Feeling the heat

RESEARCH PROFILE

NEW RESEARCH CENTRE TO BE A WORLD LEADER IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A major new collaborative research centre led by engineers at the University of Melbourne, and drawing on capacity and expertise across the University, will revolutionise the way we respond to natural and man-made disasters.

In the wake of ever-frequent extreme natural events and man-made disasters, the Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety (CDMPS) will conduct multi-disciplinary research and training in disaster management to build resilient societies adept at responding to these major challenges.

The Centre sees the University of Melbourne partnering with a range of high profile government and industry bodies, including IBM Research, the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials and the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management.

Director of the Centre, Professor Abbas Rajabifard (PhD 2002), said that the Centre would conduct research aimed at creating a knowledge base to assist policy makers to build safer communities that are able to respond to and recover quickly from disasters.

"In the last few decades, countries all over the world have experienced many natural and man-made disasters that have affected millions and cost trillions of dollars of damage to infrastructure and property," he said.

"The Centre’s research focuses on themes associated with preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating against these incidents."

CDMPS researchers work across disciplines, addressing a range of critical areas:

- Understanding natural disasters
- Improving strategic decision-making during periods of high stress
- The application of new technologies to disaster management
- Building community resilience to reduce the impact of disasters
- Effective mission critical communications
- Effective disaster management policy.

The Centre’s Manager, Ged Griffin, said a series of major inquiries into disasters including the Black Saturday bushfires, Queensland floods and Tasmanian fires, had issued repeated recommendations for a more coordinated approach to research and training in disaster management. “There was seen to be a demonstrated need to establish a dedicated Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety,” he said.

The CDMPS is now developing a Masters program in Disaster Management, to train future practitioners in this increasingly important sector.

It is also developing an international research portal, through which academics working in disaster management and public safety around the world can connect and facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration.

During 2015, the CDMPS will be laying the groundwork for its future operations.

Further information: cdmps.org.au
FACULTY OF VCA & MCM

Reaching out to regional Victoria

BY SUSAN BIRD

In 2014, alumni from the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music travelled to every corner of Victoria to present art projects in regional communities.

Supported by the Faculty’s Regional Engagement and Training Fund (RTEF), which is an outcome of a partnership with Creative Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria, the initiative’s aim is to offer arts training and engagement projects to communities around Victoria.

Since the program began in 2012, 31 art projects have been created by VCA & MCM alumni, staff and students for different communities with a total audience of over 13,000 Victorians.

Regional Arts Development Officer Lorraine Litttle works with alumni, communities and partners to develop the projects. She is proud of the project’s successes over the past three years.

“One of the very real and consistent outcomes of the program has been in the number of our students and alumni who have, as a direct result of participating in a regional project, been successful in attaining further work in regional communities. For the communities, it has been a huge fillip, to their arts development, to have such a vast array of artists from VCA & MCM living and working with them,” said Litttle.

Ruby Hughes, a 2014 graduate from the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice), performed her theatre piece Ophelia Sol in Natimuk in November as part of the FRISK Festival project. “Ophelia Sol was received with such joy and enthusiasm from both the school groups and other audience members of the Wimmera region,” she said.

More: channel.vca-mcm.unimelb.edu.au/category/maps/victoria-map/

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Passion for discovery leads to Oxford

RHODES SCHOLAR

ALEXANDER EASTWOOD

BSc(Hons), DIPLANG 2014

From Bendigo to Oxford via Melbourne, 2015 Victorian Rhodes Scholar Alexander Eastwood’s journey has been defined by a passion for scientific discovery.

“I can still recall those moments in class when certain theories and concepts would click and that flame of interest would intensify,” Alexander says.

“Among them: the beauty of Darwin’s theory of Evolution by Natural Selection, the brilliance of Watson and Crick’s discovery of the nature of DNA; the logic of Le Châtelier’s formula for chemical equilibrium.”

Alexander’s Melbourne adventure started in year 10, when he was selected as a Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholar. From there, he completed a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Neurosciences, and a Diploma in Languages (Spanish).

