

# KooriLife

THE SIX-MONTHLY REVIEW OF NEWS AND EVENTS AT UWS

Autumn 2010

## A major move forward

**UWS will be launching a fantastic new major in Semester 2 this year – Indigenous Australian Studies. Open to all undergraduate students, this comprehensive major will be rolled out across a number of disciplines and courses at UWS.**

FOR EXAMPLE, STUDENTS will be able to undertake a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, to name a couple, and graduate with a major in Indigenous Australian Studies.

*‘The new Indigenous Australian Studies major is all about giving UWS students a unique opportunity to enjoy refreshed units of study that are both informative and engaging.’*

Associate Professor  
Berice Anning

Associate Professor Berice Anning is thrilled with the development:

‘This major provides a great experience for our students. It will really give those who are interested, a unique opportunity to increase the Indigenous content in their degrees.’

One of the main reasons the major is being introduced is because of a recent audit that showed the current UWS Indigenous coursework wasn’t enough for students to achieve the UWS Indigenous Graduate Attribute.

*‘The level of interest shown by prospective “major” students has been very impressive. So we’re thrilled that UWS is helping them achieve such a valuable qualification.’*

Associate Professor Anning elaborates:

‘But it’s also about updating the coursework and making it more relevant to today’s society and student’s knowledge and skills for future employment. I’ve been fortunate enough to work closely with the Indigenous academic staff on the course content and it’s just amazing – more compelling, interesting and ultimately more engaging.’



Associate Professor Berice Anning.

Scheduled to officially begin in 2011, the major will be taught by a talented selection of Indigenous academics and existing staff members. However, to whet the appetite, the foundation unit will be offered to undergraduates next semester.

The Indigenous Australian Studies major will benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike particularly when it translates into the workplace in the form of knowledge, skills, awareness and a greater understanding of the Indigenous Australian history, culture and practices.

Professor Berice Anning offered the perfect summary: ‘Our Indigenous students will develop an even deeper appreciation of their culture and our non-Indigenous students will be able to communicate and work more effectively in more culturally appropriate ways with our community. Basically, everybody will benefit and that’s so exciting about this major.’

*‘Students have an exciting opportunity to acquire the cultural nous that will allow them to work more effectively with Indigenous Australians in the arts, communications, media, private industries, education, the government and non-government sectors, health, sciences, community services and more.’*

### Just the facts

- The Badanami Centre staff has developed an Indigenous Australian Studies major in order to implement the Indigenous Graduate Attribute into UWS courses.
- The major is made up of a suite of ten units, focusing on Indigenous Australian historical, cultural, social, economical and political issues – past to present.
- The major addresses the issues that affect Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and their relationships.



## Hello everyone



WELCOME TO OUR third issue of KooriLife – and my last.

As this is my final address to you, I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the fulfilling journey I've enjoyed in the position of Dean, Indigenous Education.

When I accepted the role in mid 2006, what attracted me most was the goal to embed Indigenous education across UWS in the form of an Indigenous Graduate Attribute.

This was a wonderful breakthrough for our students but also a great opportunity for me to contribute to a University which I consider my own.

As some of you may know, until entering what was then Milperra CAE and later UWS Macarthur, I had very little formal education and consequently limited opportunities in life. UWS changed that not only for me, but for my family also – three of my children are now either university students or graduates.

In short, I owe a lot to UWS which is why I am delighted that we have collectively achieved the vision of an embedded approach to Indigenous Education.

The future has never looked so bright for all our students.

And here are just a few memorable achievements from the last three and a half years:

- introduced an Indigenous Education Policy aligning UWS with national Indigenous education objectives
- re-developed the Indigenous Education Centre and staffed it with a committed and talented team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff
- ensured Indigenous membership on all senior and relevant committees
- seen reference to Indigenous objectives and interests permeate the broader policies, plans and governance of UWS
- created the Manager, Indigenous Outreach and the Director, Indigenous Employment and Engagement positions
- introduced student support staff and facilities on all campuses
- revised and expanded the range of scholarships
- seen a rise in achievement for Indigenous research and PhD enrolments
- introduced and successfully piloted an Indigenous school student mentoring program.

