, they talked to students about the opportunities created by the SKA and, more generally, a university education and the pathways that exist to help students from regional areas to get there.

ICRAR’s Manager of Outreach, Pete Wheeler said it was a great tour.

“We leave behind people who know more about their night skies and the radio astronomy happening right on their doorstep,” Mr Wheeler said.

“Maybe one of the students we worked with will go on to study science and make an important discovery.”

The first of at least three regional visits by the Student Guild this year took student volunteers to the Tone-Perup Natures Reserve near Manjimup.

Aden Date co-ordinates the Guild Volunteering Hub and said that students go on a volunteering road trip every year, usually to do conservation work.

“They pay their own way and we go during the semester breaks,” he said.
“This month we worked on a Woylie conservation project, helping the Warren Catchment’s Council to gather research data on the Woylie population in the region.”

Aden said the students were looking forward to going to Albany later in the year, to connect with UWA students at the Great Southern campus and work with them on a project with the Albany-based Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management.

Perhaps the most exciting project in the UWA Gives Back program comes from the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts.

Their staff will work with the local community and schools in Geraldton to apply urban design principles and techniques to the regeneration and identity of the Mid-West town as it undergoes significant growth.

Together they will develop ideas and images which will be projected onto a building, accompanied by a soundtrack and hopefully simulcast on local radio.

The ALVA residency will take place in August and September with the post-production in October and the final event in November.

Staff and students from the Faculty of Science (Natural and Agricultural Sciences) have chosen three towns surrounding UWA’s Future Farm: Pingelly, Brookton and Narrogin. They will run activities and research projects with the communities from now until October.

They will also visit every school in this part of the wheatbelt and provide the students with digital microscopes and kits for a Monitoring Soil Science program.

During the second and third school terms, the Faculty of Law will focus on shires in the Peel region: Boddington, Serpentine, Jarrahdale, Waroona and the city of Mandurah. Students and staff will organise, coach and run mock trials to increase interest in studying law at UWA.

Interested high school students can begin networking with UWA mentors and even those not disposed to studying law can learn valuable leadership, critical thinking and public speaking skills.

The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences already has a very strong presence in the regions through the Rural Clinical School. Its staff and students will concentrate on the Goldfields, running a mini medical school and demonstrating how Telehealth video conferencing technology works.

In October in Kalgoorlie and Esperance they will run a Choose Medicine program for high school students with clinical simulations and hands-on plastering and suturing workshops.

The Business School plans to take high-achieving Honours and PhD students from the Pilbara back to their region to engage with high school students in Karratha and Port Hedland.

The School’s teaching, research and executive education will be showcased to the communities in the two towns while the students will share their UWA experiences with the school students, telling them about student clubs, activities and sports, as well as scholarships and student exchange programs.

Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Education) Alec Cameron will join this trip and resident mining companies BHP Billiton and Woodside will co-host a Leaders’ Luncheon for business and community leaders.

The Faculty of Education has a long-standing relationship with the wheatbelt town of Morawa. For more than 10 years, students in its Graduate Diploma program have been experiencing teaching and living there.

This year, in August and September, the faculty will support students from its Masters programs (Primary, Secondary and Early Childhood) to work with schools in the Morawa area.

The Morawa Education Alliance works to develop the best educational services and further educational opportunities for its young people and the faculty will extend its engagement with the region by supporting the Alliance.

Staff, alumni and senior students from the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics will take a road show to the Kimberley during July.

They will engage with schools, community, alumni and industry in Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham, Kununurra and Broome, demonstrating the impact on our lives of engineering, computing and mathematics.

The REV car, Engineers without Borders and Robogals will feature in the road show.

The Faculty of Arts will also travel to the Kimberley a few months later. Staff are already developing a project in partnership with Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre to share cultural knowledge.

The three-part project began with Junba performances at LUMINOUSnight. A short film and an ebook will also be produced during the year. And Arts staff and students will work with Aspire UWA in high schools in Derby and Broome in October.

UWAnews will bring you images from some of these projects later in the year.
Goodbye paperwork ... hello eRecruitment

Recruiting staff can often be a daunting task, especially if you are inundated with applications. With this in mind, Human Resources (HR) recently implemented an online recruitment system – eRecruitment – which enables the recruitment process to be managed and monitored online for the 500 or more positions that are advertised annually by the University.

“Essentially eRecruitment has eliminated the need to wade through reams of paper,” said Mark David, Associate Director, HR Services. “If you’re nominated to be part of a selection panel, you can now review and rate applications confidentially online.

