Graduations shine spotlight on passion and persistence

By Lindy Brophy

The smaller of the year’s graduation ceremonies saw some big names involved.

The only Honorary Doctorates bestowed in the spring graduations were to two of the University’s greatest supporters, Andrew and Nicola Forrest.

The Forrests donated Australia’s biggest philanthropic gift when they pledged $65 million to tertiary education, most of it to UWA, last year.

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Champion Australian hockey player Tristan Clemons was also on the podium, as a valedictorian. Dr Clemons graduated with a PhD in Chemistry. He has been awarded an NHMRC Early Career Research Fellowship for four years’ research in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

A private posthumous graduation ceremony was held earlier this month for Dr Michael Crouch, who delivered his PhD thesis just 10 days before he died, at the age of 78.

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Graduations shine spotlight on passion and persistence

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His widow and adult children attended the ceremony in the Prescott Room, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Johnson.

Dr Crouch had been raised in Sudan and Kenya and educated at Cambridge and Oxford universities before embarking on a life as a colonial officer in the Middle East.

During a dramatic career, he was instrumental in an operation that saved the Arabian Oryx from extinction and he himself survived three assassination attempts.

He and his young family moved to WA in 1967. According to his son Charles, “it was as far away as possible from people trying to shoot him.”

He still visited the Middle East, particularly Yemen, and acted as an Arabic translator for refugees.

He researched feminist history at UWA, writing a biography of his grandmother, a pioneering feminist in colonial India.

His supervisor, Winthrop Professor Jenny Gregory, described Dr Crouch as “a fine writer who displayed great persistence and dogged determination despite ill health”.

“His grandmother’s rich life story – the essence of his thesis – documents a casualty of the changing world … her life in the 20th century was a story of personal disappointments … (and) early expectations of her future as an independent woman were to be unfulfilled.”

Read about other new graduates Dr Renae Barker and Dr Mahmudur Rahman on pages 10 and 11. They were awarded their PhDs from the faculties of Law and Science, respectively.

This law and mining partnership is gold

As Australian companies mine 25 per cent of Ghana’s gold, a team from UWA has been helping the African country with the legal side of the industry.

The Law Faculty’s Jill Howieson led UWA’s participation in the development and delivery of a course on mining law and policy in partnership with the University of Ghana (UG) with funding from the International Mining for Development Centre (IM4DC).

IM4DC is a joint venture between UWA and the University of Queensland, funded by the Australian Government, to share our mining expertise with developing nations. Tim Shanahan, Director of UWA’s Energy and Minerals Initiative, is one of two directors of the IM4DC board.

IM4DC and its partners are a great example of how UWA can improve the capacity of developing nations to derive more sustainable benefits from their resources endowment,” Mr Shanahan said.

Two week-long courses were delivered by the UWA and UG teams, with a third course due to be run by the UG staff next month.

“It was a terrific capacity-building project,” said Tara McLaren, research development adviser for the Law Faculty and part of the group, including UWA project Manager Wendy Treasure, who recently spent two weeks in Ghana.

“The course was delivered with their academics, Samuel Manteaw and Dr Kweku Ainuson, to government, industry and community groups, cultural leaders and regulatory bodies.

“The course had come here to UWA in February to discuss the development of the course with Jill and then again in May to do a course in legal mediation specifically designed for the mining industry.”

The collaboration is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australia-Africa Partnerships Facility, and supported by the Australian High Commission in Ghana and Murdoch University.

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Elderly people are being cared for, health and wellbeing is a priority and carers are supported.

This doesn’t sound like news in the non-Indigenous-dominated cities and suburbs of Australia.

But in most remote Aboriginal communities these are only achieved with hard work, dedicated community members and professionals and the right approach.

Kate Smith, Assistant Professor in UWA’s WA Centre for Health and Ageing, is one of those professionals. She has worked in the Kimberley region, focused on the care of the elderly and now, those people’s carers, for 15 years.

She is one of a cross-disciplinary group at UWA and the University of Melbourne researching and putting into practice strategies for improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal people with disabilities and their carers, through carer empowerment.

Strong Carers, Strong Communities has NHMRC funding of about $1.7 million to discover if a community development approach results in improvements to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal family carers and the people they look after.

“Over 11 years, we have achieved a real awareness in Aboriginal communities with respect to dementia and to the needs of carers,” A/Professor Smith said.

“We have partnered with the same six communities since 2003, employing and training Aboriginal researchers throughout, first to understand the extent of the problem of dementia among Indigenous people and then to work out the best way to care for people with disabilities and their caregivers.

“Our research showed that a lot of carers of Aboriginal people in remote areas were struggling, with support services visiting the communities infrequently and using a ‘silo approach’. We needed to find out what was important to the carers and work towards that goal rather than simply providing them with information about caring and health issues.”

The research group got together all the services, including mental health, aged care and disability services, and encouraged them to pool their funding, which is looked after by an NGO. A community care manager (a member of the community) is trained to provide constant support in the community, and employ community staff.

“It means there are services based in the community all the time, which not only has good outcomes for health issues, but creates employment and helps to empower the community,” she said.

But before any of that could be done, the initial problem was how to diagnose dementia in Aboriginal people over the age of 45 and the extent of that problem.

“There was no way of finding out about memory loss in older Aboriginal people living in remote areas, many of whom have low literacy levels and found the usual tests ridiculous,” A/Professor Smith said.

“So after working with 22 communities in the Kimberley and employing community members to assist (especially with interpreting the 26 languages) we developed a tool that is meaningful to and valid for Aboriginal people.

“The person is asked a number of verbal and visual questions such as to look at and remember pictures of animals and commonly used objects. You need to work with a community and find out what’s meaningful to them before you can assess the extent of the problem.”