And of course, we've recently introduced the Indigenous Graduate Attribute currently being rolled out across UWS with the help of a \$900K DSAF grant.

So while I'm truly thrilled and satisfied with the landmark successes we've enjoyed during my tenure, it is now time for me to move on to other personal and professional pursuits.

I would like to sincerely thank the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Board of Trustees, the Indigenous Advisory Council members, alumni and staff at all levels of the University who have offered their tireless support during my time here.

Needless to say, I must also thank you – all the talented, determined Indigenous students who have inspired such pride in me every single day.

Finally I would like to wish my colleague Associate Professor Berice Anning the very best with her appointment as Director of Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education and Acting Dean of Indigenous Education.

Professor Michael McDaniel  
Dean, Indigenous Education

## The gaining of knowledge and skills to lead and partner with Indigenous Australia

### The UWS Graduate Attribute

The Indigenous Graduate Attribute is all about adding Indigenous specific content and elements of study to existing courses at UWS. This targeted knowledge can be applied to all career paths and will ultimately help our students achieve even greater success in their working lives.



THE INDIGENOUS GRADUATE Attribute was developed as a separate attribute by the Badanami Centre staff, namely Professor Michael McDaniel and Associate Professor Berice Anning. In collaboration with other UWS academics they have taken an innovative approach to implementing the Indigenous Graduate Attribute:

- consultation across the disciplines/Schools at UWS
- developing/establishing relationships through the respect of culture and tradition
- establishing a quality and talented team of Indigenous academics
- developing a learning and teaching framework for Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Australian Studies
- integrating Indigenous content into curricula at UWS.

In essence, the Indigenous Graduate Attribute is a giant leap forward for the Indigenous academic community because UWS is now the first university in the country to make formal studies and assessments of the Indigenous Australian histories and cultures, compulsory for all undergrad students.

#### The aim of the Attribute is to . . .

- ensure that all UWS graduates develop relevant knowledge and skills demonstrating cultural competency as well as a professional capacity to interact within Australian society
- raise the level of academic service delivery to UWS students
- ensure the inclusiveness of Indigenous Australians in the National Identity.

#### The outcome is to ensure . . .

UWS graduates will appreciate the history and culture of Indigenous Australia and gain knowledge and skills for working productively in Indigenous communities. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

Dr Wendy Holland highlights another important by-product of the Indigenous Graduate Attribute:

'The Indigenous welfare-dependent model of old will hopefully be replaced by something more positive as UWS students begin to recognise the significant contribution Indigenous people make to the Australian economy from tourism to the arts and mining.'

Core units with Indigenous content now complement courses across disciplines including Nursing, Medicine, Health Sciences, Natural Sciences, Law, Psychology, Arts and Humanities.

*'The key strategy in rolling out the Indigenous Graduate Attribute is developing the Indigenous Australian Studies Major. And the exciting thing is that the Badanami Centre is currently co-teaching an Indigenous subject in the School of Biomedical Health and Science called Culture, Diversity & Health as part of this initiative . . .'*

*'Working in collaboration with the Unit Coordinator, Dr Ursula King, the Badanami Centre is being properly funded for academic delivery just like any other school within UWS. This is a fantastic acknowledgement of our work and purpose here at UWS – it's a big breakthrough for us.'*

Dr Wendy Holland

#### Disclaimer

Views expressed in articles are contributors' own and not necessarily those of UWS. Statements of fact are believed to be true but no legal responsibility is accepted for them.

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# Anita Heiss does a little 'Manhattan dreaming'



It looks like we have our very own Carrie Bradshaw in the guise of popular, 'chick lit' author and UWS alumni, Dr Anita Heiss.