A small project team has been working to ensure eRecruitment meets various needs across the University. “Rolling out eRecruitment has really shown us how recruitment activities vary around the University,” said Elsa Isebe, Project Manager for eRecruitment. “This has been one of the challenges in implementing eRecruitment in such a large and diverse organisation.”

As well as enabling selectors to review applications online, eRecruitment has also resulted in streamlining the request to advertise and the offers of employment processes.

“Approvals can be obtained within hours, rather than days, with lost paperwork being a thing of the past,” said Elsa. “With online acceptance, administrators can start preparing for the new staff member a lot sooner than they could before.”

While various administrative tools are offered in eRecruitment, not all aspects of the recruitment process can be conducted online.

“An important element of the recruitment process is the relationship you build with candidates,” said project team member Emma Badminton. “It means taking the time to contact and meet preferred applicants as soon as possible after applications close. People might be surprised at the impact poor recruitment practices have on the reputation of an organisation.”

eRecruitment has been operating for about six weeks. It is expected that the new system will amass valuable information to better inform the University’s recruitment strategies.

“With the University’s goal of attracting and retaining the highest quality of staff, it’s important our recruitment practices ensure all parts of the University are able to achieve this,” said Mark.

For further information on eRecruitment, including user guides and training videos on using the system, visit www.hr.uwa.edu.au/home/erecruitment

Scaring crows

A cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Faculty of Arts and the Animal Welfare Office may come to nought.

But it will have made a peahen happier.

One of the Arts peahens, Susan, has been sitting on an egg in an exposed area and has been attacked by a couple of crows. Peacock custodian Joanne Smith, executive assistant to the Dean, enlisted the help of animal welfare officer Chris Mayberry.

Dr Mayberry made a few suggestions and the Arts staff took up his idea of a scarecrow. They made one of a broomstick and some found objects and, so far, it’s doing the job and keeping Susan safe.

“She’s very broody – I think she’d try hatching a stone if it was put under her,” Joanne said. “It’s unlikely this egg is even fertilised. It’s very late in the season. “But we’re happy that she’s safe and comfortable.”
In step with women in the developing world

The all-female staff at UWAPublishing are taking small steps toward helping women in developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty.

In solidarity with the women and girls around the world who walk many hours every day to collect water, food and firewood, the staff walked 10,000 steps a day for a week last month to raise money for CARE Australia’s Walk In Her Shoes campaign.

“We’re lucky working at the UWA Claremont campus, where we have a big oval, we’re very close to the river and there are lovely tree-lined streets, so lots of good places to walk.”

While they walked they wore their Centenary T-shirts, which are being sold through the UWAP website.

There are three gold and/or white designs on royal blue cotton T-shirts, featuring the peacocks, Winthrop Hall’s rose window, and the number 100. The shirts are $25 each with three women’s sizes and four men’s sizes.

They are available at: uwap.uwa.edu.au/uwa-t-shirts

If you would like to donate to CARE Australia through the UWAP team, please go to: https://walkinhershoes2013.everydayhero.com/au/uwa-publishing

A pilot and a crane driver were part of the crew needed to capture a piece of history on James Oval last month.

Hundreds of students gathered on the grass to form a big number 100, to commemorate their student days during the University’s Centenary.

Photographer Matthew Galligan was lifted high into the sky where he took some brilliant shots, despite his fear of heights.

An unmanned air vehicle (UAV), also known as a drone, flew over the students taking aerial photos. Paul Dewar described himself as the chief pilot of the UAV, while Tim Lucas was the payload operator, controlling the camera.

Paul said their company Cyber Technology had been in business for just a few years but they were already in demand for film shoots, real estate advertising, infrastructure inspections and search and rescue missions.

Guild President Cam Barnes did a fantastic job wooing students from the crowd to join the gang on the lawn, keeping up spirits as they waited for enough people to join the throng, initiating Mexican waves, crowd surfing with Centum and generally keeping everybody entertained.
Historic windows
given a new life

Three years almost to the day after a hailstorm smashed the stained glass windows of Winthrop Hall, some of the original glass has been returned.

Amateur stained glass artist and PhD candidate Veronica Connaughton presented Alan Robson with a napkin or document holder made from the shards of glass collected from the ground after the storm.

“I had recently arrived from Queensland and was walking my dog through the University grounds when I saw some men shoring up the windows of Winthrop Hall and I asked them if I could have some of the broken glass,” said Veronica, who is doing a PhD in neuropsychology.

