Our biotech brain gain

Keeping graduates in South Australia is one of the biggest challenges facing the local biotechnology industry – but now a group of students is doing something about it.

South Australia’s biotechnology industry employs more than 1000 people, and generates revenue in excess of $100m annually, with the potential for further growth.

This growth could depend on the industry’s ability to attract and retain local graduates, who might otherwise head interstate or overseas.

To tackle this issue head-on, a group of five biotechnology PhD students from all three universities and based at CSIRO engaged the support of the nation’s peak biotechnology organisation, AusBiotech to establish a representative student body. The five students were Denise Furness, Michelle Zucker, Bianca Benassi (University of Adelaide), Olgatina Bucco (Flinders University) and Sasja Beetstra (University of SA).

The South Australian branch of the national AusBiotech Students’ Association (ABSA) was launched recently and aims to bridge the gap between biotechnology students and industry. It already has some 80 members from the three universities at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels.

University of Adelaide biotechnology PhD students Denise Furness (right) and Bianca Benassi
Photo by Ben Osborne

One of the founding members, Denise Furness, a University of Adelaide PhD student based at CSIRO, said local students were much more likely to stay in South Australia if they learnt of the opportunities available here while still at university.

“These are things that they might not be able to get just from their university studies. They’ll be able to network with people from all aspects of industry, and attend important industry events and workshops.

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continued on page 11
Back in the December Adelaidean, I commented, almost in passing, that 2005 seemed likely to be an “interesting” year. With 2005 a third over, “interesting” is hardly the word. The Federal Government, having won another term and having gained control of the Senate, has been spurned into producing a snowstorm of documents proposing further changes to universities. These cover everything from the protocols associated with granting university status through to the governance of universities, voluntary membership of student bodies, mechanisms for funding research, and quality assurance of programs offered in other countries.

Many of these issues have serious implications for this and every university. For example, if membership of the student union is made voluntary, this puts at direct risk a range of student services, which it is in the interests of the university and all students to maintain. At the University of Adelaide, the Student Service Fee supports not only social and cultural events, but a range of vital services. Some will be lost, and others will have to be supported by funds that would otherwise be used for teaching.

The Government’s agenda for reform of research funding contains a range of unknown challenges in determining how universities should be funded for the research they undertake. Tied up with this is the proposal that there should otherwise be used for teaching.

The challenge with these exercises is two-fold. On the one hand, how to find a set of criteria which cover disciplines ranging from the Fine Arts through to Theoretical Physics and Agriculture, while on the other ensuring that the cost of the exercise is not so high as to waste a significant proportion of the funds earmarked for research.

Serious as all these issues may be, there are even more fundamental questions hidden away in some of the documents. For example, in the document on the enabling legislation for universities – should it be State or Federal legislation? – there is a section discussing “ownership” of universities. The implication appears to be that the Government in some way owns the universities. This is an appalling concept. Universities are owned by the members of the university, which includes all of its graduates, its staff and its students. Universities may be founded (and funded) to serve the community, and in that sense they are community bodies: but they are definitely not owned by the Government!

Universities exist for the purpose of communicating knowledge, for the purpose of creating new knowledge and serving the community. They are not an arm of whatever Government happens to be in power, and they could not and should not be asked to peddle a preferred view of the world. Certainly the Government, like anyone else, can contract with us (and indeed they do) for the provision of education, qualifications, training, research and other services, but the independence of universities is a vital cornerstone of a free society.

It is time that this debate was held in public, and a serious attempt made to resolve these issues to ensure that universities are able to serve future generations.

From the Vice-Chancellor
Young achievers take centre stage - and awards!

Past and present University of Adelaide students have performed well at the recent 2005 Young Achiever of the Year awards.

Music, Law and Arts graduate Patrick Lim (pictured right) won the overall title of Young Achiever of the Year and also the Arts category, while Physiology PhD student Beverly Mühlhäusler (below right) won the Science and Technology category (which was sponsored by the university’s Faculty of Sciences).

The third Adelaide student to feature in the awards was Education graduate Kiara Rahman who won the Outstanding Young Indigenous Achiever category, and who is now studying for her PhD at the University of South Australia.

Patrick Lim

With a demanding schedule including freelance and voluntary work along with his numerous performing commitments, it is a passion for his craft and the State’s up-and-coming performers that motivates Adelaide graduate Patrick Lim.

Patrick admits to working from 8.30am to 10.30pm on a typical day and moving between roles as Artistic Director for both the State Opera of South Australia Young Artist Opera Studio and the 2005 Primary Schools’ Festival of Music, and rehearsals and performances for shows.

Patrick, 25, from Happy Valley, won the Arts category and then claimed the overall award from eight other category winners.

A multiple degree holder with the University of Adelaide, Patrick trained at the Elder Conservatorium where he received a Bachelor of Music with first class Honours in classical voice. His other degrees are a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English literature, a Bachelor of Laws with Honours, and two Associate Diplomas in Speech and Drama.

Patrick is bringing forth skills from his diverse studies in his work as Artistic Director of State Opera’s Young Artist Opera Studio where he has produced chamber operas and musical theatre works resulting in more than 100 singing roles for young artists including many graduates of Elder Conservatorium.

Patrick, who gave 150 performances last year including appearances in Sydney and a return visit to New York following the success of his 2002 solo cabaret show at one of New York’s top cabaret venues, said the award was an opportunity to use his profile and expertise to give something back to Adelaide.

“It gives young artists the opportunity to perform in their hometown rather than having to travel elsewhere,” he said.

He has also been helping uncover the “next generation” of young talent while travelling around the State conducting auditions for the SA Primary Schools’ Festival of Music to be held in September.

