

Issue one 2011



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Welcome to our first issue of what'snew@scu for 2011. It promises to be an exciting year for Southern Cross University, as we embark on the next phase of growth across our campuses. Construction of new facilities at Coffs Harbour and the Gold Coast campus will get under way in the coming weeks.

We have continued to experience strong demand for courses, and I extend a warm welcome to all those new and continuing students who are now well into their first session of study for 2011. We have also welcomed a number of key staff, some of whom are profiled in this issue. Professor Adrian Miller, our new head of Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, will be working closely with the community to further develop the teaching and research strengths within the College. Gnibi has an exciting future and we are delighted to be welcoming Professor Miller into this role.

We have also recently welcomed Professor Michael Heinrich, as the new head of Southern Cross Plant Science, one of two Special Research Centres. We are continuing to develop our research capability in key areas including plant science and Professor Heinrich brings a vast amount of knowledge and experience to this role.

Southern Cross University received the highest possible classification of a 'well above world standard' rating in the field of geochemistry in the Excellence in Research for Australia 2010 National report released in late January. We achieved an 'above world standard' rating for research in the field of earth sciences, and a 'world standard' rating for research in each of the fields of agriculture, forestry and nursing. This was a pleasing result for us in areas in which we have been placing increased emphasis.

Finally, I hope you enjoy our story about the New Italy project and take the time to put the spaghetti sauce recipe to the test.

Peter Lee

Professor Peter Lee FTSE

Indigenous research in focus at Gnibi

The new head of Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, Professor Adrian Miller, aims to develop research programs that will enable the College to reach its full potential as a significant player in the national and international Indigenous higher education sector.

Professor Miller said Gnibi's research program would be built on a foundation of developing credibility through authentic collaboration within Indigenous communities and Indigenous organisations.

"I think Gnibi has got an exciting future and I will be working with my colleagues, and the community of people who want to be involved, to shape it together. In regards to the research agenda, the essential framework will involve Indigenous communities, Indigenous organisations and the broader community," Professor Miller said.

"For the past 10 years I have been working in a highly productive mainstream academic centre as a senior academic at James Cook University. That centre was heavily focused on teaching and research and I plan to bring some of those skills into this environment and see how well we could develop a similar program in a strictly Indigenous-focused setting.

"In terms of engagement with



The new head of Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, Professor Adrian Miller.

the local community, I see local Aboriginal communities and local broader communities as absolutely significant to any future direction we take. The way I see engagement working is by taking a 'concentric circles' approach where we start within the University, then move out to the local communities, then to regional centres and then more broadly to national and possibly international settings.

"A local project that is already under way is the result of a local elder coming to me with a fantastic idea. It is basically an oral history

project that records the stories of elders. Our hope is that we can incorporate what we record in our teaching programs - so we get vignettes of wisdom incorporated into the curriculum.

"That project is an example of what is really exciting about the College in that projects can be initiated by communities coming to us and saying 'we want to do this', and we are able to say, 'yes, we have the capacity to do that'. Projects like this enhance not only our research but also our future."

New head of Coffs campus

David Lynch is passionate about education - from training the teachers of the future to opening up opportunities for a university degree, no matter what a person's background.

Professor Lynch, who teaches in the School of Education, has also recently taken up the position as Southern Cross University's head of Coffs Harbour campus and is keen

to further strengthen the relationship between the University and the community.

"What I'm really passionate about is education and opening up people's eyes to the opportunities that are available to them through quality education," Professor Lynch said. Professor Lynch has extensive experience in the field of education, as a teacher, a school principal and

in higher education as an education researcher and innovator. His own path into a university has reinforced his passion to promote the benefits of education.

Professor Lynch graduated with a Bachelor of Education and Master of Education from James Cook University and a Doctor of Education from Central Queensland University.

Cookbook celebrates the influence of Italian migrants

The recipes and reminiscences of descendants of Italian migrants living in the Richmond River are being collected for a cookbook designed to identify and celebrate the influence of Italy on food production and consumption in the region.

Project leaders Dr Adele Wessell, senior lecturer in history at Southern Cross University and Associate Fellow at the National Museum of Australia, and Jo Kijas, Consultant Historian and Community Development Worker at New Italy Museum Complex, are inviting descendants of Italian people to share recipes and the memories they have about them.