The Kimberley Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (KICA) tool is now widely used across Australia. It can be freely downloaded from www.wacha.org.au/kica.html. From diagnosis that was not previously possible, it is now clear that the prevalence of dementia among older Aboriginal people living in remote communities is 12.4 per cent, five times higher than among non-Indigenous people.

Once the extent of the problem was established, the Indigenous Dementia Services Study turned its attention to how to care for people with dementia. Their models and trials showed that community participation at all stages provided optimum results.

This translational project was judged to be one of the 10 best NHMRC research projects for 2012, out of the 5,000 teams who applied for funding across Australia.

“There is a Kimberley-wide change in attitudes to health and ageing, and community services. But there is still much work to be done to build the capacity of remote Aboriginal communities to improve the health and well-being of their carers and the people they care for,” A/Professor Smith said.
September is a special month at UWA: graduation season. A time for us to reflect on our graduating students’ contribution to the University, to celebrate their achievements, and to wish them well as they embark on their future endeavours.

Thank you to all of our staff involved in ensuring that graduation is a memorable and special time for all those who attend.

During the graduation season we had the pleasure of awarding Honorary Doctorates to Andrew and Nicola Forrest in recognition of their service to the community and to philanthropy. The Forrests were the first Australians to sign the internationally recognised Giving Pledge as well as being founders of GenerationOne, the Australian Children’s Fund and Walk Free. Andrew and Nicola have also made a commitment to supporting education and research at Western Australian universities, a commitment that will foster many new opportunities for UWA.

October is also particularly significant as we welcome three new senior staff. These appointments signify growth and development for the University across three key areas: teaching and learning, technology and community engagement.

I am pleased to welcome Professor Kent Anderson who has been appointed to the Position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, (Community and Engagement).

Professor Anderson will have strategic oversight of the University’s external relationships.

With his wide-ranging background in Law, Economics and Asian Studies and his experiences in Alaska, Japan and Hawaii, Professor Anderson is charged with leading UWA’s engagement with the wider community to reinforce the University’s commitment to excellence.

His expertise in the Indo-Pacific region will be important to UWA.

I would also like to welcome our new Chief Information Officer, Ms Assine George.

Her long and successful career has included leadership roles at The Benevolent Society, New York Life Insurance (Hong Kong) and the Commonwealth Bank. Ms George’s experience in these roles will allow her to provide strategic leadership and management of information technology across the University, to support and enable teaching, learning, research and administration.

Ms George took up her position after IT services and the Library were re-established as separate divisions. Both areas have new challenges to take on, as technology continues to evolve and change the nature of both streams of information provision.

Leading the Education Innovation team is Winthrop Professor Gilly Salmon as UWA’s Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education Innovation.) This is a new role that will provide academic leadership to support and develop education strategies and teaching and learning policy.

Professor Salmon is internationally renowned for her significant contributions to online education, having been a digital learning innovator for more than 20 years. She was Pro Vice-Chancellor of Learning Transformations at Swinburne University of Technology, and researches and publishes widely on the themes of innovation and change in higher education and the exploitation of new technologies of all kinds in the service of learning.

Welcoming people to Perth is greatly satisfying at this time of the year, with the wildflowers in bloom and the weather at such perfect temperatures. I hope each of you enjoys all that spring brings.

Spring on campus

Kicking off a new career with an MBA

There might be a few footballs being kicked around at the south end of campus – but be sure it will be done in a business-like fashion.

Darren Glass is the third high profile AFL footballer to enrol in the Business School in the past few years.

The former captain of the West Coast Eagles decided just weeks after retiring in June that he would enhance his leadership prospects outside of football with a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

The current captain of the Fremantle Dockers, Matthew Pavlich, is currently studying for his MBA, and both of them follow former West Coast defender Brett Jones who recently completed his MBA and now works as a talent manager for the WA Cricket Association.

As a talented cricketer himself, Brett had to choose between cricket and football when he joined the Eagles 10 years ago. He retired in 2011.

Darren enrolled in the Business School’s new full time MBA at the suggestion of Mark Barnaba, Chair of the Business School and former Chair of the West Coast Eagles.

This is his first UWA degree, while Matthew and Brett did their undergraduate studies here, Matthew in sport science and Brett in business studies.
The attractive stripes of the zebrafish make it a popular choice for home aquariums. It has also become a popular choice for scientific research – for many reasons other than its pretty appearance.

UWA and Edith Cowan University are establishing the State’s first zebrafish facility, with a joint ARC LIEF grant led by Winthrop Professor David Hunt and funding from both institutions. The million dollar project is being developed at UWA’s Biomedical Research facility at Shenton Park.

“The scientific community is not interested in the zebrafish because it’s a fish but because it’s such an excellent biomedical model,” said Professor Hunt, a member of the Neuroecology group in the School of Animal Biology. “It is a great model for studying human diseases and developmental disorders.”

The zebrafish is set, in many cases, to take the place of the mouse as the small laboratory animal of choice for many researchers, so the facility, with its 900 tanks, several thousand fish and qualified staff to breed and care for the fish, is eagerly anticipated by WA’s research community.

“It is a relatively inexpensive animal and easy to maintain,” Professor Hunt said. “It has a fairly short life cycle, so intervals between generations are short. You can breed large numbers easily, as fish naturally have big broods. And, perhaps best of all, in the early stages of their development, as an embryo and a juvenile, they are transparent, so you clearly see the development of the organs.

“The zebrafish is a perfectly valid model for studying human diseases and disorders.”

About 20 years ago, a large mutagenesis program was set up to generate mutations in zebrafish, and this has now been refined so that individual genes can be targeted. This means that mutations can now be generated in the genes that underlie many human diseases. “This is not possible in any other animal apart from mice. However, to generate a mouse model can cost up to $10,000 and take the best part of a year. To use zebrafish, it costs a few hundred dollars and you can see results in just a few months,” Professor Hunt said.

