

Head of School of Physics Newsletter - July 2011

Phil Dooley – Many of you will know that Dr Phil Dooley, the School's Manager of Outreach Programs is leaving us to take up a position in Europe. Phil has significantly developed his role during the years he has been with the School and our outreach in areas such as the Kickstart program is all the better because of Phil's efforts. We wish Phil well as he follows this new direction in his career with JET, the Joint European Torus project. Tom Gordon has been appointed on a fixed term contract as the School's new Science Communicator.

AIN-Physics Building

I am pleased to be able to inform everyone that the University has selected the principal design consultant for the new building. The international consortium of architects will be coordinated by Architectus (Sydney), in conjunction with Jestico +Whiles (UK) and a specialist lab design team from the US and UK practices of CH2M Hill. A full briefing on this team will be provided in due course, but amongst their combined portfolio are the design of the Australian Synchrotron at Monash University, the Mountbatten building at the University of Southampton (a world class nanoscience and nanotechnology research centre), and the detailed design of the nanotechnology laboratories for industry and University clients in Europe, the US and Asia. This team was identified after an exhaustive search that started with nearly thirty responses to a call by the University for expressions of interest in providing the architectural services for the building. The panel of assessors unanimously agreed on five top ranked submissions from architectural practices who were exceptional against all the assessment criteria, offering strong experience and expertise in design of advanced physical science laboratories, design of education teaching spaces and working in the role of managing consultant. We selected three of the five for interview after further submissions which included price proposals, and obtained references on each of these from users, project managers and building contractors. On the basis of the interviews, the reference checks and the submissions made by the three teams, the panel was unanimous in recommending the Architectus/J+W team for appointment as the project architects.

The design consultants will engage intensively with the users on the different Working Groups during the design process. The first occasion will be a series of meetings with users over the two weeks commencing Monday August 15. We will also have our Boston consultants, Mark Reed of the LAB consultancy company and Professor Charlie Marcus of Harvard University, with us for part of these meetings, both as peer reviewers and as facilitators of this interaction.

The remaining consultants (structural, mechanical, electrical, fire and hydraulics) are in the process of being appointed. One consultant who has been appointed is the quantity surveyor who, at the time of writing, is evaluating the DEGW Design Brief for costing purposes.

I mentioned in June's newsletter that plans for decanting of A29 are continuing with the recent acquisition of part of Level 1 of Carslaw from the Faculty of Science and 21 Ross Street. The University is currently negotiating to acquire further accommodation for the School for the purposes of decanting in Redfern near the Australian Technology Park. Should the Redfern accommodation become available then the Carslaw space may not be then required. When the acquisition of decanting space has been resolved then the process will begin to 'refit' as required before occupation can occur. This will require decisions to be made regarding where members of staff and students will be located. Prof Martijn de Sterke has agreed to chair a subcommittee of the School Space & Infrastructure to make recommendations to the School Management Committee regarding this. Further details regarding this will be circulated in the very near future.

ARC Grant Success – Congratulations to members of the School who have recently been successful in obtaining ARC Linkage Grants.

Prof Marcela M Bilek and Prof David R McKenzie have been awarded \$540K over 3 years to study multifunctional surfaces for implantable biomedical devices. This project aims to improve the quality of life of patients receiving biomedical implants. The project will develop new plasma processing methods to create surfaces for implants that will give control over the response of human tissues. Tissue integration with the device will be achieved where required and infection suppressed.

Prof David McKenzie has also been awarded \$585,000 over 3 years to study feed through technologies for polymeric encapsulated active implants. This project will address the scientific challenges of signal transfer between tissue and novel active implantable medical devices, with major implications for cochlear implant manufacture. This will lead to improvements in the quality of life of the hearing impaired, and will make an important contribution to the development of other sensory implants.

Undergraduate Enrolments - Semester two has commenced with generally healthy numbers of undergraduate students. The one area of noticeable change compared to last year is in Junior Physics. PHYS 1004 (Environmental) numbers are down from 335 to 180. This is due to a change in the requirements of the B.Med.Sci. degree that now allows students to undertake either Psychology or Physics. A significant number of students took this option in semester 1 and that trend continues in semester 2. There was a significant reduction in PHYS 1902 Advanced students (from 155 in 2010 down to 109), seemingly reflected in a corresponding increase in PHYS 1003 Technological students to almost 300. This is currently being evaluated in order to understand why this has occurred.