Dr Wessell said the connection between food and history was a powerful one in this context because the historical circumstance around Italian migration to the Richmond River was fascinating and because the migrants who arrived in the region came from a culture where food and the family were very important and deeply intertwined.

“By collecting these recipes we can build an understanding of food traditions and how they communicate cultural heritage. Italians brought their foods and cooking with them to Australia and adapted them to local conditions and there is a lot of history captured in those changes,” Dr Wessell said.

“Food has been recognised in recently published literature as a form of communication, which makes the study of food production, food making and consumption a fruitful line of enquiry for a range of issues. This project takes a historical dimension to that work, placing the food memories in the context of the times, the history of place, individual life stories and archival records. The project is underpinned by the conviction that food is a means by which we create cultures.”

The New Italy cookbook project will collect recipes from descendants of those who came in the 1880s, when Italian migrants first arrived in New



Giacomo Piccoli seen here tending his grapes was the last of the Italian pioneers to live at New Italy.

Image courtesy of the New Italy Museum.

Italy having been rescued from barren land east of Papua New Guinea by the New South Wales Government following the failed Marquis de Rays sham immigration scheme, through the successive waves of migration in the 1920s to the 1950s post-war period.

Dr Jo Kijas said the New Italy Museum already had a sizeable collection of recipes and that museum volunteers

were currently digitising those while they collected further recipes and stories.

“For example one of the recipes in our collection has come from Americo Melchior who learned this recipe from his Grandmother Fulvia when he was six-years-old. He moved to the Richmond River from Italy in the 1950s with his mother and father and began cooking for the family before he started school. People love his spaghetti sauce and say it’s the best they’ve had. He says his grandmother can take all the credit for the good taste of the sauce and the secret is to cook it for a long time,” Dr Kijas said.

The aim of the ‘Food Stories from Italy to the Richmond River – a legacy of local recipes from Italy’ project is to create a cookbook; collect stories; develop an exhibition at the New Italy Museum; develop educational materials for schools; facilitate cooking demonstrations; and to collect food momentos.

The project will be officially launched on Anniversary Day at the New Italy Museum Complex on Sunday, April 10 from 10am. Americo Melchior will be cooking his Italian Spaghetti Sauce for hundreds of people as part of the launch and Anniversary Day celebrations.

Anniversary Day commemorates the Sydney landing of the survivors of the Marquis de Rays sham immigration scheme on April 7, 1881. The scheme saw more than 300 men, women and children leave the poverty of the Veneto region in northern Italy to make a new life in a “tropical paradise” east of Papua New Guinea, only to find a barren environment. Many of the survivors ultimately settled on land near Woodburn, calling their community New Italy.

To contribute a recipe or to share your stories (who cooked it, when would it be eaten, what memories do you have of eating it) email Adele Wessell at adele.wessell@scu.edu.au or Jo Kijas at newitalymuseum@harboursat.com.au

Americo’s Italian Spaghetti Sauce

serves 50

Ingredients

- chicken stock: 6 chicken wings, 3 litres of water, salt, pepper, garlic and rosemary
- 6 brown onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 200 g of butter
- at least 1 head of garlic, chopped
- 4 stems rosemary, leaves removed and chopped finely
- 1 kg fine pork mince
- 3.5 kg chuck steak, diced into small pieces
- 1/2 glass white wine
- course ground pepper
- 2 tbs salt
- 2.5 kg crushed tomato (can or fresh)
- 1.5 kg tomato paste

Method

1. To make chicken stock put the wings in 3 litres of water with salt, pepper, garlic and rosemary. Simmer until the wings are cooked, drain and use the liquid for stock. Set aside.
2. Cook onions and garlic in the butter and oil until the onion starts to brown and stick to the pan.
3. Add rosemary and mix.
4. Add pork mince and cook until the fat starts to release.
5. Add chuck steak and cook until the meat starts to brown.
6. Add wine, pepper and tomatoes and tomato paste and chicken stock.
7. Simmer for at least two hours with no lid until the oil and tomato start to separate.

