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UniSA News

Summer edition



UniSA scientist SA's top man
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UniSA scientist SA's top man

A formidable talent in the world of science has been honoured with the title of 2007 [South Australian of the Year](#).

In August UniSA's [Laureate Professor John Ralston](#) was named [SA Scientist of the Year](#) but this latest award acknowledges his contribution to the state on a much broader scale.

Prof Ralston is the Director and founder of UniSA's [Ian Wark Research Institute](#) (The Wark™) based at UniSA's thriving Mawson Lakes Campus. The Wark™

is one of the world's leading centres for particles and materials research and the lead institute for the [Australian Minerals Science Research Institute \(AMSRI\)](#). The Wark™ is engaged in research into a range of fields including minerals processing technologies, biomaterials, biotechnology and bio and polymer interfaces feeding into a broad range of industries.

One of Prof Ralston's great passions is to lead research that is contributing to the development of a more sustainable society and environmentally and economically efficient industries.

Through The Wark™ and AMSRI, Prof Ralston has attracted more than \$100 million in funding to SA from government, industry and other partners. According to a recent independent report, one \$24 million Wark project has delivered \$436 million in savings to the mining industry through innovations in minerals processing technologies and other aspects of the industry.

[UniSA Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj](#) says this acknowledgement for Professor Ralston and for the power of science and education to change communities and deliver tangible benefits is gratifying evidence that UniSA's approach to end-user inspired research is paying great dividends.

"Prof Ralston has had a transforming impact on this State through his vision, his research leadership and his commitment to the vital role research can play in improving individual lives and communities," Prof Høj said.

"He continues to be a great advocate for the development and importance of international research communities, nurturing the careers of hundreds of young scientists from Australia and around the world and spearheading research relationships with some of the world's most advanced research centres of excellence."

Prof Ralston has actively supervised more than 50 PhD students and today The Wark™ has more than 100 active research projects; formal education and research partnerships and agreements with institutions in 11 countries; and more than 140 staff from all corners of the globe. Almost 130 post graduate research students have graduated from The Wark™.

"Prof Ralston is a great South Australian asset and someone we feel extremely proud to have as a research leader at the University of South Australia," Prof Høj says.

"We can now share that pride with the whole community."

Career notes

2007 South Australian of the Year Laureate Professor John Ralston

1978

Awarded a PhD in Physical and Colloid Chemistry – University of Melbourne

UniSA scientist SA's top man

- 1980 Established the Centre for Colloid and Interface Science at Swinburne University
- 1984 Appointed Professor of Chemical Technology at UniSA
- 1986 Awarded the Senior Fulbright Fellowship
- 1993 Elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
- 1994 Founded the Ian Wark Research Institute (named in recognition of eminent Australian scientist Sir Ian William Wark)
- 1995 Awarded the RK Murphy Medal in Industrial Chemistry/Chemical Engineering
- 1997 Awarded the RSC Australian Lectureship in Chemistry
- 2000 Successful in gaining ARC Special Research Centre in Particles and Materials Interfaces status for The Wark™
- 2002 Awarded and Honorary Doctorate from the Abo Akademi, Finland
- 2003 Awarded and Australian Government Centenary Medal
The Wark™ granted status as a national Centre for Nano and Biomaterials
- 2005 Elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science
Named the AE Alexander Memorial Lecturer of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute
Named UniSA's first Laureate Professor
Led a successful bid to establish and become lead Institute for the Australian Minerals Science Research Institute (AMSRI) comprising a consortium of world class Australian university research centres and a global network of 24 collaborators (supported by Australia's largest ever ARC Linkage grant with a cash value of more than \$22 million with a goal to support innovations that improve energy efficiency, frugal water use and waste management, improved minerals processing technologies and develop better and new materials)
- 2006 Elected to the Council of the Academy of Science
Awarded the Premier's Science Excellence Award in research leadership
Awarded the Chemeca Medal for Outstanding Service and Contribution to Chemical Engineering
Named by the Australian Mining Magazine the inaugural winner of the Most Outstanding Contribution to Mining award
- 2007 Named South Australian Scientist of the Year

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Celebrating our teachers

With a strong new focus on teaching and improving teaching outcomes across the University there has also been some real attention given to acknowledging UniSA's great teachers.

For the first time UniSA held a special luncheon to celebrate teaching excellence and honour the winners of [Carrick Awards](#) and a new suite of UniSA's own teaching awards and citations.

About 150 attended the luncheon in November which including UniSA Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj, Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Lee and visiting Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at Oxford Brookes University, Alan Jenkins.

Winners of the eight Carrick citations for UniSA attended and there was a special screening of interviews with them about their approach to teaching and learning.

Prof Høj announced the recipients of the UniSA Awards for Teaching Excellence – David Badenoch (Education), Sue Gilbert-Hunt (Health Sciences) and Dr Iona Petrescu (Communications). From Health Sciences, Dr Sara Jones, Helen Banwell and Ryan Causby received the UniSA Enhancing Learning Award and 13 academics from all four divisions were given UniSA citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning. A further 53 UniSA Quality Teaching Awards were presented. The winners received between \$5000 and \$1500 to spend on development activities designed to further enhance their development as great teachers.

Congratulating the winners, Vice Chancellor Prof Høj said he believed good teaching was at the heart of every successful University,

“It is our teachers who are responsible for developing high quality professionals with integrity, vision and the drive to contribute to society in a positive and creative way,” he said.

“Good quality undergraduate teaching is also the engine room of a successful research culture.”

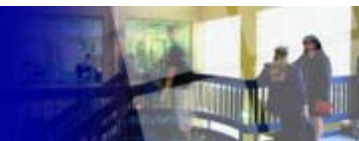


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Shark patrol saves lives, enhances careers

For the third year running, UniSA's Aviation Academy will play a central role in the State Government's initiative to keep metropolitan beaches safe for swimmers.

