Nobel Prizes are in the news again – or as much as anything can be noticed when it is not directly related to the Afghanistan war against terrorism.

The Nobel Prize for Peace has recognised the work of the United Nations and its Secretary General, Kofi Annan. May that award inspire the work of the UN when Peace has never been more absent from recent international politics.

The award of the Nobel Prize in literature to V S Naipaul caused more comment. For many of us, it is a belated award. Naipaul has charted the post-colonial world as no other writer in the English language has done. Or so I think – his A Bend in the River is certainly on my select list of ‘desert island discs’. His sharp and controversial views on multiculturalism also ensured media notice and debate.

But it is the economics prize award for 2001, shared by three academic economists – Professors George Akerlof of UC Berkley, Michael Spence of Stamford and Joseph Stiglitz at Columbia – which are perhaps the most interesting of the laureates.

Their seminal writings (reviewed in The Economist of 13 October 2001 p.72) explore different aspects of the market. In particular, the challenges of working in the imperfect environment of asymmetric information within markets. Akerlof’s pioneer work focussed on the used car market, out of which he developed more general theories about the consequences for sellers when buyers found it exceedingly difficult to separate out quality. The challenge of identifying the notorious ‘lemon’, and the effect of the ‘lemon’ in market pricing which drives out quality product creates an ‘adverse selective’ environment. Spence and Stiglitz’s work explores different aspects of how organisations and individuals establish ‘signal’ quality in complex markets, whether it is the communication of capacities or the profiling of the reliable customer.

Far from being esoteric or narrow economic models, the work of these three laureates offer us fascinating jump-off points for thinking about the complex yet uncertain environments of markets, brands and positioning in higher education, in this increasingly competitive era of internationalisation.

The applications may be relatively obvious. Yet the consequences can be profound. At the macro level, there is the large challenge for the University sector to establish its vital role among a diffuse and uneven set of educational providers. This will increase as a challenge, with the emergence of many more private providers, both physically present and ‘on-line’, offering professional credentialling and specific professional training. Within our national sector, issues of differentialisation between institutions will also grow. We want a diverse sector able to argue for quality, with different capacities and missions, in the different groupings. Communicating that sense of difference will be a great challenge. And equally this will apply in the wider region within which Australia operates. We need to be able to promote a quality system amidst other national providers, especially in Asia, and at the same time do justice to the range of institutions operating out of Australia. Getting across the right messages about diversity, quality and flexibility will not be easy, yet it is crucial in positioning Australian higher education globally.

Our own University is, of course, foremost in my mind in taking up these challenges. UWA has a strong sense of its own values and mission, and that is a great basis for engaging in changing markets with a great plethora of providers and agencies. But we also need a strategic sense of how we advance our interests in the practical terms of presenting UWA to the community and the wider world.

In truth, UWA has increasingly emerged as a comprehensive university of excellence, pursuing an academic plan that identifies key areas of priority, and operating as an international gateway to Western Australia. From 2001 ‘UWA Restructured’ will capitalise on its intellectual and material resources, with huge promise. The Academic Board and Senate meetings of 22 October 2001, which so strongly endorsed our new structure, marked that bold step forward.

UWA is now a university for the future. And we need to develop the ways in which we communicate the nature of our University to the community and markets of the wider world. The noblest prize will not be some external ranking agency but through the standing which comes from the regard and respect of our students and our peers. Excellence alone will bring that about.

Professor Deryck Schreuder
Vice-Chancellor and President
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The opening of impressive new facilities for research into human movement and exercise science will ultimately benefit the lives of ordinary people.

Professor George Stewart, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, said, at the recent opening celebrations, that, although about 70 postgraduates would be using the new laboratories for specialist research, their work was central to the health and well-being of all people, not just elite athletes, people with movement problems or those in specific occupations.

“And educating people to understand their health and well-being is tremendously important, as it is central to our lives,” Professor Stewart said.

The $2 million research facility was officially opened by the Minister for Education and Sport and Recreation, Alan Carpenter, who told guests that he had once been a student in the department – for about a fortnight!