Cover photo: Americo Melchior (centre) will be cooking his ‘famous’ spaghetti sauce at the launch of the New Italy cookbook project being held at the New Italy Museum Complex on Anniversary Day, Sunday, April 10. Also pictured (left) Dr Jo Kijas, Consultant Historian and Community Development Worker at New Italy Museum Complex and (right) Dr Adele Wessell, senior lecturer in history at Southern Cross University.

Unlocking the potential of humble marine species



Dr Kirsten Benkendorff is researching the unique compounds found within a marine snail.

Studies by Southern Cross University researcher Dr Kirsten Benkendorff into the unique compounds found within a humble marine snail hold great promise for the prevention and treatment of cancer.

The lecturer in the School of Environmental Science and Management has shown that a local marine snail produces anti-cancer agents and several species of abalone contain natural antibiotics and antivirals that may be capable of boosting human immune systems.

Dr Benkendorff, who has moved to Southern Cross University from Flinders University in South Australia, has spent more than a decade investigating the biological and chemical lives of marine invertebrates that are commonly overlooked on our seashores.

She has recently been named the winner of the prestigious annual Dorothy Hill award from the Australian Academy of Science, which recognises excellence in research in marine sciences by female researchers under 40 years.

Dr Benkendorff has discovered that the adult predatory marine snail *Dicathais orbita* produces bioactive compounds that selectively kill a range

of cancer cell lines without affecting normal human cells and, in mice, these compounds were shown to prevent the formation of colon tumours. The snail also produces muscle relaxing and antibiotic compounds.

"These bioactive compounds are very simple but cannot easily be synthesised," Dr Benkendorff said. "They can be extracted, but the molluscs are edible, so one option may be for people to eat these organisms as medicinal food – a food that has proven health properties beyond basic nutrition. In countries where a lot of marine snails are eaten, like Korea, people have low rates of colorectal cancer. We may also be able to develop complementary medicines in concert with sustainable aquaculture."

A desire to conserve these little known but possibly life-saving species underlies Dr Benkendorff's work, which includes consideration of sustainable harvesting and farming practices. She is also interested in molluscs as indicators of environmental health and her previous studies, mostly in South Australia, have informed governments and industry in the design of marine reserves and the monitoring of marine developments.

Top rating for geochemistry

Southern Cross University received the highest possible classification of a 'well above world standard' rating in the field of geochemistry in the Excellence in Research for Australia 2010 National report released in late January.

The Centre for Coastal Biogeochemistry Research, Southern Cross GeoScience and the School of Environmental Science and Management all contributed to the University's success.

Professor Bradley Eyre, director of Centre for Coastal Biogeochemistry Research said this was an outstanding achievement for Southern Cross University, highlighting the quality of

the research being undertaken.

"The University has been building its research capacity in the geochemistry field over a number of years and has been investing in world-class facilities," Professor Eyre said.

The Centre for Coastal Biogeochemistry Research studies the interactions of humans with the biology and geochemistry of the earth system. The Centre has been particularly successful with high-end research outputs such as Australian Research Council funding and publications in the highest quality journals.

Examples of the broad range of

internationally significant innovative research projects being undertaken by the Centre for Coastal Biogeochemistry Research include quantifying the role of coastal carbonate sediments in buffering ocean acidification and the uptake of atmospheric carbon dioxide which may off-set global warming, harnessing the biogeochemical processes in coastal sands as novel wastewater treatment systems, and using cutting-edge stable isotope techniques for tracing nitrogen along freshwater-marine continuums.

Professor Richard Bush, co-director of Southern Cross GeoScience said that receiving the rating was a tremendous

endorsement for the University's research strategy, excellent facilities and high quality staff.

Further results in the Excellence in Research for Australia 2010 National report included an 'above world standard' rating for research in the field of earth sciences, and a 'world standard' rating for research in each of the fields of agriculture, forestry and nursing.

For more information about the Centre for Coastal Biogeochemistry Research visit www.scu.edu.au/coastal-biogeochemistry

For information about Southern Cross GeoScience visit www.scu.edu.au/geoscience

Pregnant women invited to participate in research

Pregnant women and women who have recently had a baby are being asked to volunteer for a study examining the affect pregnancy may have on how much a woman can lift as part of her everyday activities.