Patrick said winning the Young Achiever of the Year “highlights the value of what I have contributed to South Australia’s Arts industry, and what the arts industry contributes to our society as a whole”.

Beverley Mühlhäusler

Beverley Mühlhäusler’s research could help pave the way for intervention strategies to reduce the risk of obesity.

Bev, 25, the winner of the Science and Technology category of the 2005 SA Young Achiever Awards, is in the third year of her Physiology PhD.

Her research is focused on the effects of over-nutrition during pregnancy and potential changes within the brain which could lead to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular complications in later life.

“I’m looking at the appetite regulating system in the brain, how it’s affected by environmental changes before birth and whether the system could be permanently changed and result in overeating for the rest of a person’s life,” she said.

She said over-nutrition could occur as a result of over-eating or mothers with diabetes who exposed their babies to a higher level of glucose.

A two-time recipient of the Postgraduate All-Rounder Award, Bev has presented at a series of national and international conferences and is active in the Australian Society for Medical Research and university teaching programs.

Stories by Lisa Toole
Fulbright scholar Josh reaches new watermark

Adelaide’s latest Fulbright Scholar stands to lead the way in the global push to better capture, convey, treat and reuse water.

Joshua Cantone, a first class Honours graduate in civil engineering, won the 2005 Fulbright Postgraduate Award in Science and Engineering sponsored by BHP Billiton. He joins Music PhD student Aleksandr Tsiboulski as the university’s two Fulbright recipients for 2005 (see page 16).

Josh says his research will focus on Chicago’s ambitious Tunnel and Reservoir Project.

“This is a project designed to manage the area’s combined sewer overflow, minimise pollution of surrounding waterways and reduce street and basement flooding after heavy rains,” he said.

“I will be investigating ways to control this enormous system and best utilise its capabilities. The outcomes of this project could pave the way for the development of similar systems worldwide. This would be a significant step in the global push to better capture, convey, treat and reuse water.”

Josh will be working as a research assistant with Professor Arthur Schmidt from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in addition to completing a Masters Degree in Civil Engineering.

The winner of a variety of awards including the Frank Bull Scholarship for excellence and leadership, Josh said he gave himself a reasonable chance of winning the scholarship.

“You never know who you are up against when you apply for an award as prestigious as the Fulbright,” Josh said. “I felt I had a good chance, but I am glad the wait is over and I am now looking forward to future challenges.”

Currently employed as a civil engineer with Kellogg, Brown & Root, he has played a critical role in the development of the Urban Stormwater Master Plan for Victor Harbor in South Australia.

The plan assesses the effectiveness and adequacy of the existing storm water infrastructure before identifying remedial measures and better methods of management.

His goal is to explore the tried and tested practices in the US as well as emerging technologies that could have a positive long-term result for Australia.

The prestigious Fulbright program is the largest educational scholarship of its kind and was created by US Senator J. William Fulbright and the US Government in 1946. Aimed at providing mutual understanding through educational exchange it currently operates between the US and 150 other nations.

In Australia, the scholarships are administered by the Australian-American Fulbright Commission headquartered in Canberra and are funded by the Australian and US Governments and a select group of corporate partners. Josh joins 19 Australians to become a Fulbright Scholar in 2005.

Story and photo by Howard Salkow

Scholarships help build innovation success

A youthful researcher and a 24-year project management veteran were recent winners of the EDS Bioscience and Defence Scholarships respectively.

South African-born Dr Hentie Swiegers is a Research Molecular Biologist based at the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI), an R&D service provider to the Australian wine industry.

And Mr Ian Ratcliffe is a Project Manager, Defence, Industrial and Major Projects, for Soniclean, a leading provider of ultrasonic solutions for the health, defence and industrial markets.

Available through the University of Adelaide’s Education Centre for Innovation and Commercialisation (ECIC), the EDS-sponsored scholarships fund the tuition fees for the Graduate Certificate in Science & Technology Commercialisation.

Only 29 years old, Dr Swiegers can boast an impressive list of accomplishments and achievements. He has published six international papers, has a patent to his name and has already received three scholarships.

He obtained a BSc in Biochemistry from the University of Pretoria and a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Stellenbosch and conducted his PhD research at the Institute for Wine Biotechnology, University of Stellenbosch, where he was also employed as a part-time research assistant.

“He was an exceptional individual and this scholarship will give him a tremendous hand in realising the commercial potential of his research at the AWRI,” said Dr Deborah Rathsjen, Chair of the EDS Bioscience selection panel and CEO of Bionomics Ltd.

With 24 years of project management experience, Mr Ratcliffe has spent much of this time in Ghana, West Africa, in food relief, language translation, literacy, training and, since returning to Australia, in manufacturing.

“Ian is an impressive individual who will benefit greatly from this opportunity,” said Vice-Admiral David Shackleton (retd), Chair of the EDS Defence selection panel.

Based at the University of Adelaide’s Thebarton Campus, Soniclean is rapidly expanding its reach into Asia, North and South America and Europe.

The University of Adelaide’s ECIC Science and Technology Commercialisation programs open the doors to market opportunity, growth and commercial success.

Dr Hentie Swiegers (left) and Mr Ian Ratcliffe

Photography by Ben Osborne

“It is vital, for the State’s sustainability and growth, that entrepreneurship and innovation are encouraged and properly realised. This is the key impetus behind the scholarship,” said ECIC Acting Director Mr Antonio Dottore.

Story by Howard Salkow
A University of Adelaide mathematics student may hold the key to controlling an anthrax outbreak in humans.

Using a method known as “survival analysis techniques” Ms Jessica Kasza, who is in her Honours year at the University of Adelaide, is developing a model that could help world health authorities rapidly identify and manage an anthrax outbreak.