Occupational Health and Safety – Nathan Apps has been appointed the School Safety Officer. I would like to thank Rob Davies who has been undertaking this role in the School for a number of years. The School's Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee has been renamed the School Safety Committee and will continue to be chaired by A/Prof Joe Khachan. Further details regarding changes to School OH&S policy will be circulated in due course.

Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) - In the 2009-10 Budget, the Commonwealth Government introduced an important new research block grant scheme known as the Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) initiative, to address the gap in funding for the indirect costs of university research. Over the four years 2009-10 to 2012-13, \$510 million will be provided under the SRE program to support universities in meeting the indirect costs of their Australian Competitive Grant (ACG) research, predominantly through funding bodies such as ARC and NH&MRC.

All University of Sydney employees undertaking research are required to complete the associated SRE survey. All School staff undertaking research should have received an email regarding this and started to complete the survey.

Planning Day - Over the past several years the School has experienced considerable success in our research and teaching activities as well as being able to secure from the University the commitment to

complete a new building. The building project is exciting and offers us many opportunities but it has also prompted me to come to the view that we would benefit from embarking on a new planning process that has a focus on where we wish to develop the School over the years to come. A planning day has been set aside on 29 September to meet as a School but there is quite a deal of preparation that will be required beforehand to ensure we obtain a positive result. For this reason I have asked Philip Pogson to support us in this process. Philip assisted myself and the Dean in the Science Foundation for Physics strategic planning process in 2010 and has extensive experience in developing strategic plans with GO8 universities, medical research institutes and in rural industry R&D. As part of briefing Philip on the School, he will ask to meet individually with a number of you in the near future. I would appreciate it if you could meet with him, if requested, to share your views on what you see as the future priorities for the School as a whole and for your own area. He will be contacting you in the coming weeks to make a time with you.

Workshop Review – The formal change management plan for the School workshop continues with the imminent release of the Formal Change Proposal and Formal Implementation Proposal. This will be followed soon after by the release of the Final Change and Implementation Plan after which implementation of change will commence.

General Staff Review – The General Staff Review, chaired by Ms Cindy Willkinson is nearing completion. The associated report is expected to be released in August.

University Vehicle Policy – Staff are reminded that it is the responsibility of the nominated driver/vehicle custodian to ensure that any person driving a University vehicle is legally licensed to drive and/or operate the vehicle. Further, drivers holding a Learner's permit or a red Provisional license are not authorised to operate a University owned vehicle.

The International Science School (ISS) – The ISS took place from 3-16 July. All involved thought this was very successful event and in keeping with previous successful ISS events. I would like to acknowledge Dr Chris Stewart, Ms Alison Muir and Mrs Alex Green for their efforts in making the ISS a success and particularly for the extra hours worked outside normal business hours. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Diana Londish for her work in the early planning phase of the ISS in 2010. Discussions are currently underway as to how to celebrate next year's 50th anniversary of the first ISS.

Building Maintenance

Lift – The construction of the new passenger lift in A28 is proceeding with completion expected in September.

A28 Main Corridor – Staff will no doubt have noticed that the main corridor on the ground floor (Level 2) of A28 has had all items removed from the walls at the Eastern end in preparation for painting. Once the painting has been completed, a series of new glass-fronted display cabinets will be installed.

Sydney Achievers International Scholarships - The University has announced the Sydney Achievers International Scholarships for new international students commencing at the University in 2012. These prestigious scholarships are aimed at attracting high achieving, academically meritorious, international students to enjoy the 'Sydney experience' at the University of Sydney. Any questions with regard to the scholarships should be directed to Jay jayatilaka, Deputy Director, International Office, at Jay.jayatilaka@sydney.edu.au. Complete details on the scholarships are available at: http://sydney.edu.au/future_students/international_undergraduate/costs_scholarships/sydney_achievers.shtml

The July 2011 Europe Funding Bulletin is available on the International Handbook, Europe page: http://s1.sydney.edu.au/internationalhandbook/regions_countries/europe/funding_sources.shtml