A MEMBER OF the Wiradjuri nation of central NSW, Anita is one of Australia's most prolific and well-known authors of Indigenous literature. And her recent book, *Manhattan Dreaming* is a frothy, funny take on love in the Noughties – with a sexy Indigenous twist.

UWS Bankstown Campus was proud to host the launch of *Manhattan Dreaming* in early March. Over 60 people went along to the event where Uncle Greg Simms delivered the Welcome to Country and R E A Saunders performed the official launch. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Janice Reid was part of the enthusiastic audience who listened to Anita's quirky talk about her research in the iconic Manhattan.

Anita was in her element and was thrilled to see copies of *Manhattan Dreaming* and her other works including *Not Meeting Mr Right* and *Avoiding Mr Right* fly off the shelves at the UWS Connect Book Shop. Anita spent quite sometime discussing her inspirations for the novel and her aspirations for the future. Many staff and students who attended the launch had the opportunity to get signed copies of her novels.

Anita got the last word (of course!) when she shared her passion for the university who set the stage for her brilliant career – the University of Western Sydney.

In April 2011, Anita will see the release of her next novel *Paris Dreaming* – the follow up to *Manhattan Dreaming* – published by Random House. For more information about Anita's works go to: [www.anitaheiss.com](http://www.anitaheiss.com)

*'UWS supported my dream to become an accomplished writer and complete my PhD. From my supervisors to administrative staff, I always felt well supported in my studies and it was the commitment of all that helped me realise my potential and ambition as a writer! And for this, all of it, I'll always be grateful.'*

# Mind over mentor

## The 2010 Indigenous School Student Mentoring Program launches

After a fantastic start to the Indigenous School Student Mentoring Program in 2009, four new high schools from the Campbelltown and Liverpool areas will be joining the program in 2010:

**James Busby, Hoxton Park, Sarah Redfern and Airs high schools**

As well as inviting students from these schools, the program has also signed up year 10 and year 11 students from existing high schools on the program, namely Ambarvale and Leumeah.

One of the program's coordinators, Maree Graham, anticipates another successful year:

'We're really looking forward to working with our new and existing students – it's a real privilege watching these talented young men and women grow both emotionally and academically.'

In 2010, an extra 30–40 UWS students will receive mentorship training for their exciting new roles. It's all about passion, commitment, academic smarts and of course the desire to inspire – criteria that the mentors-in-training have in spades.

*'The fact that our new students are discovering dreams and aspirations they never thought possible is a huge reward for me and everyone on the mentoring program.'*

Maree Graham  
Indigenous Outreach

Indigenous success stories – UWS second year medical student, Dana Slape and UWS senior academic, Terry Mason.

The ceremony was complete when students were invited up on stage to receive their induction certificates and a commemorative dictionary.

**Is there life after the mentor program? The answer is a resounding 'yes'**

Out of the 16 students accepted into the 2009 program, 12 continued with their high school studies while the remaining four went on to full-time employment or further study at TAFE. The odds are definitely in the students' favour. And, as Maree explains:

'The opportunities are as great as the students want – we give them the tools and then it's up to them to dream as big as they can and achieve big too. It's very exciting.'

### Setting the game up to win

To prepare the new students for the 2010 program, a series of workshops will be held specifically for both Year 10 and 11 cohorts on-campus. Designed to be both fun and academically-enriching, the workshop themes will include, Indigenous Games, art and even dance!

Meanwhile, this year's students enjoyed an induction ceremony in early March. Parents and carers alike looked on, proud, as their children were officially welcomed into the program.

Students were introduced to their new mentors and treated to inspiring talks by walking

*'The mentoring program provides our students with a unique tertiary learning experience. It opens doors and creates fantastic opportunities.'*



Indigenous Dance Workshop.