Anthrax spreads via spores entering the body through a cut in the skin, or the gut via eating contaminated meat, or the lungs by inhalation. If identified early it can be effectively treated with antibiotics but because its symptoms are similar to flu, it may be left undiagnosed until too late. Anthrax mostly occurs in farm animals and rarely in humans.

Survival analysis techniques were first developed to analyse medical and biological data (for example, in cancer and AIDS research).

“The techniques allow researchers to take into account information about the development of a potentially fatal disease from not only the people who die from the disease, but also from those who recover either through treatment or naturally,” Ms Kasza said.

“I intend to use the techniques to analyse existing data about anthrax outbreaks in humans and draw conclusions about its incubation, spread and management.”

Ms Kasza is also a step closer to her goal after winning a CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences (CMIS) scholarship to attend the 55th International Statistical Institute (ISI) Conference in Sydney recently, the premier professional development event for statisticians worldwide.

“It’s important for CSIRO to encourage talented young statisticians to consider a career in research,” said CMIS Chief of Division, Dr Murray Cameron.

“By supporting students to attend ISI, we’re giving them the opportunity to hear about exciting developments in research and in application areas from finance to genomics.”

Ms Kasza was one of four mathematics students offered scholarships to attend the conference by CMIS. She was a top student at the Summer School conducted by Australia’s International Centre of Excellence for Education in Mathematics (ICE-EM).

ICE-EM is supporting developments in bioinformatics and computational biology, which are increasingly becoming standard tools in biological and medical research.
Developing the foundations for a healthy society

The healthy development of Australia’s next generation and flow-on effects for the wellbeing of our society are at the heart of multidisciplinary research initiative, Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA).

HDA is a research cluster of the University of Adelaide started by Professor Robert Norman and Professor Caroline McMillen in June 2004 as part the university’s response to the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) priority to provide everyone with a healthy start to life.

The resulting focus encompasses research opportunities from preconception right through to adolescence.

“It is about achieving better outcomes for children at all stages of development and in all areas, medical, physical, social and psychological, while improving the profile of developmental research and assisting researchers to attract more funding for research in those areas,” Professor McMillen said.

The “cluster” concept refers to building research density through bringing cross-disciplinary researchers together and fostering links with industry, health service providers, government departments and the community.

HDA has more than 90 members from the five university faculties representing more than 20 disciplines ranging from biochemistry and demographics to law and paediatrics, and links have also been forged with various Child and Youth Health Research organisations, industry bodies, community groups and service providers in South Australia.

Professor McMillen said these connections enabled professionals with complementary skills in healthy development to come together and begin to collaborate, and this has already resulted in some cluster members securing very large research grants.

“It is about linking at every dimension possible from research level to industry level,” she said.

Professor Norman said major successes include links that have been formed with the State Government.

“It has given us a new visibility and it has been very good to suddenly lift the veil on who is out there,” he said.

“We have been able to build a picture of current health research and development and where everybody sits at a State level.

“It gives us a picture of the whole body rather than one particular organ and allows the government to plan services better using skills and expertise that may not have been obvious before.”

Professor Norman said one of Adelaide’s unique features was its strength in healthy development research and HDA was a means of further promoting this image while enhancing the quality of research occurring here.

This could be achieved through other key objectives of the HDA related to attracting more students to undertake multi-disciplinary projects, ensuring they were offered top-level training and building networks between emerging and established researchers, he said.

The University of Adelaide’s other research clusters are Healthy Ageing, Water, Defence and Security.

HDA Oration

One of Australia’s foremost demographers, Professor Graeme Hugo, will give the inaugural Healthy Development Adelaide Oration on Thursday, May 26 at the State Library.

Entry is free and the public is welcome.

This is followed the next day (Friday, May 27) by HDA’s inaugural Research Day at Level 4, Union House, University of Adelaide.

For further details on the Healthy Development Adelaide cluster, visit www.adelaide.edu.au/hda

For information and registration, call Anne Jurisevic on 8222 6678, or email anne.jurisevic@adelaide.edu.au

Story by Lisa Toole

Health Sciences

Developing the foundations for a healthy society

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Story by Lisa Toole
Two University of Adelaide researchers will be embarking on an ambitious project to develop diagnostic tests to predict a couple’s risk for the three main complications of late pregnancy.

The major complications are preeclampsia, intrauterine growth restriction and pre-term birth.

Professor Gus Dekker, Clinical Director, and Dr Claire Roberts, Director of Research for the project, will form a major collaboration with the University of Auckland’s Associate Professor Robyn North.

The project, called SCreening fOr Pregnancy Endpoints, or SA SCOPE, will be funded by a $2.37 million grant over three years from the Premier’s Science and Research Fund, which was awarded to the University’s Research Centre for Reproductive Health.

“Together, these pregnancy complications affect 19% of all first pregnancies in Australia and cause significant maternal and infant morbidity and mortality in Australia and worldwide,” Professor Dekker said.

In the developed world, an estimated US$41 billion is spent annually on healthcare costs to provide ante-natal care, neo-natal intensive care and hospitalisation for first-time mothers and babies with these diseases.

“The precise causes of these pregnancy complications are unknown but how well the placenta develops is a key factor in pregnancy success,” Dr Roberts said.

Professor Dekker said that lifelong consequences for the babies range from mild learning and behavioural problems to severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy and intellectual handicap.

“Poor fetal growth has also been implicated as a major risk factor for the development of a variety of adult onset diseases including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

These lifelong health problems cause considerable human suffering and massive costs to the community, the individual and the healthcare system,” he said.