PhD student Nellie Buckley from the School of Health and Human Sciences at Southern Cross University said the project entitled 'Lifting capacity and technique in pregnant women compared to non pregnant women' was inspired by her concern that there was a lot of misinformation in

the community about lifting during pregnancy.

"It is important that pregnant women are being given reliable information about what is, and what is not, safe. I'm really passionate about doing whatever I can to get good information out there for pregnant women so that they know, as far as physical activity goes, what they can and can't do, and lifting is just the start," Nellie said.

"Pregnancy is a time in a woman's life where she can increase the number of fat cells easily and therefore readily

gain weight. So you might see a situation where a woman becomes inactive during pregnancy as a result of misinformation and then gains more than a healthy amount of weight and this may not be good for her or the baby in the long term.

"So I am undertaking this research to determine what the right message is that should be being given to pregnant women in regards to lifting and I would be grateful to any women who would be willing to volunteer their time.

"I am looking for volunteers who are 12 weeks pregnant or more, through to women who have had a baby less than 12 weeks ago, who can attend the Southern Cross University campuses in either Lismore or at Tweed Heads and participate in one or more assessment consultations that will take about two hours.

"Participants will be asked to complete a 'lifting capacity' test to determine their 'maximum acceptable weight' for lifting. This process involves me monitoring: each participant's heart rate; what their perception of how heavy the load is; and whether they feel they could lift more.

"I have been trained and accredited to conduct all of the tests participants will be asked to complete. The lifting capacity test is gradual, beginning at a low level and steadily becoming more difficult. If, at any time, the participant believes that she cannot safely or comfortably continue, the test is concluded as the maximum acceptable load has been reached.

"To carry out the research I will be testing women at three key points during and after pregnancy - at approximately 20 weeks and 36 weeks during their pregnancy and then at approximately 12 weeks postpartum."

The study requires approximately 40 women in each stage to participate who are healthy and without any obstetric complications aged between 18 and 45. The research project is already under way and will continue until mid 2012.

People who are interested in volunteering or would like to find out more about the study can contact Nellie Buckley via e-mail at nellie.buckley@scu.edu.au or telephone on 02 6620 3230.



PhD student Nellie Buckley (right) explains the research project.

International researcher heads Southern Cross Plant Science

The new head of Southern Cross University's Special Research Centre Southern Cross Plant Science, Professor of Plant Biology and Pharmacognosy Michael Heinrich, describes plant science as a crucial area of research in today's fast changing world.

Professor Heinrich is a pharmacognosist, biologist and anthropologist specialising in medicinal and food plant research, specifically bioactive natural products as well as food and medicinal plant usage (ethnopharmacology), particularly in Mexico and the Mediterranean. He most recently held the position of head of the Centre for Pharmacognosy and Phytotherapy in the School of Pharmacy at the University of London. He said plant science was important because the world's growing population was putting increasing pressure on the environment leading to the

degradation of essential resources at an unprecedented rate.

"Humans rely completely on plants for our survival but all too often we forget this. Theoretical and applied research in plant sciences is like a plinth that can be used to develop sustainable models of resource use and of protecting, and sustainably using, Australia's unique biodiversity," Professor Heinrich said.

"The research expertise at Southern Cross Plant Science will enable us to do research on how to improve crops; how to develop novel crops (crops that have been bred to have improved qualities) and how this can be done in a sustainable way. This is a key contribution that plant science can make and Southern Cross University is in an ideal position to deliver it.

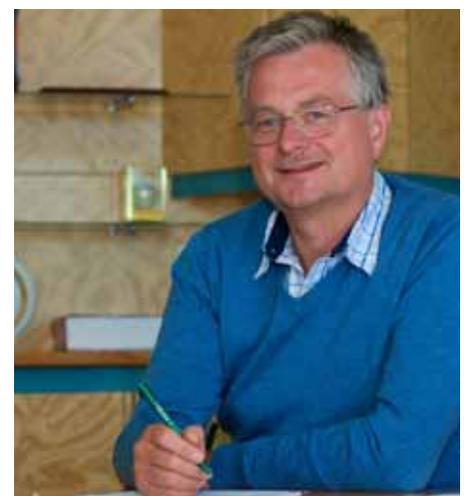
"I am looking forward to leading this team because while Southern Cross University is small, it has a good international reputation in some key

areas of natural science. If the regional focus of the University is combined with a much stronger international network, I foresee excellent opportunities to develop high-impact science."