From December 3 until March 28 next year, UniSA aviation students and graduates will fly a weekday patrol between 11am and 7.45pm, on the lookout for sharks between North Haven and Normanville.

The three person crew, comprising the pilot, a trained SES shark spotter and a communications officer, can alert the swimming public of any shark sightings by way of an onboard siren. They also relay details of the sightings to police and beach patrols who can take other appropriate measures to ensure public safety.

UniSA's Head of Aviation, Stephen Phillips said the shark watch patrol was not only a vital community service but an invaluable opportunity for graduate pilots to gain experience in a real-life setting.

"Similar to fish spotting, the aerial shark patrol is an example of the diverse career opportunities for pilots beyond the better known avenues of military and commercial passenger aviation," Phillips said.

"Right now pilots are in demand in all sorts of fields, ranging from 'fly-in, fly-out' for the mining industry, charter and air ambulance services, as instructors and with regional, national or international airlines. For our graduates flying the shark patrols provides a valuable first look into a wide range of career prospects."



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In brief

BHERT applauds water education partnership

It might be a long way to the Yellow River in China, but Australian know-how is preparing a new generation of Chinese specialists to tackle the problems of water scarcity, water allocation and environmental degradation in one of China's most significant waterways.

In a unique Australian education program the University of South Australia (UniSA) in collaboration with the International Centre of Excellence in Water Resources Management (ICE WaRM) has been providing specialist education to a group of 18 future leaders of China's Yellow River Conservancy Commission (YRCC).



UniSA delivered its first program to a YRCC cohort in 2004 and this year its hosted a second cohort in an especially expanded program developed with ICE WaRM.

The group graduated from the program this month and at the same time, ICE WaRM and its partners were acknowledged by the Business/Higher Education Round Table with the 2007 Award for Outstanding International Collaboration in Education.

The ICE WaRM partnership brings together academic and applied expertise in key areas from its founding partners UniSA, Flinders, Adelaide and Deakin Universities and the University of Central Queensland and is now Australia's leading water resources education, training and research organisation.

UniSA Professor Simon Beecham from the SA Water Centre for Water Management and Reuse says the success of the 47-week program has ensured more groups from the YRCC will take up educational opportunities in SA.

"This has been a very fruitful collaboration between two nations facing the sharp end of water management in a 21st century world that is increasingly impacted by climate change," Prof Beecham says.

"The program brings together all the right elements from English language education, through to the technical and business aspects of water resource management.

"It is a fine example of how academic collaboration can deliver invaluable outcomes at an international level. Australia's geographical history has been one in which water management is a core issue and for that reason we have developed strong skills in this field.

Professor Beecham says the BHERT award serves to acknowledge the success and importance of the ICE WaRM, YRCC collaboration.

The BHERT Awards also saw an honourable mention given to UniSA's School of Communications under the category of Best Education and Training Collaboration for its collaboration with TAFE SA and the World Police and Fire Games 2007 to organise student journalists to cover the games.

Title changes reflect Uni's core activities

The importance the University of South Australia places on research and teaching and learning is being reflected in a symbolic way, with a change of title for two of the University's senior managers.

Professor Caroline McMillen's title has been changed to Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President: Research and Innovation.

And Professor Peter Lee's title changes to Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President: Academic.

Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj said the change better reflects the importance the University assigns to those two core areas of university function.



Professor Caroline McMillen

"In the current and rapidly evolving higher education environment, there is a question of whether use of the titles Pro Vice Chancellor: Academic and Pro Vice Chancellor: Research adequately reflects that importance," Prof Høj said.



Professor Peter Lee

"This question is of importance for UniSA as we aspire to improve our performance in these key corporate priority areas."

The change brings UniSA into line with the majority of Australian universities.

"For all intents and purposes the operation of these two portfolios will remain the same." Prof Høj said. "There are simply strong evidential and visual reasons why it is appropriate to change the titles, and above all, the decision is closely linked with the type of university we aspire to be and be seen to be."

Dr Basil Hetzel wins prestigious international award

The King of Thailand will present former UniSA Chancellor, Dr Basil Hetzel AC with the 2007 Prince Mahidol Prize at a ceremony on January 30.

Named in honour of His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol, the "father of modern medicine and public health" in Thailand who died in 1929 at the age of 37, the award recognises Dr Hetzel's contribution to international public health.

Dr Hetzel's pioneering work in addressing intellectual disability and deformity resulting from iodine deficiency began in 1964 in Papua New Guinea.

In collaboration with the PNG Public Health Department, Dr Hetzel's team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital showed that cretinism, a severe form of brain damage, could be prevented by the injection of iodized oil before pregnancy.

Subsequently at the CSIRO Division of Human Nutrition (1976-1985) his team demonstrated the profound effects of iodine deficiency on foetal brain development in animal studies.

Iodine deficiency is now recognised by WHO as the most common preventable cause of brain damage in the world today. There is an at risk population in excess of 2 billion from 130 countries.

In 1985 Dr Hetzel played the key role in establishing and then leading the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD), which is now a multidisciplinary global network of 700 professionals from more than 100 countries working with WHO and UNICEF.

The ICCIDD with WHO and UNICEF has played a leading role in a global program of prevention, dating from the World Summit for Children in 1990.

In 1999 an assessment by an ICCIDD/WHO/UNICEF team found that 68 per cent of households worldwide were consuming iodized salt, compared with only 20 per cent before 1990.

Recent research in Australia has identified significant iodine deficiency in school children and in pregnant



women. This indicates the need for greater use of already available iodized salt.

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