Professor Dekker said predicting and preventing pregnancy complications has personal and public health benefits, particularly for the pregnant woman, her baby and future adult health.

“SA SCOPE aims to develop diagnostic tests that could predict risk and initiate preventative and therapeutic interventions before symptoms of pregnancy complications appear,” he said.

“Currently, there are no such tests and our therapeutic interventions have low efficacy, being simply too little, too late,” Dr Roberts said.

This funding will be used to recruit a large number of women (and their partners) pregnant for the first time in Adelaide and Auckland and determine their risk based on tests on maternal and paternal blood samples.

Dr Roberts said the project would allow for advancements in functional genomics and bioinformatics and building and maintenance of South Australian intellectual property for continued research and development in South Australia.

The University of Adelaide’s commercial development company, Adelaide Research & Innovation Pty Ltd who assisted the Research Centre for Reproductive Health with the grant application, will work closely with the centre’s researchers to bring the results of this innovative research – predictive diagnostics for pregnancy diseases – to the community.

Story by Howard Salkow
A double celebration, and happy memories

It was twice the prestige and festivities as the University of Adelaide hosted two graduation ceremonies in Singapore for the first time recently.

An increasing number of Singaporeans studying at the University of Adelaide meant it was necessary for the two ceremonies, held at the Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre.

The Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre provides the university’s offshore programs in Singapore, while many prominent Singapore figures have studied in Adelaide.

Perhaps the most notable of these figures is Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Tony Tan, who graduated from the University of Adelaide with a PhD in Applied Mathematics in 1968.

At a special university function held earlier in the week, Dr Tan received a Distinguished Alumni award from the university. He joins other such notable Singapore recipients of the award as former Singapore president, the late Mr Ong Teng Cheong and former Singapore Airlines CEO Dr Cheong Choon Kong.

“I am honoured to receive such an award,” Dr Tan said. “I have many happy memories from my time there.

“I found Adelaide a charming and gracious city, and its people civilised and helpful. I learnt a lot from discussions with my supervisor and my colleagues, and I made many friends.

“I left the University of Adelaide well prepared to tackle any problems that I could encounter in the next phase of my life.”

University Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) Professor John Taplin said the achievements of past Singapore graduates such as Dr Tan bode well for the university’s newest graduates.

“We are extremely proud of our association with all of our Singapore graduates, and particularly with the likes of Dr Tan, who has done so much for the Republic of Singapore,” Professor Taplin said.

“We hope that our graduation ceremonies served not only as a celebration of the considerable achievements already obtained by our class of 2005 in Singapore, but also as an encouragement for them to set their sights high and to make a real impact in Singapore and the world.”
A former leukaemia researcher is using his new University of Adelaide qualification to help keep Singaporeans cooler and safer.

Dr Ben McCaw was born in Australia but has lived with his family in Singapore for the past three years. He graduated with a Master of Applied Finance at the University of Adelaide’s recent graduation ceremony at the Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre.

Dr McCaw spent four years in Australia as a medical researcher in Melbourne, focusing primarily on leukaemia research, before joining the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Singapore as a Research Fellow.

He has just started his new job as business development manager for a new water treatment company, HydroScience Asia, which is based in Singapore.

HydroScience Asia uses a novel chemical-free technology that, when applied to water circulating in cooling towers, effectively eliminates germ growth while preventing internal components from rusting. The results are cheaper and safer cooling for potentially thousands of Singaporeans.

“I enjoyed my time as a medical researcher, but I realised that greater opportunities existed in the investment side of medical technology and research than just in the field of pure research,” Dr McCaw said.

“So I decided to pursue the University of Adelaide’s Master of Applied Finance course, which was held through the Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre.

“I was very impressed with the structure of the program and the teaching, and I’m looking forward to using what I’ve learnt in my new job.”
James Chen, 23, is a strong example of today’s young Singaporean who wants to be tomorrow’s leader.

James has been the youngest student in both of his postgraduate courses at the University of Adelaide.

He graduated from one of these courses, the Master of Project Management, after already completing his Master of Business Administration in July last year.

James has also been the Business Development Manager of CMConduit Pte. Ltd., a local business specialising in training and consultancy and is also establishing a profile as a writer of business-related articles.

He has contributed some 30 articles to publications such as Human Capital, Productivity Digest, The Singapore Marketer and Today’s Manager.

James said he is looking forward to receiving formal recognition of his increasing skills base.

“I had been writing business articles since doing my undergraduate degree here in Singapore, but doing my postgraduate studies at the University of Adelaide really broadened my horizons and gave my articles deeper thought and greater depth,” James said.

“And because I was working for a small-to-medium sized business in Singapore at the time I was doing my studies at Adelaide, I was able to put what I was learning straight into the context of my job.

“Another reason I chose to study with Adelaide is because it can provide courses through the Ngee Ann Education Centre, so I could stay here in Singapore with my family and friends.”

James’ long-term aim is to obtain a doctorate from the University of Adelaide. Whatever career path he follows, James said studying at Adelaide has given him the tools he needs to succeed.

“I have to say that I have grown in stature in terms of maturity and confidence,” James said. “I am forever indebted to the University of Adelaide for giving me the opportunity to shine and grooming me as a potential leader of the future.”

Stories and photos by Ben Osborne

James wants to be Singapore’s future

A life-changing trip to India has been the catalyst for young Singapore worker and student Jessica Lim to reach her highest potential.

Jessica has been completing two University of Adelaide Masters’ courses while working full-time, and graduated in one (the Master of Business Administration, or MBA) at the recent ceremony at the Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre.

Currently an Accounting Manager with major multinational chemical company Degussa Construction Chemicals, Jessica is also on track to graduate with her Master of Applied Finance (or MAF) from the University of Adelaide in December this year.