Southern Cross Plant Science joined a major initiative last year with the Wound Management Co-operative Research Centre which is a collaborative research body that is looking at key challenges in the area of wound healing. Professor Heinrich said that traditional plant knowledge could offer an excellent starting point to develop new wound management products.

Another international researcher will be joining the Southern Cross Plant Science team with Professor Graham King being appointed as scientific director for plant conservation genetics. Professor King is currently the deputy scientific director of Rothamsted Centre for Crop Genetic Improvement, Rothamsted Research, the largest

agricultural research centre in the United Kingdom. Professor Heinrich said he is looking forward to Professor King joining the team.



Head of Southern Cross University's Special Research Centre Southern Cross Plant Science, Professor of Plant Biology and Pharmacognosy Michael Heinrich.



Sport accreditation

Southern Cross University's Bachelor of Sport and Exercise Science degree has received full accreditation from peak professional body Exercise and Sports Science Australia (ESSA).

The course is only the second regional program in the country to be fully accredited, and is one of only nine programs Australia-wide with ESSA accreditation.

Dr Kade Davison, lecturer with the School of Health and Human Sciences, said the course had achieved high standards in order to meet the accreditation criteria.

"Undergraduate course accreditation means a student who has completed the course is automatically eligible for full membership with ESSA at the level of exercise scientist," said Dr Davison.

TAFE agreement

Taking the step of studying at university will be easier for Gold Coast Institute of TAFE students with a new agreement between Southern Cross University and the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE.

Under the agreement Southern Cross University will grant Gold Coast Institute of TAFE graduates an admission ranking score and guarantee a minimum agreed level of advanced standing ranging from four to 12 units in a related Southern Cross University program.

Investigating gambling

The Centre for Gambling Education and Research successfully tendered for \$933,538 in funding to complete a study about interactive gambling for Gambling Research Australia last month. This national study will determine who, what, when, why and how people are gambling using interactive technology in Australia, including through the internet, phone and digital television. The study will be conducted by Professor Nerilee Hing and Dr Sally Gainsbury from the CGER, Professor Alex Blaszczynski from the University of Sydney, Professor Dan Lubman from Monash University and Associate Professor Rob Wood from the University of Lethbridge.



Southern Cross University graduate Glen Hannah was named 'Musician of the Year' at the Tamworth Country Music Festival.

SCU Alumnus celebrates musician of the year award

Glen Hannah, a graduate of SCU's contemporary music program, was awarded a 2010 CMAA Achiever Award as 'Musician of the Year' at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January. The award recognises people who make a significant contribution to the development and promotion of country music.

"I had no idea I was in the running for this award, it never crossed my mind. I was on stage at the Golden Guitar Awards as part of the house band when they read my name out and I had to leave the band area and quickly

accept the award before getting back into the gig," Glen Hannah said.

"It's certainly an honour to be recognised by your peers - it also feels very humbling as I get to work on a lot of records with musicians that in my mind are far superior to myself and have taught me a great deal about musicianship and musical taste."

When asked about what he is currently working on and what comes next, Glen said: "I spend half my time as a graphic designer/photographer and am currently working on various album covers. My recent design projects

have been Kasey Chamber's 'Little Bird' album, Shane Nicholson's 'Bad Machines' as well as Kim Cheshire's 'Dead Man's Shoes' which is an album I also produced. As a live musician I am currently a part of Don Walker's band and we are called 'The Suave F*cks'. I'm also finishing off an upgrade on my home studio and have some projects lined up to produce this year once that is finished. In April, my wife Felicity Urquhart, is having our first baby - so I'm thinking a sound-proof room inside the house could come in handy."

Hunt is on for award-winning graduates

Southern Cross University is calling on the community, alumni, staff and students to send in their nominations for the 2011 Alumni of the Year Awards.

The awards, which will be presented at a gala event in Bangalow on Friday August 5, recognise and honour the outstanding achievements of Southern Cross University alumni and highlight the contributions they have made to the community.

Nominations close on May 31 with winners selected according to exceptional leadership and achievement in their field of endeavour, outstanding service to the community and creativity and innovation in ideas or services.