“The University deserves to be congratulated on these facilities and their perception and awareness of the science of human movement,” Mr Carpenter said.

He said he was particularly impressed with a project which would be carried out in the new centre to analyse temperature control and hydration in underground and surface miners in WA.

“This is hugely significant to WA’s economy,” he said.

The Head of the Department of Human Movement and Exercise Science, Professor Bruce Elliott, said he was not very keen on the health model that operated today. He was more interested in prevention.

“And with these new facilities, I am sure we’ll take the world by storm.”
Sarah Hay just scraped in by the skin of her teeth.

Now aged 35, the Creative Writing student, has won The Australian/Vogel Award for the best unpublished manuscript by a writer under 35 for her novel Skins. The award is the richest and most prestigious for an unpublished novelist.

The award has launched the careers of Australia’s premier writers, including Kate Grenville and Tim Winton. “It is the prize that recognises novelists who are going to be substantial and important,” says Dr Brenda Walker, Sarah’s friend, mentor, teacher and herself an award-winning novelist.

A first novel that is more than skin deep

“A very accomplished undertaking that doesn’t falter in tone – a vivid sense of place, astute characterisation and a challenging take on the nexus between civilisation and savagery.”

Sarah Hay at home in her garden. She looks down at this garden from an upstairs window as she writes.

A second year student, Sarah Hay says that her novel had its genesis in the creative writing program in the English Department.

“I don’t think I would have actually got going without the University’s support and feedback during the past two years,” she says. “Previously, I had been involved in journalism and public relations, but when you move into creative writing, there are things you need to learn, like not overwriting – one of my problems.

“When you have the opportunity to read and discuss your work with a group, these flaws become evident. Then there is the feedback you get from tutors as you go through the work, chapter by chapter. Eventually, I found my own voice as a writer – and, as the judges observed, it became quite a distinctive voice!”

Books dominated Sarah’s childhood on a station 80 kilometres from Esperance. She was also intrigued by the history of the region, and when a fishing trip left the family marooned on Middle Island, the seeds of her novel were set. There were ruins of sealers’ camps on the island, and a host of legends about Black Jack Anderson, a black American who ended up on trial in Albany in 1835. She used history as a framework for a novel that deals with issues of racism and the treatment of women during the 19th century.

Brenda Walker believes that established novelists can play an important mentoring role. “Apart from editorial advice and editing, one needs to do a lot of listening and encouraging – that’s important for writers trying to find their way. You can also help in practical ways and by providing focus.

“When you begin work on a manuscript it can be enormously exhausting and overwhelming. But there comes a point when it would be impossible to withdraw, when the process of writing becomes compulsive and deeply pleasurable. At that point you feel very good about it, and that feeling has nothing to do with the possibility of publication, but with the integrity of the work.”

Skins will be published by Allen and Unwin early next year. Sarah is already working on a second novel set in the East Kimberley.
A sound way to monitor milk

Donna Ramsay had just started her postgraduate research when she gave birth to her daughter Gabrielle.

As she was studying breastfeeding with Professor Peter Hartmann, a world leader in the biochemistry of breastfeeding, her new role of motherhood actually enhanced her research rather than hindered it.

Now one year into her PhD, Ms Ramsay has hit the headlines with her research, thanks to Australian Science Communicators (ASC).

She was nominated by Professor Hartmann (and chosen) for Fresh Science, part of the Great Australian Science Show in Melbourne, run by ASC. Fresh Science chooses 16 young scientists with new fresh good Australian research that has not had any publicity.

They each make a presentation at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Ms Ramsay’s presentation, Bringing the Breast into the 21st Century, was picked up by four newspapers and several radio stations in the eastern states.

A radiographer who specialised in ultrasound and spent much of her working day at a private hospital, screening women for breast cancer, Ms Ramsay decided she wanted to take her skills and interests further.

Her PhD research has used ultrasound for the first time to image the ejection of milk from a human breast, with the aim of identifying and helping with breastfeeding problems.

“Most breastfeeding research has centred on the baby. Here, in Professor Hartmann’s lab, we are at the forefront of mother-focussed research,” Ms Ramsay said.