Born and raised in Malaysia, Jessica said after completing her undergraduate accounting degree at the Sydney University of Technology in 2000, she took a break of five months and worked in India as a social volunteer.

“The trip to India changed my life entirely,” Jessica said. “I worked as a relief team member helping the earthquake victims in Gujarat, and I also travelled to other cities like Bombay and Madras where I helped the poor and sick in the slums. I came back with a new perspective on life and was more certain about what I wanted to do and achieve in my life and career.”

Jessica then came to Singapore and worked at KPMG Singapore for three years. After marrying, she took up her position with Degussa, a German company recognised as one of the global market leader in specialty chemicals.

She said her MBA and MAF help her in her current position, particularly in areas such as presentation, writing, teamwork and interpersonal skills – but more importantly, she says the journey associated with completing the program is helping her to reach her highest individual potential.

“My overall goal is to get the most out of my life, and to have the biggest impact I can,” she said. “For me, the journey in achieving success is more valuable than the success itself, because it is the journey that teaches me discipline, builds my character and through the MBA and MAF programs I am able to get to know different people from different industries and walks of life.”
Our biotech brain gain

continued from page 1

“One of the best things about an organisation like this is that it will benefit all biotech students, regardless of whether they’re in the final year of a PhD or just starting as an undergraduate.”

“It will give postgrads a great chance to get a foot in the door and make themselves known to potential employers. For first-year undergraduate students, it will expose them to what’s out there and help them think about the direction they want their career to head in.”

Denise’s personal experience in the field of biotechnology is proof South Australia does have a lot to offer.

“Adelaide has an excellent reputation for its biotechnology – I’m from Victoria and did my undergraduate studies and worked in a few different labs there for a while, before I became bored with science and left the field altogether,” she said.

“Then I heard about what was going on here, and that rekindled my passion enough that I moved here to do my PhD through the University of Adelaide and CSIRO. I’m really keen to stay here after I finish.”

For Flinders University PhD student, and fellow ABSA founding member Olgatina Bucco, developing even these preliminary relationships with industry is proving beneficial.

“I wanted to be involved in the local ABSA committee because networking in South Australia with the right people has helped me to define my career path. It also presented me with many more opportunities that I would have not received otherwise, including work prospects here in SA,” Olgatina said.

“There are lots of opportunities in SA for young ‘biotechers’, however a lot of students are so busy supporting themselves financially and being preoccupied with studying and exams, thinking about their future is not an immediate necessity.”

“ABSA aims to make seeking out these opportunities easier by bringing them directly to the students.”

Story by Ben Osborne

Education

Australian boarding schools are far from being replicas of the influential public boys’ schools of Britain, according to the latest research by a University of Adelaide graduate.

Dr Mathew White studied Australian boarding schools and investigated first-hand student experiences for his PhD thesis at the University of Adelaide’s School of Education. He has been working for the past eight years at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, where he is currently the International Baccalaureate Coordinator and the Assistant Head of Manifold House.

“The findings of my research challenge the popular stereotype that Australian residential education is an inflexible, British colonial model,” Dr White said.

“The seeds of origin of Australian boarding schools may be British, but their education philosophy and social interaction patterns are reflective of Australian multiculturalism.

“Boarding is a highly un-researched area in the Australian education system, which means our perception of it is reinforced by the ABC television’s version of Tom Brown’s School Days, which went to air recently portraying an image of the system being violent and inherently hierarchical.”

Dr White used a humanistic approach to gain data from memoirs written by a group of 45 Anglo-Australian and overseas-born boarding school students.

“These memoirs were generated from concrete questions regarding place-of-birth, ethnic identity, and languages spoken at home, as well as questions that required students to reflect on their role in boarding school as a social system,” Dr White said.

The students’ responses shed light on the overall positive home-like environment of boarding schools, and also suggested that boarding schools in some ways may in fact be better than home.

“The respondent’s personal statements revealed that the relationships among students, and among students and staff, in the boarding house tended to be personal and informal, and the success of a boarding school was determined by the personal atmosphere, support, and comfort of the boarding house,” Dr White said.

“The study also revealed an attitudinal shift in the group that welcomed the many cultures of the school, and recognised the single culture of the home.”

Although Dr White came across negative observations such as the pressures of homesickness, tedium of school life and lack of freedom in some of the students’ written experiences, the overall impression was favourable.

“ABSA aims to make seeking out these opportunities easier by bringing them directly to the students.”

Dr Mathew White
Photo by Sukhmani Khorana

“Then I heard about what was going on here, and that rekindled my passion enough that I moved here to do my PhD through the University of Adelaide and CSIRO. I’m really keen to stay here after I finish.”

For Flinders University PhD student, and fellow ABSA founding member Olgatina Bucco, developing even these preliminary relationships with industry is proving beneficial.

“I wanted to be involved in the local ABSA committee because networking in South Australia with the right people has helped me to define my career path. It also presented me with many more opportunities that I would have not received otherwise, including work prospects here in SA,” Olgatina said.

“There are lots of opportunities in SA for young ‘biotechers’, however a lot of students are so busy supporting themselves financially and being preoccupied with studying and exams, thinking about their future is not an immediate necessity.”

“ABSA aims to make seeking out these opportunities easier by bringing them directly to the students.”

Story by Ben Osborne

Volume 14, Number 3 • May 2005 | Adelaidian
Some of the State’s best young minds are tasting life at the University of Adelaide – while still at high school!

Launched in 2001, the Headstart scholarship program has been developed in consultation with schools to give gifted Year 12 students an accelerated entry into university, provided they have completed at least one Year 12 subject before they officially start Year 12.