Ongoing work at UWA includes disorders of the visual system that cause blindness and, at ECU, the genes that are involved in the development of Alzheimer’s disease. So even though human and fish genomes are clearly quite different, the zebrafish genome contains most of the genes that cause human disease.

Diseases and disorders including heart disease, developmental defects, Parkinson’s disease, age-related eye disorders, spinal cord and muscle development are all easily researched with zebrafish. And it is also possible to undertake cancer screening, including melanoma.

Professor Hunt said it was important to note that genetic research using zebrafish was not restricted to single genes. “We know that human diseases are often a product of a combination of genes, as well as environment, and we can create those with the zebrafish.

“The new facility will be state-of-the-art, with carefully monitored robotic feeding. It will also be an advantage for researchers that the highly-trained staff in Animal Care Services (ACS) will be caring for the fish, instead of their care being left to PhD scholars.”

(ACS was recently granted international accreditation for its care of laboratory animals: the only institution in Australia or New Zealand with that accreditation.)

Professor Hunt would like to hear from researchers who are interested in using the zebrafish facility when it opens early next year.
More than a million people walked through the doors of the Reid Library last year – were you one of them?

While the debate continues about the future of the print book, there is no doubt that the library deserves its place in the middle of the campus. It continues the role for which it was created in the 1960s, as the central hub of academic life.

As the Reid celebrates its 50th year, library staff are looking to the future rather than dwelling on the past.

“There has been a lot of speculation about digital libraries without books,” said Acting University Librarian, Jill Benn.

“I think that some print books will always remain important because not everything is available digitally.

“But the future of the library is about learning and research: whether it’s using the (printed) collections or digital material or simply using the space and our facilities to work with other students.”

As it looks to the future and reflects on what Ms Benn describes as “massive changes” over its lifetime, in one regard the library has come full circle and returned to one of its original ideas.

“The original library layout had seating for students next to the windows on both the north and south sides, so they could enjoy views of Winthrop Hall and James Oval to inspire them,” Ms Benn said.

“But as the collections grew, shelves overtook that seating and desks for students were in the middle of the building.

“Now with much of the collections in digital form, shelving has been removed and new seating created next to the windows.”

The latest facilities in the Reid took a lead from the newer and very popular Science Library with comfortable couches, groups of chairs and tables, armchairs, computer desks and collaborative spaces.

“The Reid is a place where students meet, make new friends and socialise, as well as working together on assignments and projects,” Ms Benn said.

“The library café was before its time. We were probably the first library in WA to have its own café. The popularity of cafes in libraries really only took off much later.”

The Reid Library was built at a cost of £460,000, to take the place of the much smaller library in the undercroft of Winthrop Hall.

The current decorative film on the front doors was inspired by some of the original drawings for the building, designed by Gil Nicol, who went on to form Cameron Chisolm Nicol. It was designed, created and installed by graphic designer Erin Steenson and her colleagues at UniPrint.

There is an exhibition in the middle of the main floor of the library documenting the building’s history. In the display cases are the bronze medal the architect won from the Royal Institute of British...
Architects; one of the smallest books in the collection, *Le Rima di Francesca* Petrarca (about three by six centimetres); the old card indexes and stamps; and the surprising information that the Reid Library had the first self-check machine in the world. It used punch cards, was designed by UWA academic Alex Reid and introduced in 1975.

Interestingly, Professor Reid (who has recently retired) has exactly the same name as the University’s Chancellor in 1964, Alex Reid, after whom the library was named.

Just as the Reid opened, the Xerox copier was invented, and revolutionised research and study, almost as much as the introduction of the Internet 30 years later.

Within a decade of opening, the library was doubled in size, with the building extending further south.

In the early days, students could borrow a maximum of three books at a time. Now, undergraduates can borrow 30 items, and there is no restriction on numbers for graduate students and staff.

In 2008, under University Librarian John Arfield, the library joined with IT Services to form Information Services. That liaison came to an end on the first of this month. The library and information technology are once again separate entities at UWA.

“Both areas have a lot of opportunities and challenges,” Ms Benn said. “The library needs to continue to evolve to best meet the student experience and support of research. As much as the library is a big user of technology, there are different challenges and different opportunities for the future.

“One of our latest initiatives is a new improved student IT service, available at all of the six subject libraries – this was one of the many positive things to come out of the integration of the two areas.”

The Reid is planning to hold a celebratory event in November as part of an Arts Faculty celebration of the 50th anniversary of the New Fortune Theatre.

To watch an entertaining four-minute video that documents the history of the Reid, and see images of the decorative film on the doors, please go to is.uwa.edu.au/about/reid-50-years.
Archival records attract young helpers

The colourful history of UWA is being preserved with the help of 29 volunteers – students, alumni and community members.

Despite its unfair reputation as musty or dull, the University Archives is attracting young people by the dozens...and some of them have even decided to change the direction of their careers towards working in archives.

Every Wednesday, the majority of the volunteers (in three-hour shifts) fill the Old Senate Room in the Irwin Street Building on the edge of James Oval. Others work in the Archives office on Mondays and Thursdays.

They carefully sort through archival files and help to preserve them before rehousing them into archival boxes.

The Archives Volunteer Program began in July 2013 supported Fran Pesich, President of the UWA Historical Society. The Volunteer Coordinator, Christina Garnett (Project Officer – Archives), has produced policies, procedures and a confidentiality agreement.

The University Archives has 1.3 linear kilometres of boxes of paper documents. “Of course that doesn’t include books, photographs (about 60,000), framed pictures and certificates and all manner of other objects,” Ms Garnett said.

Ms Garnett supervises the rehousing project, as volunteers remove metal staples and paper clips, recopy faxes or documents that are held together with sticky tape, onto paper that will last, and refile the records into archival boxes.