He spent a semester on exchange to the University of St Andrews in Scotland, which he describes as a “wildly different experience” to Melbourne.

“It was the University’s 600th anniversary at the time, and tutorials were held between ruins of the Reformation and the world’s first golf course,” he says.

Last year he did honours in Autism research at the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health as a Frances Elizabeth Thomson Trust Scholar under the supervision of Dr Emma Burrows and Professor Anthony Hannan. He was inspired to study the neurosciences not by what is known, but what is not known. In his final year he took an elective subject, ‘Principles of Neuroscience’, and he says this unit demonstrated the plethora of unexplored phenomena around the brain.

“I was hooked — like a determined explorer in a time when the world was less known … this is the final frontier,” he says.

The Rhodes Scholarship for postgraduate study at the University of Oxford is the oldest international scholarship program in the world.

FACULTY OF ARTS

Internship leads to new perspectives

Bianca Montero (Master of Development Studies 2015) shares her experience as an intern at The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (Social Enterprise Sector) in Melbourne.

“My internship was largely in a research capacity, conducting feasibility studies on potential new social enterprises. I worked on the initiation of the Food Justice Truck, a subsidised supermarket on wheels. It has since been greenlit, and should be piloted some time this year. After doing so much theory throughout university, it’s incredibly exciting to see tangible outcomes of your research that go beyond a good grade.

“I think my internship grounded my degree for me. I was yearning for something more practical, and it definitely allowed me to apply the knowledge I had learned in a classroom to the ‘real world’.

“My internship changed my perspective on development. I had often considered it from a humanitarian and social perspective, but it was only when I started working under Social Enterprise that I really appreciated development from an economic and business perspective. Prior to the internship, I think I valued education and social empowerment more as an approach to development, and while I still believe they are necessary elements, I realise now that they must be accompanied by economic empowerment and independence, for true sustainable development.”
MELBOURNE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Leadership skills from the desert to the department

ALUMNUS PROFILE  LOUKA PARRY

The kids in Mimili didn’t want to ask Louka Parry’s name when he first arrived in the tiny community in north-western South Australia. They just wanted to know how long he was staying.

“To me, that said: ‘I want to know if you’re going to commit to the community before I make any commitment with you’,” Louka reflects.

That first day in town, when questioned by a little boy, Louka’s answer was that he’d be around for two years, and then he was going travelling. “So of course two years became three, then four then five,” he remembers. “It was somewhere that I made a huge connection with; it’s been a fantastic journey.”

Louka’s experience in Mimili inspired him to study the secrets of leadership.

“When I landed in the middle of Australia, I was very fortunate to have a great leader at that school and she developed my capacity in a big way,” Louka explained.

He decided to study a Master of Instructional Leadership that was offered in weekend intensives, even though it meant a formidable commute.

“Initially, it was a 4am wakeup, a five-hour drive to Alice Springs then a flight to Melbourne,” he said.

“So it was quite a logistical challenge, but one of the benefits was the intensive modules so you can continue to work in your school setting.”

Louka was one of an increasingly large cohort of professionals willing to travel interstate to study the Master and Professional Certificate in Instructional Leadership. More than 40 per cent of enrolments over the past two years have been interstate students.

Louka is now working as Manager of Literacy, Primary Years at South Australia’s Department of Education and Child Development.

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Learning by doing

Global Management Consulting (GMC) is a third-year capstone subject that gives students the opportunity to gain industry experience overseas. Contrary to what you might expect, these candidates are not ‘work experience’ students, or even interns.

Positioned as consultants, they demonstrate their skills as advisors dealing with real problems.

In 2015, for the first time, the GMC group visited San Francisco. Dr Brent Coker (Lecturer in Marketing), who led the group, felt San Francisco was the natural choice given the dynamics in North America and the seemingly stronger support for start-ups and young business people. Students are provided with what Dr Coker calls “super-charged business learning experiences, showing them that they too can reach achieve their business potential”.

Bradley Peter Reilly took part in the 2015 program. “Presenting to executives of a multi-million dollar company was intimidating, but, by far, the most rewarding experience of my time at the University of Melbourne,” he says.