Participants in the 2005 Headstart intake and their courses of study are: Jennifer Sanders (right), a first-year Bachelor of Arts student at the University of Adelaide; Willunga High, taking up a first-year subject at uni isn’t too hard,” James said.

The four students this year had the benefit of attending preliminary classes during orientation week and a special Headstart orientation. They also met former Headstart participant and current Adelaide Law student, Brendan Lim, who shared his experiences with them.

Students who take up the offer of a Headstart scholarship benefit from, and contribute to, the intellectual and diverse cultural life at the University of Adelaide.

“I am glad to be a part of uni culture, and have the opportunity to experience it even before finishing Year 12,” James said.

The University of Adelaide provides ongoing coordination and support for the Headstart students, including:

- liaison between the university and the students, their parents, principals and mentors;
- tracking students’ progress through their university studies; and
- organising academic and peer support for students.

Story by Sukhmani Khorana

Get a headstart at uni!

Scholarships

New program gives students a smooth start

Equity

Starting university has become a lot smoother for students across the State, thanks to a new University of Adelaide program.

SmoothStart is a pilot program run by the university’s Central Student Support Services for the first semester of 2005, and is one of only two programs of its type in the country.

It aims to support students from groups, such as all students from rural areas and those from city schools underrepresented in enrolments, who may face specific barriers in making the transition to university and ongoing study.

“The pilot is quite unique in that it provides support on a non-faculty basis and involves the use of peer mentors. It is also unique because it focuses on the social, personal and academic aspects of starting uni for a specific group of students,” SmoothStart project officer Ms Karen Steinwedel said.

“The program has 10 peer mentors and is run by two Project Officers. Fifty students were invited to join SmoothStart, with each student allocated an experienced and trained student as a peer mentor for the first semester. Peer mentors remain in contact with their mentees on a regular basis.”

Jennifer Sanders (right), a first-year Bachelor of Arts student at the University of Adelaide said she has benefited immensely from joining the SmoothStart Program.

“I completed Year 12 at a rural school, Willunga High,” she said.

“Out of the 60 Year 12 students in my school, 25 graduated, and only four are currently enrolled at the University of Adelaide,” Jennifer said.

“Coming from the country, the city scared me. The SmoothStart Program and the mentors really helped with my transition into university life.

“The mentors are quite diverse and easy to get along with. My mentor helped me buy books and find my way around the library. I sometimes discuss my progress with her over a cup of coffee.”

Throughout the semester SmoothStart provides a regular newsletter, social events like Easter Brunch, as well as events organised by the peer mentors for their students. In addition, the Centre for Learning and Professional Development provides an exam preparation workshop for SmoothStarters only.

Jennifer found out about SmoothStart through the information brochures send by the University of Adelaide to her school.

“Twas really keen to meet people and find out about uni beforehand,” Jennifer said. “If I hadn’t been part of the Smooth Start program, university life would have been much harder for me.” For more information, visit: www.adelaide.edu.au/smoothstart

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University of Adelaide students continue to show their brilliance lies in more than just their academic pursuits.

First-year Medicine student Vicky Williams will take a break from her textbooks later this month to take on the role of stage manager for the Theatre Guild’s production of William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, directed by Alice Teasdale.

Despite being enrolled in a time-consuming degree like Medicine, Vicky is determined to continue with her theatre activities and balance her university life.

“Your experience at uni is what you make of it. By choosing to be involved in extra-curricular activities like theatre, I hope to get a more rounded education,” Vicky said.

The talented student’s foray into the world of theatre began in high school, and her experience was further enriched when she travelled overseas.

“As a Year 12 student, I studied drama and adapted the Peter Weir film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* for stage. I was also involved with the Scotch College Performing Art Academy,” Vicky said.

After high school, Vicky travelled to Hungary as part of the GAP Australia program, taught English in a Hungarian school and co-directed two school plays despite not speaking Hungarian.

“I learnt a lot about non-verbal communication and acting from my experience in Hungary,” Vicky said.

As the stage manager, Vicky is responsible for overseeing the backstage aspects of the play including cueing the actors, lighting, and sound operators, sourcing and maintaining the props, and ensuring that everything and everyone is in their rightful place and that the show runs smoothly each night.

“I enjoy the buzz of being in the theatre, and particularly like stage management because it facilitates the coming together of the creative elements of theatre,” Vicky said.

The director of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and University of Adelaide Drama and English graduate, Alice Teasdale chose the play because of its great potential for humour.

“I was attracted to the idea of setting the play in contemporary Australia rather than Shakespeare’s England, and finding the humour in that,” Alice said.

“It is the only Shakespearean play that shows the lives of ordinary people, and is probably one of the funniest he ever wrote.”

Alice assisted in the direction of the Theatre Guild’s *Twelfth Night* last year. She started her own theatre company, ‘Rough Magic’, in 1997, and has since directed four Shakespeare plays. She is also a well known filmmaker and scriptwriter and is on the board on the Adelaide-based Media Resource Centre (MRC).

Theatre

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* will be held at the Little Theatre at 7:30pm on 14, 17-21 and 24-28 May.

Tickets are $20/$15 and are available from the Theatre Guild on 8303 5999, online at www.adelaide.edu.au/theatreguild or from BASS on 131 246.

Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. For further information, contact Melanie Hibberd at the Theatre Guild.

Vicky Williams (right) and Alice Teasdale
Photo by Sukhmani Khorana

Story by Sukhmani Khorana

May 2005

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Brad Selway (1955 - 2005)

Bradley Selway, a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, died unexpectedly on April 10, 2005, aged 50.