“Their work ensures the records will last longer,” Ms Garnett said. “It also reduces the space needed for storage, as the new boxes are being packed more effectively. And it allows us better access, as the records are being audited as they are preserved.”

She said the majority of students were from the Faculty of Arts, usually with a History component in their courses, but some came from other faculties across the campus.

On the day UWAnews visited, the volunteers included students from the Law School, the Business School and the School of Earth and Environment.

“They have a lot of fun, meet new people, and learn a lot about the University, its workings and its history,” Ms Garnett said.

One of the ‘finds’ by a volunteer was this photo of the grass on Riley Oval being ‘mowed’ by sheep in the 1940s.

“Of course that doesn’t include books, photographs (about 60,000), framed pictures and certificates and all manner of other objects,” Ms Garnett said.

Ms Garnett advises volunteers Jemilyn Sunga and Jan Manlapaz, who are both studying Accounting and Business Law.

“We had an exchange student from the US last year who was studying mathematics. She is now doing a Masters in Information Management and hopes to pursue a career in archives.”

One of the current band of volunteers, History graduate Rose-anna Inglis, is now an information and library student at Curtin University. “Another convert,” Ms Garnett laughed.

David Ferguson has a degree in History from the UK. After migrating to WA, he decided to study Geology. “Well, geology is just like history – it’s just the history of the planets,” he said. David said he was amazed to find some official documents that were decorated with embroidery.

Rinaldi Rorimpandey, Commerce/Economics student, said he was keen to explore the University’s history and enjoyed coming across famous names associated with UWA. “It’s such a dynamic history,” he said.

The students’ work is recognised on their supplementary transcript. “But most of them didn’t know that before I told them,” Ms Garnett said. “Most of them say they come here because they want to give back to the University and it’s convenient to do some volunteer work on campus, between classes.”

She said the Archives staff would never have had the time to do the work the volunteers are doing. “It’s so valuable, and they do such a good job.”

No paper records are ever thrown out, but copying them and storing them appropriately ensures their longevity.

Two volunteers are members of the UWA Historical Society.

James Devenish, alumni and staff member, is scanning student records from microfilm. “It means the film will last longer as it won’t be passed through the microfiche viewer any more. It also give us and researchers easier access via a computer.”

Mike Manley, a former library assistant at UWA, has been working voluntarily in Archives three mornings a week since 2009. Mike is scanning images which again improves access and preservation.

“One of the ‘finds’ by a volunteer was this photo of the grass on Riley Oval being ‘mowed’ by sheep in the 1940s.”

“No paper records are ever thrown out, but copying them and storing them appropriately ensures their longevity.”

“One of the ‘finds’ by a volunteer was this photo of the grass on Riley Oval being ‘mowed’ by sheep in the 1940s.”
Even in the hospital’s hand clinic, he became known as ‘the finger guy’ when doctors and nurses said they had never seen a dislocation ‘travel’ so far. His X-ray (pictured) shows the extraordinary extent of his injury.

“It was absolutely nobody’s fault but mine,” Professor Low said, “and definitely an effort to rival that of Rick Disnick (with apologies to the Wired World of Sports team).”

His dislocation last month was open, with bone showing through both sides of his finger. “The ambulance crew took photos of it before they stabilised and bandaged it so they could show the triage crew at A and E, and they sent me straight to the front of the queue.

“My finger was X-rayed, then under local anaesthetic the dislocation was reduced, and the wounds stitched. Nurses kept popping their heads through the curtains around my bed asking: ‘Have you seen your X-rays?!’

“I started being introduced to people as the ‘finger guy’. None of the staff, who must see dozens of dislocations a day, had seen one that had ‘travelled’ as far as my finger,” he said.

The man with the accidently famous finger works in the discipline of organometallic chemistry, in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

His current research is directed towards applications in molecular electronics.

“My group and our collaborators are working on integrating the electronic properties of molecules into semiconductor devices, aiming for ultra-miniaturisation, where molecules take the place of electrical components,” he said.

Instead of using increasingly complex lithographic methods to decrease the feature size of individual electronic components within integrated circuits, molecular electronics approaches the idea from the other end, where the components are already incredibly small, and assembled into larger structures with electronic function.

In addition to his post at UWA and ARC Fellowship, Professor Low retains a Visiting Chair at Durham University and hopes his links can be used to strengthen the exchange opportunities between UWA and Durham, both members of the Matariki research network.

He also holds optimistic hopes of being fit and ready for the start of the cricket season.
The relationship between religion and the State in Australia has been sometimes fraught, always fascinating.

Dr Renae Barker, a lecturer in law and religion in the Law School, graduated with her PhD this month, her research bringing together the scattered and fragmented records of State restriction of religion, religion in education, and funding of religion.

While a PhD is a significant journey for all students, you could say that Dr Barker’s began at the age of 10.

“My father began studying for the Anglican priesthood when I was 10 years old. All our family is dyslexic and we learn best by talking rather than reading. So there was a lot of talking about the workings of the Church, and by the time my father was ordained when I was 16 I’d already absorbed a lot about Church history,” Dr Barker said.

“My original idea was for a more socio-historic approach, but I found that nobody knew WHY changes had taken place, so I changed my research to WHAT happened, rather than why.”

Her thesis examines the changing relationship between the State and religion in Australia from 1788 to the modern day: What has changed? What is the same? And what does this tell us?

“People tend to think that the world has become less religious, more secular. But 9/11 provided spectacular proof that this is not so,” she said.

“But this became a problem as the colony grew because the schools would only be established in populated areas, so children in outer and rural areas would miss out.

“So the State took on the responsibility of what was called secular education, although religious instruction was still part of the syllabus.