“I wasn’t the only one who wanted the beautiful old Italian glass. We had to apply to the Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson with our ideas and I was lucky enough to be chosen to make a memento.”

Veronica ground the glass and soldered the pieces together, with the help of Saxony Stained Glass in Mandurah, using the eight different shades of bronze, amber and gold, over the past year. “I added a little antique blue so I could create the UWA crest on the piece, similar to the crest in the Senate Room windows,” she said.

While she was working on her design, Veronica returned to study. “I had no idea when I started this project that I would end up being a student here,” she said.

Earlier this year, she and another Masters/PhD student were paired up for some course work exercises. It turned out that Veronica’s partner was Elise Hartley, whose great grandfather Fred Murrels, a carpenter, was the man who had helped to install the original windows 80 years ago.

Emeritus Professor Robson, who, like hundreds of staff at UWA, felt distraught at the damage to the Hall windows, was delighted both with the gift and Veronica’s story about Fred Murrels.

He said he would present the gift to the Chancellor, Michael Chaney, and let him decide where in Winthrop Hall it would be displayed.

Students come to grips with the restoration cycle

When 70 third-year science students arrived in Albany for a conservation biology summer school, they were told to ‘get on their bikes’.

While these students have plenty of experience and skills, it was never going to be possible to complete an ecosystem restoration in the short time they were there.

So the teachers at the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management (CENRM) have devised a teaching model in which students must restore a broken down old bicycle.

“Planning and implementation of an ecological restoration may take many months or years so old bicycles are used as a teaching tool to develop the students’ understanding of the steps required to plan and implement a restoration project,” said Assistant Professor Peter Speldewinde.

“The emphasis was not on restoring the bicycle to a pristine state but rather...
Asbestos campaigner asks for our help

While Australia has banned asbestos and UWA does some of the world’s best research into deadly asbestos-related diseases, other countries are still developing their asbestos industries.

Activist Laurie Kazan-Allen recently visited Professor Bruce Robinson and his colleagues at the National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases (NCARD), based at UWA, on a trip from the UK to encourage Australian politicians to provide leadership in Asia and to try to make the ban on asbestos global.

“The collaborative spirit of the research team at NCARD is inspiring and impressive,” Ms Kazan-Allen said. “I want the politicians to follow that model and work together with countries like Thailand and India where we know that millions of people will die from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related lung cancers in 30 or 40 years’ time.”

Ms Kazan-Allen is the co-ordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat and has been the editor and publisher of the British Asbestos Newsletter for 22 years. She was inspired to join the fight against the deadly material after her brother, Steven Kazan, became in 1973 the first US lawyer to win damages for his clients in a court action against asbestos producers. Asbestos litigation has been his firm’s primary focus since then.

“You would think that other countries would learn from the devastating experiences of Australia and the US,” Ms Kazan-Allen said. “But it doesn’t seem to matter what you say or what you show them. In Thailand, for example, the Ministry of Health supports the ban, but it is overwhelmed by the wealthy asbestos industry, which says ‘nobody is dying of asbestos-related diseases here’. That’s because nobody is diagnosing and because it takes a long time for these diseases to develop.”

In 2011, the ALP passed a motion to provide leadership in the region, working towards a global ban. Ms Kazan-Allen was on her way to Canberra to find out when that leadership would be shown.

“I’m trying to get Australia to commit to setting an example,” she said. “In the meantime, I would love to see researchers learn from the collaborative spirit of asbestos researchers here. Elsewhere, researchers are much more competitive for individual grants, but it is clear that the best work is being done here, with a targeted and co-ordinated effort.”

The students enjoyed and learned from the challenge before completing classes in saving endangered species and ecosystem restoration, both third-year units in the Conservation Biology major.

The course was co-ordinated by Dr Barbara Cooke and Winthrop Professor Steve Hopper, both from CENRM, with several senior Department of Conservation scientists.

The unit on saving endangered species focused on conserving a species of grevillea. Students also learned how to trap, process and release small mammals and reptiles. A highlight of the classes was that several honey possums were captured and all the students had the chance to see one close up.

Most of the students stayed for the second unit, ecosystem restoration. They visited restoration projects in the region and are now working in groups to write up their project appraisals.

“It is immensely fulfilling to give students the field experiences they need for their future careers as conservation biologists or restoration ecologists,” Dr Cook said.