Last year leading Lismore environmentalist, Gordon Fraser-Quick, took Southern Cross University's 2010 Outstanding Alumnus of the Year while rugby league legend Steve Price won the coveted Young Alumnus of the Year award.

Gordon Fraser-Quick, who graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science in 1995 and a Graduate Diploma of Education in 2003, has been involved in award-winning integrated waste management services and designed and constructed the world's largest vermiculture facility. Integrated with the introduction of kerbside collection of organic waste from every household in the City of Lismore, this facility converts the waste to saleable potting mix and soil conditioner.

Mr Fraser-Quick told the audience at the awards ceremony last year he was incredibly proud of receiving the award.

"Southern Cross University is an organisation that has provided me and other graduates with a way to change not only individual lives but to make a positive impact on the lives of people in communities around the world," said Mr Fraser-Quick.

"It has fuelled my passion for environmental science and given me the tools to go out and make a positive difference on the planet."

Steve Price, who graduated with a Master of Business Administration last year, has had an exceptional career as a rugby league player, and has also been involved in a range of community activities, including the Warriors Against Bullying (WAB) program, which focuses on teaching primary school students anti-bullying skills and the League of Libraries initiative, which aims to enhance literacy levels in primary school children.

Steve, one of the few NRL players to obtain a Masters degree, said he recognised the need for further qualifications to enable him to continue his career when he finishes playing.

"I'd love to be involved in the executive of the National Rugby League but the

opportunities in the corporate field of the game are few and you need to be in a position to take them as they arise," said Steve.

"I owe huge thanks to Southern Cross University because without their flexible and supportive approach to distance education study, there is no way I could have ever undertaken my degree while maintaining a professional sporting career.

"I hope I can serve as an inspiration to other sports people by showing them that it is indeed possible to get a university-level qualification while still being a competitive player."

For more information or to make a nomination go to <http://www.scu.edu.au/alumni> and follow the link '2011 Alumni of the Year Awards'.

Nominations must be received at the Southern Cross University Alumni Relations Office by the close of business on May 31.



Steve Price (left), Southern Cross University Young Alumnus of the Year, and Gordon Fraser-Quick, Alumnus of the Year, at last year's awards.

Alumni update

with Lana Nancarrow



SCU Alumni would like to welcome our alumni members back, for our first What's New Alumni Update in 2011.

SCU Alumni has been busy over the past few months planning our 2011 calendar of events, including our showcase for the year, the 'Alumni of the Year Awards' on August 5. With the Awards moving to a much larger venue this year, we invite all alumni and their partners to join us on the night, in celebration of our outstanding alumni. Tickets will be available from the SCU Alumni website from June 1.

On April 16, 1970 – 1972 students and staff of SCU's predecessor institution, The Lismore Teachers College, are invited to attend The Lismore Teachers College Reunion. The Reunion will include a Welcome Function and Lunch at the original college site in Lismore, followed by a Reunion Dinner on campus at the Zest Function Room that evening. Tickets are available at www.scu.edu.au/alumni until April 4.

We also congratulate Glen Hannah, a graduate of SCU's contemporary music program, for being awarded the 2010 CMAA Achiever Award as 'Musician of the Year' at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January and Steven Price, our 2010 Young Alumnus of the Year, who was awarded a New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Rugby League in New Zealand.

e: alumni@scu.edu.au
w: scu.edu.au/alumni

what's on @SCU

March 30

Tourism and Hospitality Management Careers Day 2011
Southport Sharks Function Centre, Southport

April 1

National Campus DJ Competition
Lismore campus

April 8 - 10

Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival
Bellingen

April 15

Psychology Colloquia
Coffs Harbour campus and videolinked to Lismore campus and SCU Riverside, Brett Street, Tweed Heads

April 16

Lismore Teachers College Reunion
Lismore

April 30

2011 SCU Race Day
Lismore Turf Club

May 13

King & Queen of the Kampus Surfing Challenge
Cabarita Beach headland

May 13

Psychology Colloquia
Coffs Harbour campus and videolinked to Lismore campus and SCU Riverside, Brett Street, Tweed Heads