Local business and global corporations were equally impressed with the student consultants, with executives flying to San Francisco to hear the presentation.

The program will return to San Francisco, with further trips to Kuala Lumpur, Berlin, Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai also planned.

FACULTY OF VETERINARY AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Class is in for dog health

A team of students is working to improve public health and animal welfare in Sikkim, in the Himalayan foothills.

Developed and delivered in collaboration with Australian-based Vets Beyond Borders (VBB), the pilot project, which built on the highly successful Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health Program (SARAH), was funded through a University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor’s Engagement Grant.

Far from the expected classroom sizes of around 30 pupils, team member and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine student Aashima Auplish says many of the participating schools had several hundred students in each session. In just two weeks the project reached an audience of more than 8700 people.

The focus was on identifying dog behaviour, rabies treatment and identification, and rabies prevention — followed up with a section on general dog health and wellbeing, and how these approaches impact on individuals and pet owners.

The project team – Aashima Auplish, Alison Clarke, Trent Van Zanten and project leader Dr Kate Abel – worked on developing content for around eight months. The material included slide show handouts, skits, inflatable dogs and a number of pre-prepared videos.

Dr Charmaine Tham, President of VBB, says the SARAH project offered a great opportunity to explore the inclusion of an education program across the organisation’s work in other countries.

“The SARAH project was established in 2006 and is very much a collaborative effort between VBB, our funding body, Fondation Brigitte Bardot in France, and the local Sikkim government to run these animal health, desexing and vaccination programs, mainly to reduce rabies,” Dr Tham says.
INVESTING IN INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTH

Despite the many recent advances in healthcare, Indigenous Australians continue to have a shorter life expectancy, higher mortality rates and higher rates of preventable illness, such as heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes, than other Australians.

A $10 million gift to the University of Melbourne last year has established the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health. This gift completes a network of six Poche Centres for Indigenous Health located within universities across the Australian mainland. Named for their benefactor, Greg Poche AO, the aim of the Centres is to effect systemic change in Aboriginal health by using specialist knowledge and skills to introduce upstream interventions in clearly identified health determinants.

The Melbourne Poche Centre will provide training and development programs for emerging and established Indigenous leaders, and create academic pathways for Indigenous PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows.

Mr Poche and his wife, Kay Van Norton Poche (pictured with Professor Shaun Ewen), are committed to doing their best to ensure that the Centre ‘makes real, long-term gains in Indigenous health’.

“Improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians is one of our nation’s biggest challenges and it is vital that we do everything we can,” says Mr Poche.

Professor Shaun Ewen, foundation director of the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, says the gift is an investment in the future health of our nation, and will play a critical role in reducing health inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

“We know that well-managed Indigenous community-based organisations have delivered positive health outcomes for Indigenous people,” says Professor Ewen. “We know that over the past several years, around a dozen senior university leadership positions in Indigenous health across the country have been left unfilled - or filled by non-Indigenous academics.

We also know that the complex challenges in the community health sector require outstanding leaders to develop nuanced responses to the challenges.

“To make real, long-term gains in Indigenous health, we need leadership from highly skilled, well-qualified Indigenous people who are able to mobilise action and build an agenda for change in their areas of practice.”

The mission of the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health is to develop the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

“These leaders will influence the strategic directions of institutions, be mentors for emerging Indigenous leaders, build enduring partnerships and influence the health outcomes of Australia so that the gap in health status between Indigenous and other Australians is closed.”

6-STAR GREEN STAR RATING FOR THE MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

The new MSD building has been awarded a 6-Star Green Star Design - Education Design v1 Rating by the Green Building Council of Australia, scoring 83 points.

The 6-Star Rating represents ‘World Leadership’ in environmentally sustainable building practices. Only 12 buildings in Australia have received a rating of this level, and the new MSD building becomes the largest to achieve this. Significantly, it is the only one to be awarded all 10 innovation points possible in the evaluation criteria.

A video podcast outlining the sustainable features and credentials of the Melbourne School of Design can be viewed online at visions.unimelb.edu.au/episode/building-sustainable-future