

Head of School of Physics Newsletter - September 2010

More Success - Congratulations to Prof. Bryan Gaensler in winning the Physics, Earth Sciences, Chemistry and Astronomy Category of the 2010 NSW Scientist of the Year Awards. The NSW Scientist of the Year awards were presented on 15 September 2010 at Government House by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir. The NSW Scientist of the Year Awards were established in 2008 to recognise and reward the state's leading researchers for cutting edge work that generates economic, health, environmental or technological benefits for NSW. I would also like to bring to your attention Prof. Joss Bland-Hawthorne who was also a finalist in the Physics, Earth Sciences, Chemistry and Astronomy Category. Overall winner of NSW Scientist of the Year was Prof. Hugh Durrant-Whyte of the Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney.

Joss Bland-Hawthorne will be giving talking at the Sydney Science Forum -Nemesis: The Search for Antimatter in the Universe on 6 October 2010 in the Eastern Avenue Auditorium. For further details - <http://www.usyd.edu.au/news/84.html?newscategoryId=2&newsstoryid=5737>

New Physics Building / AIN - Progress continues regarding the new Physics building and the Australian Institute of Nanoscience. Ongoing day to day governance is being led by the Project User Group (PUG), chaired by the Head of School. Reporting to the Executive Steering Committee chaired by the Dean of Science, the purpose of the PUG is to provide formal and effective communication between representatives of all sections of the University with an interest in the project. As such it focuses on the definition of user needs, include developing the project vision, defining current and anticipated needs and ensuring optimal facility design with respect to the vision. Also, the PUG has a number of advisory / project working groups providing expert advice, where necessary, on the research, teaching and technology aspects. The current working groups are the Research Working Group chaired by Chris Walsh, the Teaching & Learning Group chaired by John O'Byrne and the Space and Infrastructure Group chaired by Simon Fleming. Each group, populated with representatives from the School, has been meeting regularly. I look forward to bringing further news to you in due course.

Art Installation - Visual artist, Fiona Davies, has set up an art installation in the foyer of the School. The formal opening of the installation was held on 23rd September and opened by ABC TV's Catalyst presenter, Dr Paul Willis. The installation, Memorial/Double Pump/Laplace II, is one of three in a series, loosely based on narratives of the dying and death in 2001 of Fiona's father, Louis Walter Davis who graduated from the School with honours in 1948. The series of installations have been located in sites that were important in how Fiona's father defined himself. The first in 2006 was in Aberdeen, NSW - his hometown; the second is this installation in the School where Fiona's father was an undergraduate and the third was in 2009 in Lincoln College, Oxford University where Louis undertook postgraduate study. The installation may be viewed from 9am -5pm until 20 October 2010. For further information on Fiona's art - www.fionadavies.com.au

Cancer Research Network Postgraduate Research Symposium - Students undertaken research projects related to cancer research are encouraged to attend the Cancer Research Network Postgraduate Research Symposium to be held on campus on 3rd December 2010. The deadline for submitting abstracts is 12 October 2010 - <http://sydney.edu.au/cancer-research/news/students10.php>

Science Teacher Workshop - Since 1984 the School of Physics and the Science Foundation for Physics have hosted a two-day in-service training workshop for physics teachers in NSW and the ACT. Held every two years at the University of Sydney, up to 140 science teachers enjoy a packed program of inspiring talks and lectures and a choice of hands-on workshops covering a wide aspect of teaching practices, ideas for class activities and discussion groups. In recent years the STWs have focussed on the new HSC physics syllabus in NSW, with sessions allowing teachers and physicists to discuss and debate the more challenging aspects of the new syllabus document. The workshops allow teachers to encounter cutting-edge physics research, to hone their skills through sessions concentrating on practical demonstrations of physics concepts, and to share resources and strategies for the physics classroom. This year the STW is being held on 5 and 6 November 2010. The two-day Physics program includes plenary lectures featuring cutting edge research followed by a choice of workshops. Participants choose four sessions (two each day)

from up to 12 workshop options. On the first afternoon there will be a "Meet-a-Physicist" session, followed by an informal dinner. The Physics STW is accredited by the NSW Teachers Institute. I would like to thank School staff involved in this activity and would especially like to acknowledge Diana Londish for undertaking the majority of the preparation in conjunction with Faculty of Science staff.

Excess Annual Leave - Excess annual leave balances of School staff is an important issue which not only impacts on the health and well being of staff but also incurs a significant financial liability for the School. Recent changes to budgeting have schools bearing the liability for leave. The Faculty of Science currently has year to date salary costs related to annual leave liability of a total of \$3.5 million. While this should reduce through the year as employees take their 4 weeks annual leave, if staff fail to take their full annual leave then the cost to the Faculty could be significant by the end of the year. As an example, based on the 2010 Budget if all employees only take 3 weeks annual leave the total cost to the Faculty will be approximately \$1.6 million. The University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2009-2012 has a new provision whereby staff who have more than 40 days annual leave at 1 February will be directed to take, and considered to be on, annual leave from 1 February for the period of leave in excess of 40 days (Clause 134(c) University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2009-2012). Impacted staff members will be receiving notification by 31 October 2010 that their annual leave balance will exceed 40 days on 1 February 2011, unless the annual leave is taken. If the excess annual leave is not taken, the staff member will be directed to take, and considered to be on, annual leave from 1 February 2011 for the period of leave in excess of 40 days, unless, over the preceding year, reasonable requests for annual leave have been denied. Eligible employees have the ability to cash-out up to 10 days of their annual leave (they must take equivalent amount of annual leave).

Applications for this option must be submitted and accepted by 23rd November 2010 - the associated leave can be taken up to 23rd May, 2011 -

http://sydney.edu.au/sydneypeople/forms/excess_annual_leave_cash_out_form.pdf

PG interviews - Teaching & research and research-only academic staff will soon be receiving details of the interviews for the annual postgraduate students reviews that they are expected to undertake as academic members of staff. This is a very important formal activity which all academic staff are expected to make themselves available for.

Australian Institute of Physics (AIP) Prize - The NSW Branch of the AIP will hold its second annual Postgraduate Awards Day on Tuesday 23 November 2010 in the Lecture Room 1, Darlington Centre University of Sydney. Each New South Wales University is invited to nominate one student to compete for the \$500 prize and Postgraduate medal on that day. Students nominated for the awards will also be invited as guests for the NSW AIP Branch annual dinner that follows the presentations. These awards have been created to encourage excellence in postgraduate work, and all nominees who participate in the Postgraduate Awards Day will receive a special certificate recognising the nominee's high standing. Students will be asked to make a 20-minute presentation on their postgraduate research in Physics, and the presentation will be judged on the criteria (1) content and scientific quality, (2) clarity and (3) presentation skills. The process for selecting a postgraduate candidate from the School will be coordinated by the School's AIP branch representative Mike Biercuk before 15th October 2010.

AIP accreditation - An AIP Accreditation Panel will be visiting the School for one day on Wednesday 6 October 2010. The School's undergraduate courses are reviewed for accreditation every 5 years and is an important step in ensuring we continue to maintain high academic teaching standards in the School. John O'Byrne is thanked for coordinating this activity.

Open days - Staff involved in recent open days for the purpose of student recruitment are thanked for their support and contribution to this very important activity. We do rely on these open days to ensure that we continue to attract high quality students into the School. There has been some discussion as to whether this activity should be incorporated formally into the duties of academic staff for future activities.