“By the 1880s, funding had been taken away from all religious schools and it stayed that way for around 70 years, until the 1960s when a post-war baby boom and migration had swelled the population and the Catholic Church was insisting on a Catholic education for its children, which they managed with a free labour force: nuns, priests and brothers.

“The State responded with funding of religious schools, for special projects, which later included capital works, then became per-student funding, which is pretty much where it is today.

“Interestingly, education in Australia started with the Church; then their influence gradually decreased to a 70-year gap in religious education. It then increased again and, recently, we have seen chaplains appointed to State schools.”

Her third area of study, State funding of religion, found that most States in Australia had a Church Act by the 1830s, which provided a stipend for priests and the building of priests’ houses.

“This Act led to a dramatic increase in the number of clergy in Australia. But it became too expensive for the colonies and they started putting caps on the amounts of money available and eventually the funding was removed altogether.

“Then, at the turn of the 20th century, Australia’s first direct taxes were introduced and Churches were granted exemptions from income tax and land tax.

“We have absolutely no idea of the amounts this has involved but some estimate billions of dollars.

“It has been a constant point of contention, with much criticism, the latest in the Henry tax review.”

Dr Barker who is a member of the Anglican Church and on the board of trustees for the Anglican diocese of Bunbury, said the issues between State and Church would never be resolved.

“It is a dynamic relationship and it will continue that way. Things will happen all the time that force the relationship to be renegotiated.”

While religion has provided the world with one of the oldest professions, Dr Barker uses the newest technology in her teaching, making the most of Twitter and other digital media.
Millions will benefit from PhD scholar’s nutrition research

Getting enough to eat is only the start of food security for the world.

Researchers like Kadambot Siddique are committed to preventing the world from starving. But only getting the right nutrients and micro-nutrients in that food will prevent millions dying from malnutrition and associated diseases.

Selenium is an essential mineral and micronutrient whose deficiency has been linked to cancer, viral infections and heart disease. More than a billion people globally suffer selenium deficiency, due to low levels of selenium in soils and subsequently in the food they eat.

Soils in Australia and New Zealand are low in selenium, but our intake is assured with the wide range of grains, fruits and vegetables we eat.

In Bangladesh they are not so lucky.

This is why Mahmudur Rahman, a PhD scholar from Bangladesh, has been studying how to increase selenium levels in lentils, an important crop in his country.

Dr Rahman graduated last week, quietly delighted with his ground-breaking work towards preventing a global deficiency of selenium.

With his supervisors, Hackett Professor Siddique and Professor Willie Erskine from the UWA Institute of Agriculture and the Centre for Plant Genetics and Breeding (School of Plant Biology), he developed a method of increasing the concentration of selenium in lentil seed, a process known as biofortification.

Breeding and crop trials in South Australia and Victoria and in Bangladesh over the past few years have proved a great success, increasing selenium levels tenfold.

“I love to be able to do something for my country,” Dr Rahman said.

But he has done more than set in motion a plant breeding and growing regimen that will improve the nutrition and health of Bangladeshis.

“Lentils are an ideal crop with which to improve nutrition in Bangladesh.”

The driver of the project was really the arsenic in the water supply,” Professor Erskine said. “Up to 90 million people in West Bengal and Bangladesh have their groundwater contaminated with arsenic. Higher levels of selenium help to prevent arsenic poisoning, which has symptoms similar to leprosy.

“We have evidence that a selenium-deficient diet may increase the risk of arsenic poisoning,” Professor Siddique said. “So Mahmudur has achieved a double advantage with his breakthrough results.”

He said that 60 per cent of the world’s population was deficient in iron, zinc and selenium. “These are typically the rural poor,” he said. “These micro-nutrients are so important for human health. We can see that selenium acts as a detoxification for people with arsenic-contaminated water. Selenium-enriched food means arsenic is not absorbed. So that is a great spin-off for us and for Mahmudur.”

Professor Erskine said that soil in Finland was deficient in selenium and they had changed their fertilisers to enrich their cereal crops.

“It is more practical for Bangladesh and the other sub-continental countries to use fortified crop seed,” he said.

The research involved experimentation with several advanced breeding lines and standard varieties in four locations in Bangladesh, as well as field experiments in the eastern states of Australia and glasshouse trials at UWA.

Australian lentils are largely exported to countries with low dietary selenium so biofortification is important here too.

For Dr Rahman, his graduation was one achievement in what he sees as a long road to food and nutritional security for his people.
Information and advice about networking, job interviews and using social media were all part of UWA Careers Week.

But an important message the students took away with them this year was: ‘You need to be you.’

Careers Week last month was the first one to focus on LGBTI students and a highlight of the week was the Being Out: From Interview to Promotion panel and networking event.

Students heard panellists from a range of industries and business give their insights and advice on how ‘being out’ has impacted on their careers. Followed by a networking session, students had the chance to connect with LGBTI alumni and other panel members.

Malcolm Fialho, A/Associate Director Equity and Diversity, said UWA’s first LGBTI Careers Week event was a resounding success. “The diverse panel (both in terms of sexual and gender identity as well as multi-sectoral) attracted almost 50 students! The conversation was rich, and the panel and students mingled well into the evening.’

Students said it was reassuring that all panellists were very positive in their experiences as LGBTI people in the workforce. “The panellists were fantastic. The message that kept coming across loud and clear was that ‘you need to be you.’”

The week was organised and run by the Careers Centre (Student Services) in collaboration with employers, Equity and Diversity, Development and Alumni Relations, UWA Student Guild, Study Abroad and the UWA Business School.

The week kicked off with a panel of successful WA small business operators providing budding entrepreneurs with business ideas. Panellists included alumnus Charlie Gunningham, Chief Operating Officer at Business News, and Career Mentor Link mentor Heather Warner, Owner/Director of WCA People and Culture Solutions.