May 15

2011 Darrel Chapman Fun Run
Lismore campus

June 9 - 10

Northern Rivers Science and Engineering Challenge
Lismore campus

June 15 - 18

Orientation Session 2 2011

June 26 - 29

Australian University Surfing Championship hosted by SCU

Campus tours

Book a personalised tour of Lismore, Coffs Harbour or Gold Coast & Tweed Heads campuses.

email: campustours@scu.edu.au
or freecall: 1800 626 481

To receive what'snew@scu or our monthly e-newsletter DiscoverSCU email: discover@scu.edu.au
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Students head to Thailand

Ten Southern Cross University students spent their Christmas holiday break helping Thai university students learn English, in an innovative program run with Naresuan University in Phitsanulook, central Thailand.

The students, from the Lismore, Gold Coast and Coffs Harbour campuses, were selected out of 193 applicants to take part in the program, which ran in January and February. The program, organised through Southern Cross University's International Office, followed a visit from the Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Lee to Naresuan in October 2010.

Caroline Mitchell, a Bachelor of Psychology student from the Coffs Harbour campus and a Vice Chancellor's Scholarship recipient, said it was a fascinating and rewarding experience.

"We learnt so much about the Thai culture. They really wanted to talk about that and we were so well looked after," Caroline said.

"They were a bit shy at first and then they sort of opened up to us. We rotated between working with them in the English language centre and holding public conversation conferences. They would line up out the door and come in small groups with the purpose of just practising their English with us.

"I liked learning about the Thai culture



Southern Cross University students during their trip to Thailand as part of a program to assist students at the Naresuan University learn English.

and being able to compare rural Thailand to Bangkok. We lived in the dorms and the food was great. The campus was huge – there were a lot of students. There were 15 dorms, each with 20 rooms on each of the four floors, and four people in each room.

"We made some really good friendships and they taught us a lot. I actually chose a cultural subject as a result of this trip and I'd love to go back."

In an email during their visit one of the other Southern Cross University students said: "I am in love (IN LOVE) with the place! I am so so happy! The students are so wonderful! They are indeed very shy but when you find the best way to talk to them and engage them they love to talk! Students come up to us everywhere we go and want

to say hello and talk. I try and work hard to give back as much as I can but their generosity is just overwhelming! I want to come back here for sure!"

The President of Naresuan University, Professor Dr Sujin Jinahyon, said in a letter to the University that the project had been a considerable success.

"The group of students that you sent us was diverse in terms of background and training, and they contributed and worked exceptionally well together.

"Our Thai students, in particular, were full of admiration for the group's dedication, warmth and friendliness. We have learnt much from this project, which we will build on in any future activities. One thing is clear and that is 'students teaching students' an effective vehicle for facility communication and language training."

Project aims to educate recreational divers

A new project is under way to develop best-practice guidelines for zero-impact diving, particularly in protected marine environments.

The project, led by researchers from Southern Cross University's National Marine Science Centre, is being supported by the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (NRCMA) and Jetty Dive, a Coffs Harbour dive operator.

During the past two months Dr Steve Dalton and Dr Andrew Carroll have been monitoring the interactions between divers and the marine life they encounter, in particular incidental contact with the bottom that may lead to accidental damage of marine life.

"Many divers are attracted to dive

sites that are within sanctuary zones, which afford maximum protection, and are often the most diverse in terms of corals and fish life. This project raises awareness of the unique marine environment found within the Solitary Islands Marine Park and encourages divers to take photos and only leave bubbles," Dr Dalton said.

"The feedback from divers who have participated in this project has been very positive. They have a reasonable level of awareness about the importance of marine conservation and are very keen to learn more about marine parks and passive diving techniques that can improve diver experience and mitigate incidental interactions with local marine life,"

Dr Carroll said.

Mark Asquith, from the NRCMA, said: "Key to NRCMA's strategic approach towards implementing sustainable marine resource use is to support and fund projects like this; projects that develop, raise awareness and facilitate the use of current best practices by user groups, with great positive outcomes."

The project is also supported by Zan Hammerton, a Southern Cross University PhD student who has been undertaking similar research with the assistance from Byron Bay Dive Centre and the Cape Byron Marine Park. For information about the project contact Steve Dalton at steve.dalton@nmsc.edu.au