2010 Medical Students Luncheon on UWS Campbelltown Campus.

# Only the beginning...

## More medical students enrol in 2010

Since UWS started its medicine program in 2007, 18 Indigenous students from all across Australia have begun the long and important journey toward becoming a doctor.

LIKE OTHER MEDICAL schools across the country, the UWS School of Medicine recognises the critical importance of increasing the number of Indigenous doctors. The first students are yet to graduate and start the next phase of their medical training, so this really is the beginning for both the school and its first Indigenous students.

And increasing the number of students is just one part of the ways in which this still relatively new School of Medicine is working to 'Close the Gap'. All its students will graduate with a practical understanding of Indigenous health, and all students will spend five weeks in Year 5 of the program with key partners in Campbelltown, Blacktown, Mt Druitt, Bathurst and Lismore. Partnership is important for the School, which recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation to work together on Indigenous Health and Medical Education.

### What does it take to become a medical student?

'It is a competitive process,' Cris Carriage, the School's Indigenous Program officer said. 'We are looking for students with a great deal of commitment and motivation, and who can demonstrate that their academic background will enable them to successfully complete the course. The job of the School and its staff is to support students in realising their academic potential and to help them develop all of the skills they'll need as doctors.'

**'Medical School is demanding, but it also should be fun.'**

**Professor Alison Jones  
Dean of the School of Medicine**

The UWS School of Medicine's Indigenous Program Officer works with academic staff in the School as well as the team at the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education to support medical students.

All Indigenous students are eligible for tutoring through the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) in essay writing, study and research skills.

This year, students can also access Badanami onsite with the opening of a centre on the Campbelltown campus

where students are based for the first two years of the program. The centre provides a site for tutoring, group or private study as well as access to computers and printers.

**'When our students study medicine – often something they never imagined possible – they become part of a small, but growing community of Indigenous doctors.'**

**Cris Carriage  
Indigenous Program Office**

The Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association based in Canberra, encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in medicine and provides a network for all students studying medicine across Australia. Students can attend conferences and workshops and meet up to chat online.

Medicine is a demanding course and a challenge for all students. The first Indigenous students have now entered their clinical training in hospitals, general practices and community organisations throughout Greater Western Sydney. From mid 2010, when some students begin studying at Bathurst and Lismore, Indigenous Health placements begin. It really is just the beginning.

### A snapshot profile of a first year medical student – Ethan Johnson

#### I've always wanted to do medicine.

Probably since I was about 13 – it's always interested me particularly because I come from a town – Brewarrina in western NSW – where we had to fight hard to secure a doctor.

#### Without a doubt, my long term goal is to practise within a Koori community.

It's my way of giving back and caring for the people who have always supported me. I'm not sure what I'll specialise in yet – it could be paediatrics.

#### I went to Brewarrina Central School, where 99% of the students are Indigenous.

There were six kids in the final year and it was a great, tight unit – we all had big goals. And that's what life's about I think – having a dream and just going for it whatever the odds.

#### My parents are definitely my role models – they're amazing.

In spite of the fact that they didn't get as good an education as they deserved, they've worked hard over the years to raise me and my siblings. And they always encouraged us to finish our HSC and get a good education.

#### Medicine is a challenging degree but I'm enjoying every moment – even the tough bits!

It's a very rewarding experience so far – I'm guessing it's going to get even better.

#### UWS is a fantastic place – it has the best Koori student support system in NSW.

The Badanami Centre in particular is worth its weight in gold. Cris Carriage and her team will bend over backwards to help you and provide everything from tutors to computer access. They work so hard for us and we really appreciate the faith they have in our ambitions.

#### If you have a dream, you can achieve it – there's really no excuse.

I want to say to any student in high school or even primary who's reading this right now, that you should dream big – follow your heart, you know? There's so much support out there for you to pursue your goals. There's nothing stopping you from going to a great uni like this.

**'UWS also offers a range of other courses in the health sciences including psychology, physiotherapy, nursing and occupational therapy.'**