Mr Selway was an Honours graduate of the Law School of the University of the Adelaide, whose entire working life prior to the bench was spent in the South Australian Crown Law Office. His rise through the ranks from the second half of the 1970s was inevitable, as his unruffled skills and prompt attention to incoming work became increasingly apparent.

He held the senior law offices of the State, becoming first Crown Solicitor, and then Solicitor General, a position from which he was able to exercise his great knowledge in constitutional law, in the process winning the commendation of the High Court for his advocacy. In 1997 he published his book, *The Constitution of South Australia*. No other Australian State had a comparable study of its constitutional workings at that time.

In late 2002 he was appointed to the Federal Court, where he was popular with the Bar for his no-nonsense but genial approach to litigation. His sharpness of mind was revealed in a tide of ex tempore judgments. In 2002 he had also been appointed an Adjunct Professor of the Law School where he was a frequent and much valued guest lecturer.

He was without personal rancour in his litigation or in the company of lawyers. He was well loved and is sorely missed.

Contributed by Steven Churches

Photo courtesy of The Advertiser

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A feast of music

South Australia’s most talented young musicians will be on display in the Elder School of Music’s 2005 Evening Concert Series which begins next month.

The series opens on Saturday, June 25 with a fresh, lively program of music for the brilliant combination of percussion and brass with some voices thrown in for good measure. This concert will be a little different, but nonetheless vibrant and exciting – a superb start to the series.

The Elder Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra will feature in the second concert on Saturday, July 23 under the baton of Keith Crellin. It will present Bach’s *E major violin concerto* performed by Honours student, Ingrid Homburg, who is another emerging artist from one of Adelaide’s most respected musical families. Also performed will be Shostakovich’s *Chamber Symphony Op. 110a* and Mendelssohn’s *String Symphony No. 9*.

The jazz concert on Thursday, August 4 features the Elder Conservatorium Big Band conducted by Hal Hall, with special guest artist, James Morrison. This promises to be an exceptional event and one you should book ahead for as it will certainly sell out!

The Elder Conservatorium Wind Orchestra concert, conducted by Robert Hower on Saturday, August 20 will feature not one, but two Australian premières. One of these will be performed by outstanding Honours student, Fleur Green, one of Adelaide’s most sought after percussionists.

The opera production from Thursday, September 8 through to Saturday September 10 is Mozart’s Masonic masterpiece, *The Magic Flute*. This is a fresh, new production by a graduate of the NIDA School in Sydney, Andrew Davidson, and promises to be an absolute feast for the eyes and ears.

The fifth concert on Saturday, October 15 is Handel’s colourful and dramatic portrayal of one of the great epic stories of the Old Testament, *Israel in Egypt*. It features the Elder Conservatorium Chorale and *Adelaide Voices*, with the Elder Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Carl Crossin.

Adelaide Town Hall will host the final Evening Concert on Friday, November 25, which promises to be one of the musical events of the year in South Australia. The Elder Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra will present Mahler’s magnificent and moving *Ninth Symphony* in association with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the ASO’s music director, Arvo Volmer. It is a work rarely performed due to its huge proportions and it is sure to be a sell-out event – book early!

For further information, visit www.adelaide.edu.au/events/concert/evening
Sharing the volunteering spirit

Volunteering

You’re never too young, or old, to volunteer at the University of Adelaide.

The university receives an enormous amount of support from its contingent of some 1500 volunteers, across all faculties and campuses. With National Volunteer Week taking place from May 9 to 15 in order to recognise and celebrate the important role volunteers play, there’s no better time to become a volunteer, just like 24-year-old Alex Brown, who graduated from the university with a Bachelor of Commerce in 2001.

Since that time, in addition to his full-time job as an accountant at Kennedy & Co and studying to become a Chartered Accountant, he has become involved with the university’s Commerce Alumni, serving as president in 2004 and as secretary this year.

“It has been a fantastic opportunity to meet and work with people from a diverse range of backgrounds,” Alex said. “Volunteering is a great way to make new friends, to share ideas and experiences, and learn from others while having fun at the same time.

“It was a busy year (as president), but also a thoroughly enjoyable one. The Commerce Chapter is still in the growth phase, reflected by the growth in our membership from 170 to over 400 last year. Consequently, a lot of our work was done at the grass roots level, getting graduates, students and staff interested and involved in our activities.

“When you can see the end result having a positive impact on the community around you, it is very satisfying.”

For more information about volunteering at the University of Adelaide, visit: www.adelaide.edu.au/volunteers

Flannery speaks on climate change

One of Australia’s best-known scientists and authors Dr Tim Flannery, will be speaking at the Friends of the Barr Smith Library’s Authors and Scholars series this month.

Dr Flannery, who is Director of the South Australian Museum and an Affiliate Professor at the University of Adelaide, will be speaking on climate change.

Date: Thursday, May 5

Time: 6.00pm for 6.30pm

Venue: Ira Raymond Exhibition Room, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide (North Terrace Campus)

Cost: Free, but a gold coin donation would be appreciated

RSVP to Patricia Hawke by emailing patricia.hawke@adelaide.edu.au or telephoning +61 8 8303 4064.

Development & Alumni Events

Commerce Chapter

The University of Adelaide Commerce Chapter presents Gail Fuller, Joint Founder and Director of Rising Sun Pictures. This Adelaide-based company has been responsible for the visual effects for such movies as The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, The Last Samurai, Charlotte’s Web and Batman Begins.

Date: Thursday, May 5

Time: 5.45 for 6pm to 7.30pm

Venue: The Garage Bar, 163 Waymouth Street, Adelaide (Southern side of Light Square)

Cost: Members $20, non-members $25, students $10

Bookings by May 2 to Development & Alumni Office +61 8 8303 5800 or email gaynor.tyerman@adelaide.edu.au

Singapore Chapter: 10th Anniversary Of Adelaide University Alumni Association

The Singapore Chapter is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a Chinese Banquet.