One of the students said the practical work had made her much more interested in ecosystem ecology.

“The practical side of the trip was something I had never done before and (now) I can see myself doing something along those lines as a career.”
A fifth of UWA staff are from culturally diverse backgrounds, a fifth of the students are from overseas, and between them, the staff and students speak 80 different languages.

The CALD Action Plan aims to help all UWA staff to reach their full potential regardless of race, first language or religion. The movement began at Deakin University last year. In joining the program, UWA will bring together all its cultural competence programs under one framework.

Already UWA has the extraordinarily successful Courageous Conversations about Race, initiated and run by Senior Diversity Officer Malcolm Fialho. Three students spoke at Harmony Day in the Tropical Grove about the Conversations. All had thought themselves above racism and were shocked by what they learned about themselves.

UWA also has a Cultural Diversity Inclusive Practice Toolkit, an interfaith calendar, and the Language and Cultural Exchange (LACE) program, promoting intercultural friendship.

These programs and more will be united under the Action Plan which states: “It is only by embedding cultural competence strategies systematically and systemically that lasting social change, cultural shifts and genuine racial equity can be achieved.”

At UWA’s event, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Bill Louden also spoke about Indigenous programs at UWA and the University’s active acceptance of people with different sexual orientations.

“LGBTI people tell me they feel safe here,” he said. “We are one of the nation’s top 10 employers for LGBTI people.”

Professor Louden thanked Beverley Hill, Associate Director, Equity and Diversity, and Malcolm Fialho for their leadership.

In a light-hearted finish, he also acknowledged the parrots, with whose loud squawking the speakers had been competing. “They too are migrants – and welcome to this campus!” he said.
Thinking about doing a PhD at UWA? Lucky you! The first people you will meet are the candidature team in the Graduate Research and Scholarships Office.

This newly-finalised team must be one of the brightest, happiest, experienced and hard-working administrative groups on the Crawley campus.

And they do far more than process forms. Although, as Julia Alessandrini, Manager Graduate Research Candidature, admits, dealing with forms is a major activity of the team.

“Research students and their supervisors have to fill in a lot of forms over the course of a PhD or Master by Research,” Julia said. “We understand that this may seem bureaucratic and dull but our forms are the most efficient communication tools we have at the moment.

“They assist us to streamline and record communication between students, supervisors, Graduate Research Coordinators and administrators and enable us to manage a student’s candidature efficiently, provide timely advice and support.”

Julia has just completed her own PhD at UWA. She is a teacher by training, who has studied or worked at four of WA’s five universities and lived and worked in the UK and Japan, so she has extensive experience of being a student, an educator – and now an administrator.

“Our aim is to get students though their higher degrees successfully and happily and we have a fantastic team, brilliantly suited to dealing with everything that involves, from application to submission,” she said.

Her team, Thritty Bhanja, Jo Francis and Pam Townshend, also have a wealth of education, experience and interests that combine to create an impressive depth of knowledge and skills.

Pam has studied science, is a trained nurse, has worked in government and universities and is studying French and Management.

Thritty has worked for UWA for several years, has a Master’s degree in Music from the renowned Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music, Moscow, and, like Julia, has been a student in a foreign country so can relate to the problems faced by international students. She teaches music in her spare time and is an advocate of positive thinking.

Jo has been at UWA for nearly 20 years, the first 10 years in the Animal Welfare Office, where she learnt a lot about politics and lobbying. Her working life before UWA ranged from gold assayist to literacy and numeracy tutor and many fascinating jobs in between.

“Everything we do is directed towards helping students to submit their theses.

A PhD can take five or six years and lot can happen in that time,” Julia said. “We help students when things are tough, and help them to extend or suspend their studies, to take sick leave, or to change an aspect of their candidature. But we are privileged to be part of the highs of student’s candidature, too. We love to see the students finally arrive at GRSO reception to submit their theses,” she said. “It is one of the best moments of the job!” she said.

The four women work together like a well-oiled comedy team, often finishing each other’s sentences.

Pam started saying: “A lot of the time, we deal with people under stress, particularly when they are writing up …”; then Thritty chimed in with: “Particularly international students who have visas that require them to finish on time …”; then Jo added: “And they don’t have a support network here, so we often help them with housing and medical issues, as well as their study issues …”; and Julia finished with: “We listen, give advice and guidance about where to get help. We might even go along with them to an appointment if they need us.”