Almost 90 per cent of employers use social media to research and recruit staff, so a day was devoted to helping students understand how and why they need to use LinkedIn and keep their Facebook settings private. Students could have their LinkedIn profiles checked and a photographer was on hand for those needing professional photos for their profiles.

The Go Public workshop and panel taught students how to apply for public sector positions and write selection criteria for opportunities in the three levels of government.

About 800 students registered for the 15 events throughout the week. Next year the Careers Centre is planning to release a range of online resources and has scheduled an on-campus Careers Fair for March 4.
CEED project plants the seeds for a flourishing career

What do a spaceship entrepreneur, a partner in a law firm and two UWA academics have in common?

They all took part in the CEED program while undergraduates at UWA.

CEED – Cooperative Education for Enterprise Development – is celebrating its 25th year of operation, with an alumni of 450 graduates.

CEED projects are typically Honours, Masters or Engineering final year research projects. CEED scholars come from disciplines across the campus, with this year’s group ranging from Engineering to Business and Psychology.

The CEED program brings together a business or enterprise with a need, and a student who can fulfil that need. With 22 students involved this year, CEED director Jeremy Leggoe said the number of students varied depending on the number of projects offered by industry.

“There is competition among the students for the projects,” Associate Professor Leggoe said. “Sometimes as many as 25 will apply for the one position. They have to apply just as they would for a job, and go through a selection process.”

The successful students typically spend eight weeks working on their industry projects over the summer break, then complete their research during the year, presenting it at the annual CEED dinner and seminar in September.

“They have an industry mentor and an academic supervisor,” he said. “In contrast to a conventional research project, they have access to the company’s data and resources to support the research. They are also paid a studentship which, next year, will be $10,000 for the year.”

Two CEED alumni work at UWA: Associate Professor Sarah Prout in Earth and Environment, and Assistant Professor Karina Jorritsma in Psychology. Another is a partner in a law firm … and the spaceship entrepreneur?

That’s Enrico Palermo, Vice President of The Spaceship Company, founded by Virgin Galactic.

He recently gave a lecture at UWA, then accompanied A/Professor Leggoe to visit students at Governor Stirling Senior High School, with which runs a specialist engineering program, supported by UWA and engineering firms.

Three CEED scholars this year are working on projects with the UWA Centre for Safety, led by Winthrop Professor Mark Griffin in Psychology. The projects deal with safety issues in the mining and oil and gas industries in WA.

Other students are working with the Water Corporation on the management of its assets, considering the long term performance of materials in its pipes and the effectiveness of treatment processes.

“For several years, we have had an ongoing project with Wood Group Kenny,” A/Professor Leggoe said. “Five successive CEED scholars have worked on a tool for understanding the stability of pipelines on the seabed. Each has built on the work of the previous projects, developing a body of work that has now been presented at several international conferences.”

He said many CEED scholars ended up working with their project companies after graduation.

“Our scholars really benefit from getting experience in the professional environment. They get used to understanding how their projects fit into the context of the business in which they are working.”

This year’s CEED scholars each gave a 15-minute presentation of their research to industry representatives at the dinner and seminar on 24 September.
Indigenous graduate Jeremiah Riley was looking forward to his year at the University of Dundee but the change in climate was enough to give him cold feet.

Mr Riley, a Law graduate, has won an Aurora Rio Tinto (Australian Government-Rio Tinto) NTRB scholarship to study a Master of Laws in Mineral Law and Policy at the University of Dundee.

He has been working for the Native Title Council in Broome for the past three years and just before he left for Scotland, he revealed that he didn’t own a jumper, let alone a warm coat.

“But part of the scholarship is a cold weather clothing allowance which they will pay me as soon as I arrive so I should be alright,” he said. “Although I must say that, after Broome, even Perth’s cold!”

Mr Riley is a second cousin of Aboriginal activist, lawyer and widely-acknowledged hero, Rob Riley, who was part of the negotiating team which established the Native Title Act. He was a senior adviser to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and was awarded the Human Rights Medal in 1996, just before he took his life, at the age of 42.

“Rob was Dad’s cousin and I didn’t know him personally so I can’t say he was a direct influence on my life,” Mr Riley said. “But he is certainly part of the family story and I knew what he had achieved so I never doubted I could achieve my goals too.”

After leaving school, Mr Riley spent a year at Shenton House, doing the School of Indigenous Studies’ pre-Law program.

“There was amazing support for me and the other five students in the program and great camaraderie,” he said.

After graduating from Law, he tried family law but soon gravitated to native title work and was offered the job in Broome three years ago.

“It’s been a busy and important time up in Broome, with the James Price Point project,” he said. “Not only was it a $30 billion gas plant but there were native title and heritage processes inextricably involved.

“I got to understand a lot about mining and mining law and negotiating native title while producing workable agreements.

“But the mining companies realised that, while our hearts are in the right place, native title lawyers need more knowledge of the mining industry, so they joined with the Australian Government to set up this scholarship several years ago.”

Mr Riley is the only native title lawyer going to Dundee this year.

“It’s a great place to do a 12-month Masters, as they have 30 years’ experience with oil and gas exploration in the North Sea,” he said.

Meet the partly chocolate dog

Arnold, the Guide Dog puppy sponsored by UWA staff and students, visited his patrons on the Oak Lawn last month.

Fund-raising on the Crawley campus last year included the sale (and consumption) of 11,000 Freddo Frogs, and staff who came to meet Arnold were joking that a third of him was made of chocolate.

Arnold is now one year old and will start his full-time training within the next six months or so. Until then, he has weekly classes at Guide Dogs WA.

He was sponsored during the University’s Centenary, to coincide with the centenary of the Association for the Blind WA, which has recently been rebranded VisAbility.