Date: Saturday, May 28

Time: 7pm

Venue: Auditorium of the Ngee Ann Kongsi Teochew Building, 97 Tank Road, Singapore

Cost: $50.00 per person

Bookings through Ms Pamela Wong at NAAEC (65) 6738 2910

Alumni Association Annual General Meeting

You are invited to attend the AGM of the Alumni Association. Light refreshments will be provided prior to the meeting and there will be an opportunity to mingle over drinks and nibbles following the meeting.

Date: Tuesday, June 21

Time: 6pm – 7pm

Location: Equinox Function Room, Level 4, Union House, University of Adelaide (North Terrace Campus)

RSVP: by June 17 to Kim McBride, telephone +61 8 8303 3196, Fax +61 8 8303 5808 or email kim.mcbride@adelaide.edu.au

Agenda and documents will be available from the Development & Alumni office or downloaded from the website at www.adelaide.edu.au/alumni after May 23.

Distinguished Alumni Award

Each year the University of Adelaide Alumni Association recognises its outstanding alumni by bestowing up to three Distinguished Alumni Awards. These awards recognise outstanding service to the University of Adelaide and/or the Alumni Association, and outstanding service to the community or outstanding contribution in their chosen fields, and nominations are now being received.

MBA Chapter: Network Breakfasts

Purchase your own breakfast, sit amongst your peers and enjoy stimulating conversation and network opportunities. Current students and graduates are all welcome!

Date: 1st Wednesday of every month

Time: 7.30am – 8.30am

Venue: East Terrace Café, Adelaide

For information regarding this event, please contact Paul Szuster at paul@unimeter.com or visit www.asgb.adelaide.edu.au/alumni/events adelindex.html

Nominations can be forwarded to:

The Executive Secretary

Alumni Association Development & Alumni Office

Level 1, 230 North Terrace

The University of Adelaide SA 5005

Please note: the deadline for nominations is 5pm, May 31, 2005.

For further information on this or any other Alumni Association award, email Gaynor Tyerman at gaynor.tyerman@adelaide.edu.au or telephone +61 8 8303 6396.

Information on previous recipients and the rules for this award are located at: www.adelaide.edu.au/alumni/scholarships/dstngshd.html

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Global talent goes local for new music series

Classical guitarist Aleksandr Tsiboulski’s future is indeed full, and bright.

The 25-year-old University of Adelaide Music PhD student and international performer has recently been named as one of two Adelaide students to receive a prestigious Fulbright scholarship in 2005 (see page 4 for details on the other recipient, Josh Cantone).

And later this month he will kick off his own series of concerts known as Chambered by performing with one of Australia’s best known musical talents, fellow guitarist Slava Grigoryan.

Alex was born in the Ukraine and moved to Adelaide in 1989, later attending the specialist music school, Marryatville High School.

He has a first-class Honours degree in Music from Australian National University, and among a swathe of achievements, won the Australian Guitar Competition in 2000, and last year was named the SA Young Achievers’ Award in the Arts.

In addition to studying at Adelaide, and his playing commitments here and around the world, he also commutes to teach classical guitar part-time at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne.

He will use his Fulbright scholarship to head to the US in 2006 to continue his PhD research into the works of the great Mexican composer, Manuel Ponce (1886-1948), and developing his playing.

“I’m really looking forward to going to the US on the Fulbright, and also just to be immersed in the music scene over there for a sustained period of time,” Alex said.

“There is always a lot going on over there: performances, conferences, festivals, and competitions.

“There’ll be a lot for me to do and experience.”

Alex, who is studying for his PhD at Adelaide under the supervision of the Elder School of Music’s Dr Mark Carroll, said Adelaide was an ideal base for him to continue his career at this stage of his life.

“Adelaide has always been my permanent address, and I always like to come back here between trips,” he said. “I have to say that I quite like the lifestyle here, too.”

On Sunday, May 15, Alex will join forces with fellow Soviet-born guitar virtuoso Slava Grigoryan for the first concert, Ecos de Cuba, of the Chambered concert series, which has been organised by Alex personally.

He said the idea for Chambered came out of his desire to bring music “up close” and approachable to Adelaide audiences, by collaborating with leading young musicians such as Grigoryan and performing in venues where the divide between audience and performer is minimised.

In the second concert, Baroque and Beyond, he will join Ben Dollman (violin), Glenys March (harpischord) and Zoe Barry (cello), and for the final concert Songs of the Half Light he will perform with Adelaide soprano Emma Horwood.

“For Chambered I wanted to give Adelaide audiences the opportunity to hear and see how good our local musicians are,” he said.

“Another reason is that there are many young artists here in Adelaide that I really admire, like Emma Horwood and Ben Dollman, and seeking to collaborate with people like that seems like an obvious and enjoyable thing to do.”

Alex will go on to perform solo recitals in Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart, Adelaide, Ukraine, the UK, Canada and Italy later this year. He will appear with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra with Rodrigo’s Concierto de Aranjuez, and record Manuel Ponce’s Guitar Sonatas in Florence for an Italian record label for international release.

Ecos de Cuba, the first concert in the Chambered series, will feature Aleksandr Tsiboulski and Slava Grigoryan on Sunday, May 15 at 6pm at The Jade Monkey, 29a Twin Street, Adelaide. Tickets are $25/20, and are available through BASS on 131 246, or by emailing adelaideconcerts@yahoo.com.au

Story and photo by Ben Osborne