They have a comprehensive list of tips for candidates and their supervisors, which UWAnews will publish at a later date.
A unique and inspiring group of first year students with something to celebrate gathered for lunch in the Sunken Gardens early in the semester.

Every commencing student has reason to celebrate the start of a new stage in life but, for many in this group, just getting to this stage has been a challenge.

The children of staff and students at our day care centres are helping to raise money for the Centenary guide dog. Lindy Brophy, editor of UWAnews, is running the campaign and has a life-size model guide dog to inspire people to donate. The model dog spent a couple of weeks at the Early Learning Centre on the Nedlands campus where the children fell in love with him and asked their parents every day for coins to “feed” him. They raised $145.

The model dog then went to Unicare on Parkway, where educator Andy Streit took him around the Crawley campus in a little cart with some of the children walking alongside.

“The children loved it,” Andy said. “They were running up to staff and students asking for a coin for the guide dog.” In two mornings, the little group collected $521.

Next stop for the model dog was the Business School and it is due to move to CTEC next month.

If you would like to host the collection dog at your reception desk or in your tearoom, please contact Lindy on 6488 2436 or lindy.brophy@uwa.edu.au. It is booked up until late June.

Wednesday 24 April is International Guide Dog Day and the model dog will be in the University Club, accompanied by working guide dogs and guide dog puppies for most of the day. Please donate generously on this special day.

Or you can go to: www.everydayhero.com.au/event/uwa-centenary to donate online.
Model pharmacist is “more than just a shop-keeper”

By Sally-Ann Jones

Busy PhD student Kim Watkins may describe herself as a ‘garden variety’ pharmacist but she has been given a five-star rating by her peers.

Kim, who lectures and tutors in the School of Medicine and Pharmacology, was recently named the Five Star Role Model Pharmacist by the Pharmaceutical Society of Western Australia.

The prestigious award is given to a PSWA member who is inspirational to other pharmacists.

Kim and her husband Steve Lewis have owned and run the High Wycombe Pharmacy for 12 years and regularly welcome UWA students on clinical placements.

Kim’s award – presented by President of the PSWA, John Harvey, at a special dinner – recognises her determination to ensure that pharmacists are seen as more than just “retailers and shop-keepers”.

“I think the important role that pharmacists play is under-utilised and undervalued in the health system,” she said.

“Over the years, while teaching and mentoring young pharmacists, I’ve tried to inspire them to do better – to be health professionals who can empower people to take control of their own wellbeing.

“As pharmacists, we want to make sure we maximise the benefits of medication while minimising the negative consequences,” she said.

“It’s important that we help people get on with living life to the fullest.”

For her PhD, Kim is researching how to optimise clinical guidelines to ensure best practice by pharmacists – and improved health for patients. She is particularly interested in the management of asthma and has completed seven focus groups with pharmacists and other health professionals and is currently in the process of interviewing 300 people with asthma.

“Asthma patients come to the attention of health professionals when they’re in hospital but I’ve been talking to people who are managing their condition day by day in the community.”

Kim said Australia had a high rate of asthma compared to other countries and more than two million Australians currently suffered from the condition.

Asthma is also associated with a poorer quality of life.

“My PhD hypothesis is that successful implementation of pharmacists’ clinical guidelines will lead to appropriate assessment and timely referral of ‘at risk’ patients with asthma so that they can receive best practice management. In doing this we hope that most patients can live a normal and active life, free of symptoms,” she said.

Kim’s supervisor, Professor Rhonda Clifford, Director of the Division of Pharmacy in the School, said Kim’s award was exciting.

Kim said Australia had a high rate of asthma compared to other countries and more than two million Australians currently suffered from the condition.

If you would like to be part of Kim’s study – either as a health professional or a person living with asthma – contact her on kim.watkins@uwa.edu.au

Cake and congratulations

The Vice-Chancellor Paul Johnson invited the staff who had worked on LUMINOUS Night and the Alumni Weekend, including all the volunteers, to a morning tea in the Prescott Room to thank them and congratulate them on a brilliant weekend.

Professor Johnson made special mention of the grounds staff who had worked so hard to present the Crawley campus in all its glory.

“And after more than 35,000 people had been here on Friday night, I arrived back early the next morning to see it all looking immaculate again – as if fairies had come in overnight!” he said.

From all accounts, the cake tasted as good as it looked.

Madeleine King, Director UWA Centenary Celebrations, directs her attention to the fabulous cake that was the centrepiece of a special morning tea in the Vice-Chancellery.