Arnold is named after UWA academic Arnold Cook, an economist, who brought the first guide dog to Australia.
Celebrate Spring at St George’s

SpringArts at St George’s next Saturday will highlight the best of the college’s beautiful gardens and its neo-Gothic buildings.

The day-long event is an opportunity to explore the grounds and experience the delights of community living on campus.

The gardens, featuring the imposing oak trees and the perfumed rose gardens, will be on display as part of the Open Gardens Australia season. Their usual entry charge of $8 (free for people under 18) will apply.

Perth’s favourite gardener, Sabrina Hahn, will broadcast her popular radio show, Roots and Shoots, on ABC720 from the quadrangle between 8.30am and 10am.

There will be guided college tours every half-hour throughout the day from 10am to 4.30pm and lots of entertainment.

An exhibition of Georgians’ art will include work by award-winning young photographer Jarrad Seng. Piano recitals are scheduled for every half hour in the dining hall, which is reminiscent of Hogwarts’ hall. Harp and string trios will perform in the chapel throughout the day, and other music, including the Georgian ladies’ ensemble, a barber’s shop quartet, a band set and bagpipes, will be part of the entertainment.

Children’s activities, which should be a great success, following the College’s popular school holiday programs, will run all day. And, for a complete change of pace, poetry readings will pop up in the gardens and throughout the College during the day.

Students will fire up their pizza oven and take orders for fresh pizzas. A gourmet sausage sizzle and drinks will be available all day.

All proceeds will go towards funding scholarships for regional students. So come and explore, discover or reconnect during the inaugural SpringArts on October 4.

Fireman Dan flies out at short notice

More UWA staff have been helping out during emergencies.

Last month, UWAnews featured four staff members who are SES volunteers and we mentioned that other staff, including Dan Petty, were also emergency volunteers.

Even as the photos were being taken of Jenny and Maxine Gamble, Linda McInnes and Hayley Hutchison in their orange SES overalls, Dan, from the University Website Office, was fighting a bushfire in the Kimberley.

He is a Lieutenant with the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and has been with the Wanneroo unit for 10 years.

A month ago, Dan was called to help fight fires over a 700,000 hectare area on the Dampier Peninsula. At short notice, he and three crew from Wanneroo and six other metropolitan volunteer fire fighters were flown to Broome where Dan was a Sector Commander.

After a few days, the fires were under control and Dan and his crew returned to Perth.

He thanked his colleagues in the Website Office for picking up his workload while he was away, especially Grant Malcolm.

The University has an Emergency Services Leave policy for staff who volunteer.

Dan Petty after fighting the fire near Broome. “We never have photos of us in action because everybody’s too busy putting out fires to take out cameras,” he said.
Prizes, funding and a lecture from the Raine Foundation

Funding is now available from the Raine Medical Research Foundation for research projects and visiting research fellows.

As a young researcher in medical science said recently, UWA is extremely fortunate to have the Raine Foundation and its generous support.

Applications for two prizes and a research collaboration award close next week.

The 2015 Strachan Memorial Prize is for clinicians and clinical scientists working in medical and health science in WA, who have completed their doctoral degree within the past five years.

The prize is a travel allowance of $5,000 and is awarded for the best scientific paper arising from clinical or medical health research primarily at UWA or an affiliated institution.

The 2015 Raine Research Prize is a similar award: travel allowance of $5,000, again for the best paper by health and medical researchers at UWA. This prize is open to scientists who have completed their professional qualification within the past six years.

Applications for both these prizes close on Monday 6 October.

The Healy Research Collaboration Awards, of $10,000 each, are to facilitate cross-institutional ties, and to encourage early-career medical research scientists at UWA to develop national and international collaborations.

Applications for the Healy awards close on Thursday 7 October.

Funding for a Raine International Visiting Research Fellow for 2015 is open to all schools and centres at UWA. The Fellowships will help to bring international postdoctoral research scientists to UWA to share new knowledge, train staff and students and initiate collaborative research.

You must apply by Monday 6 October.

For more information about the prizes, the award and the fellowship, and application guidelines, please refer to the Raine Foundation website: www.raine.uwa.edu.au

After the flurry of last-minute applications, medical scientists can enjoy a lecture by Raine Visiting Professor Andrew E Pelling.

Professor Pelling holds the Canada Research Chair in experimental cell mechanics across the departments of physics and biology at the University of Ottawa.

His lecture is Pushing Living Cells to Artificial Extremes and it will be delivered in the School of Anatomy, Physiology and Human Biology, north seminar room (1.81) at 1pm on Tuesday 14 October.

Professor Pelling is hosted by Professor Miranda Grounds from the School.

The lecture is free and no RSVP is required.

Dinosaurs’ flowers

It’s not quite our own Jurassic Park, but the University’s Jurassic garden has a new star.

A bright orange 60cm cone is standing out among the foliage of the almost secret garden near the Edward de Courcy Clarke Earth Science Museum.

The brilliant decoration is part of an Encephalartos senticosus, a cycad that is native to South Africa and a direct descendant from the Jurassic period (at least half a million years ago).

Some sources say these plants flower every year or every alternate year but because this specimen is quite hidden away, it comes as a surprise to see the big orange cone suddenly sitting among the dark fern-like foliage.

Grounds staff report there is also an excellent specimen of the stunning plant in the Taxonomic Garden, towards the southern end of the Crawley campus.

The School of Earth and Environment also has an Eocene garden, with plants from that period, at least 33 million years ago.
Who says books are passé?

Six weeks after the Save the Children book sale in the undercroft, there should be some people in Perth who are a full bottle on Gothic cathedrals in France and Germany.

Among more than 100,000 books that went on sale over the six days of the sale were some recent Swedish novels, books on painting in watercolour, ancient Egypt, life in the rain forests and, of course, a couple of very old books about Gothic cathedrals.

