

15 October

Adelaide Researchers Make an Impact

A molecular biochemist renowned for his work on the role of human growth factors and potential cancer treatments, and an agronomist who has developed more effective and cheaper fertilisers have each been awarded \$10,000 for their innovative research. Professor John Wallace and Dr Sam Stacey from the University of Adelaide have been named the winners of the two biggest individual prizes on offer at the inaugural Adelaide Research & Innovation Impact Awards. The researchers each won an Excellence in Innovation & Entrepreneurship \$10,000 Prize. Two separate awards were given for established researchers and early career researchers. Dr Stacey won the latter.

Professor Wallace from the School of Molecular and Biomedical Science has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a researcher and teacher at the University of Adelaide. Recognised as one of the world's foremost molecular biochemists, he has for the past two decades worked on Insulin-like Growth Factors (IGF) – small proteins – and their roles in cancer. He is the co-inventor on a number of patents and with his colleagues developed the technologies underpinning one of the University of Adelaide's first spin-out biopharmaceutical companies, GroPep.

Dr Sam Stacey from the University of Adelaide's School of Earth and Environmental Sciences has helped develop new fertilising agents which are more effective and less expensive than existing chemicals used by farmers. His work has sparked intense commercial interest from one of the world's largest fertiliser companies, with two patents now pending. In the future Dr Stacey hopes his research will have applications for organic farmers where effective plant nutrition solutions are limited.

Two of the University's researchers have also been awarded \$5000 for their breakthrough in developing a new wound dressing for people recovering from sinus operations. Rhinologist Professor Peter John Wormald and his PhD student Dr Theodore Athanasiadis won the \$5000 Most Exciting New Disclosure Award for their invention which improves healing, controls bleeding and prevents excess scar tissue after sinus surgery. The pair collaborated with colleagues in New Zealand to develop a special anti-adhesion dressing.

Professor Janet Hiller and Associate Professor John Moss from the Discipline of Public Health won \$10,000 for securing the largest new research contract on behalf of the Australian Health Technology Assessment.

The inaugural research awards, held on Thursday 11 October, were sponsored by the State Government, the University of Adelaide and a host of South Australian companies. In presenting the awards, the acting SA Minister for Science & Information Economy, Jane Lomax-Smith, said universities continued to be “the powerhouse of research” in South Australia. “People do not always realise how significant the efforts of universities are. They harness the State’s brain power and the innovation of ideas.

The University of Adelaide has a very strong tradition in this sense. “The South Australian R&D community, including the University of Adelaide, continues to be at the forefront of exploration and discovery, and with the strong partnership between the State Government and the R&D community in South Australia we will continue to succeed.”

The Impact Awards is one of a number of initiatives supported under the State Government’s 10 Year Vision for Science, Technology and Innovation in SA - STI10. “The aims of our 10-year vision are to grow our science and research community and raise public awareness of science to the younger generation so we can achieve the bold targets set in the South Australian Strategic Plan,” Minister Lomax-Smith said.

Adelaide Research & Innovation (ARI) Managing Director Robert Chalmers said all the finalists were worthy winners and “outstanding ambassadors for commercial research”.

The University of Adelaide is one of Australia’s most research-intensive universities and collaborates extensively with business, industry and government to drive innovative research in South Australia.

Further info on Adelaide Research & Innovation: www.adelaide.edu.au/aripl/impactawards/

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