The University of Western Australia

UWAnews | Number 2 | April 2013 | 21
We hope you enjoyed reading the first online edition of *UWAnews* two weeks ago.

The new ‘mixed media’ approach is designed to provide an alternative for those who prefer to read their news online.

The printed edition of *UWAnews* – a bigger better version with more stories and pictures – will be published once a month.

And the online edition will also come out once a month, in between the printed editions, to keep you up to date with what’s happening on campus. It will include Research Grants and Promotion Briefs that were formerly published in the printed edition.

The online edition will also contain all the stories and pictures from the printed issue, in case you missed it.

Please let us know what you think of the new format by writing to lindy.brophy@uwa.edu.au

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**IN A CAMPUS EMERGENCY**

**DIAL 2222**

Security staff will call the emergency services, direct them to you and come to help you while waiting for their arrival.

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**UWAnews deadlines for 2013**

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The University of Washington in Seattle celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2011 — and they were still flying their banners late last year when Centum visited.

Like UWA, the University of Washington has lush green grounds. They are so extensive that a bus service runs right through the middle of the campus with several stops.

It rains so much in Seattle that the University has a huge stock of yellow umbrellas that are available for staff, students and visitors to pick up in one part of the campus, use to get to another place, then leave it there.

But when Centum visited, the sun was shining.
A twisted ladder in the blue stocking:

A personal perspective on how far women in universities have come in the past 50 years

Winthrop Professor Grady Venville
Dean of Coursework Studies

An edited version of her speech at UWA on International Women’s Day 2013.

I celebrated my 50th birthday last month, and I have used it as a personal reflection of the past 50 years.

I’ve used the metaphor of a twisted ladder for two reasons. First for promotional and leadership levels in the working world. A ‘twisted ladder’ also is a nod to one of my personal heroes, Rosalind Franklin. She was an X-ray crystallographer at King’s College in London in the 1950s and provided the evidence that James Watson and Francis Crick used, without her permission or knowledge, to crack the scientific discovery of that century, the twisted ladder or helix-like structure of DNA. She was never awarded the Nobel prize.

So how have things moved on for women since then?

In the 1960s, pregnant women, and most married women, had to resign from universities. In 1963 the first female professor was appointed at UWA, Mary Lockett, Professor of Pharmacology.

I was born in Perth and lived in the Goldfields where my father was the principal of a small school. He always said I could do anything I wanted to and supported me all the way.

Ten years on at UWA, Unicare (childcare) opened in 1972.

We moved to Geraldton where I spent my school years. I regularly visited Perth and stayed with my grandmother, Alma Venville, who was the first female Mayor of the City of Stirling. I was surrounded by hard-working, successful women in leadership roles who loved and cared for me and, on reflection, inspired me. I thought that was normal.

In the 1980s we had a State Equal Opportunity Act and at UWA Professor Cheryl Praeger became the first mother to be appointed to a Chair. But women held only 15 per cent of academic posts, most as senior tutors and below.

I was at UWA studying Science and Education. I had only two female lecturers in four years. During my teaching practicum at Carine SHS in 1984, I remember being told by the principal not to wear trousers. I thought that was a ridiculously impractical instruction for a science teacher who was working in a laboratory so I ignored him and I still got an ‘A’ for practicum.

In the 1990s, 48 per cent of students at UWA were women, and women made up 55 per cent of the general staff and 22 per cent of the academic staff, the lowest proportion of women across all Australian universities.

In 1990, there were no women in senior management and only three female professors compared with 92 male professors. But in that same year, the first female Vice-Chancellor at UWA and in the Go8 – the late Professor Fay Gale – was appointed.

I married and had two babies and started my PhD in genetics education and heard of Rosalind Franklin for the first time.

By 2000, UWA had 12 female professors alongside 118 male professors, but five women in senior management.

I had a postdoctoral appointment at King’s College London – in a building named the Franklin-Wilkins Building!

And now in the second decade of the 21st century, UWA has been named employer of choice for women for the 11th consecutive year, but still only 10 per cent of the female academic staff are professors, while 30 per cent of male academic staff hold this position.

Women are climbing the ladder, but there are plenty of twists in it.

I’ve managed to negotiate many of the challenges and there are important messages I learnt along the way:

We must be better role models and mentors; encourage men to advocate for women; be defiant, stand up to and speak out about any sexual harassment and discrimination, and encourage and support appropriate behaviour; and celebrate female heroes, like Rosalind Franklin, and tell their stories.