The sale made $216,000 from the campus ‘pop-up shop’ and a further $56,000 from other SC book sales, their online shop and donations, making a total of $272,531.16 from books in 2015.

The 50 categories included music – sheet music as well as vinyl records and CDs. This year, these included the complete scores for two operas.

Sorting the books for the sale (which has already begun for next year’s event) must be one of the most interesting volunteering roles in Perth.

One volunteer found a book of 17th century literary letters, with a pencilled note on the fly leaf:

Save the Children sale, undercroft 1976, 75c.

A volunteer at the sale was adding up a customer’s purchases when he saw his own hand-written name in a book. He had lost that book at least 25 years ago.

One of the most fascinating donations on sale this year was Varro on Farming, a 1912 translation from the original Latin of more than 2,000 years ago.

Young social media guru builds up UWA fan base

By Sally-Ann Jones

Nobody who met a work-experience student from Shenton College when he spent a week at UWA was surprised to learn that he has built up a following of 77,000 Twitter followers since posting his first You Tube video only a few months ago.

Undoubtedly he’ll have a lot more fans after working with UWA’s extended Communications and Marketing team.

Harrison McCallum is the kind of young man who makes a big impression. And his advice – based on his own successful social media experience – helped many in the team to understand more about social media and implement some of his ideas.

Harrison was 15 when he started the week and spent his 16th birthday morning a few days later eating chocolate cake baked by UWAnews editor Lindy Brophy before getting down to business.

Harrison helped Lindy write several articles including a story about Indigenous student Jessyca Hutchens and her national Charlie Perkins Scholarship to Oxford. With Lindy, he also helped take photos of a PhD scholar and had a meeting with the CEED program coordinator and wrote a story about the program so more students would get involved.

Among other tasks, he helped senior video production officer Akos Bruz film and edit a bioscience video for students.

He helped staff in the Website office to create captions for a You Tube video on Clough Scholarships.

And he helped Sally-Ann Jones prepare a science communication presentation by creating a powerpoint on exploiting social media to optimise attention to research.

Harrison, who said he could sing before he could talk, is a keen musician. His You Tube channel, youtube.com/user/ theharricz features his covers of popular songs as well as humorous blog videos on topics such as expectations versus reality and social standards.

Soon after he posted his first cover at the beginning of the year, he attracted two managers in the US and is travelling to Los Angeles during the school holidays with his family to meet them, along with some of his fans.

He hopes to build up a following of 100,000 by the end of the year – and nobody at UWA will be surprised if he does.

Book fans wait in Whitfeld Court for the doors to open on the first night of the sale
A chance to wear your onesie!

Staff and students are encouraged to join the inaugural Campus Sleepout on the Great Court on Thursday 23 October.

Organised by Student Services, the event is to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people in Perth and to raise money for RUH, a charity that runs a centre for homeless people in Northbridge, just 12 minutes from the Crawley campus.

Bring your sleeping bag, your guitar, your zebra onesie: whatever you need for the night. Student Services will provide soup and a roll for dinner and cereal for breakfast.

Each participant is required to raise at least $50 for RUH. You must register by Friday 3 October, when you will be sent an information pack that will answer all your questions.

Register at neysa.cloanan@uwa.edu.au or donate at donate@www.student.uwa.edu.au/sleepout

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*QS World University Rankings by Subject

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PhD – it’s a lot more than just three letters

Dr Louise Wedlock
Manager, Graduate Research Candidature
Graduate Research and Scholarships

When I was interviewed for this role I was asked ‘what do you understand the word ‘candidature’ to mean’? The longer I am in this role the more I realise that I had no idea what that meant.

A PhD candidate is normally enrolled for at least four years – and what I do, and my team of three wonderful staff, is help them manage everything that happens to the students in that time – in four years, a lot can happen!

We manage all of the students enrolled in higher degrees by research (HDR) at UWA (nearly 2,000), a mixture of masters level, doctoral level, full time, part time, international and domestic students, with around 400 enrolments each year, and around 300 theses submitted for examination.

HDR students are enrolled centrally through our Graduate Research School, but are supervised locally in Schools and Faculties. Our candidature team manages and processes all the main points of administrative contact between the student and the Graduate Research School including applications for admission, appointment of supervisors, changes in their enrolment, yearly milestones, and anything in between, up to the point of submission of a thesis. On the surface we provide a purely administrative function, but underneath there is so much more that goes into looking after these budding researchers. No two students and no two supervisors are the same, which makes every query new, and I never know what might happen tomorrow.

I come from a mixed background, completing my PhD and a postdoc in Chemistry at UWA as well as 12 years’ experience teaching classical ballet, having started dancing at the age of three. As such, finding a job that satisfied my need to use my analytical and research skills as well as working with people was a challenge for me – and now I feel I’ve found a niche in which I can make a real difference to the lives of students as well as their supervisors.

I love working with human beings – research degrees take an enormous amount of time and energy from the people who are involved in them both student, supervisors, and the graduate research coordinators, and helping these incredibly brilliant people work together to make the ride as smooth as possible is exceptionally rewarding.

What do I love most? Some days it is being able to share the magic moment when they hand in their thesis and are given that red or blue mug. The insurmountable effort that got me to that point in my own PhD is still so fresh in my mind.

I am so lucky to work with such a great team and be given so many opportunities for professional development that helps me do what I do.

This year I’ve completed an accreditation in mediation and conflict resolution, and also been through an accreditation with the Australian Research Management Society. Both of these opportunities have allowed me to have greater perspective on how I deal with people, but also engage with where my work sits in the broader higher education sector.

UWA and the higher education sector are facing some of the biggest changes in their histories, and I don’t know what the future will bring, but I know that this is exactly where I’ll be.