“Using ultrasound, we can image the milk ejection, or let-down, as it is more commonly called, in a non-invasive way, from one breast, while a baby feeds from the other breast, because the let-down occurs simultaneously in both breasts.

“The alveoli in the breast are dilated with milk, then they contract and most mothers feel this let-down as anything from a faint tingling to a moderate pain.

“Both about 30 per cent of mothers can’t feel let-down, so they can be convinced that they don’t have enough milk to feed their babies, especially if they don’t have good support and knowledge.

“The ultrasound can prove to these mothers that the milk is being supplied and some of them, after seeing it on the screen, can learn to identify the feeling,” Ms Ramsay said. Let-down could occur up to eight or ten times during a breastfeeding session, but, after the initial sensation, the others are not felt.

“The mean optimal feeding time is 86 seconds after let-down.

“If a mother feels her baby is not thriving, then she may continue to feed her baby for long periods, only to find that it, in fact, doesn’t thrive and always seems hungry. This means that this mother may only have one or two let-downs, so a long feeding period doesn’t necessarily mean a big feed.

“She would do better to feed for much shorter periods more frequently. It is this sort of information that the ultrasound can show so clearly and mothers can see and understand it.

“If Australia had a 20 per cent increase in breastfeeding, we could save $11 million a year in associated health costs. Currently, 95 per cent of Australian women start to breastfeed a new baby, but only 50 per cent are still feeding after six months,” said Ms Ramsay who fed her daughter for 18 months.

Her research is funded by Medela, a European-based company which manufactures breast pumps, and which has collaborated for several years with Professor Hartmann.
Managing the Pilbara

Mission Impossible becomes mission accomplished for Botany group

The vast spaces of Western Australia's Pilbara region are echoed in the size of the research grants for a group of botanists who are developing a range of sustainable management systems for the area’s rangelands.

Dr Pauline Grierson, a senior lecturer in the Department of Botany, and Professor Mark Adams head up the Ecosystems Research Group that has won the University’s largest Australian Research Council linkages grant for this year and the only grant awarded for five years.

Totalling $1.3 million, the new grant allows continuation and further development of research projects that have been funded by the ARC in conjunction with Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd under its collaborative grants schemes since 1995.

By the end of this grant period, the collaboration will have lasted 11 years. Hamersley Iron is one of the major holders of pastoral leases in the Pilbara and Dr Grierson said the company had great respect for station management.

“Hamersley have always supported our work, showing great vision in their management of the stations. Our success with ARC grants is largely due to the commitment and support of Hamersley Iron, who as a company, show real understanding of fundamental science research”.

She said their work on ecological processes was the first such research initiative in the Pilbara. “The region is of immense economic importance to Australia, where pastoralism, tourism and mining co-exist, and major companies are vitally concerned with managing land for multiple uses and for multiple stakeholders.

“Our research in the Pilbara has aimed at quantifying natural variability in water and nutrient availability across a range of vegetation types and at a multitude of scales, from metres to hundreds of kilometres.”

To date, the group has characterised the quantifiable primary relationship between rainfall and productivity of native grasslands and demonstrated a secondary but strong nitrogen limitation to that productivity. They have characterised the relationship between the woody ‘weeds’ (Acacia and Eucalyptus species) and the availability of water, alongside fire and flood factors.

“We have established a series of long-term trials designed to test the effects of grazing on a range of ecological and physiological properties of native grasslands and a multiple-scale approach to quantifying the effects of water availability on growth and physiology of trees and shrubs,” Dr Grierson said.

The group is also involved in on-going and detailed examination of the impacts of fire on native pasture regeneration. They have established permanent research plots to quantify the long-term effects of grazing on productivity and diversity of Pilbara grasslands.

They are using techniques suited to the remoteness and climatic conditions of the Pilbara and to the nature of the plants and soils.

“The lack of previous studies in the Pilbara meant that nearly all our methods and techniques had to be established from scratch,” Dr Grierson said.

“... Hamersley Iron, as a company, shows real understanding of fundamental science research ...”

“... our research is now being applied in the rangelands of Pakistan, in Kurdistan and Wyoming...”
“Our aim, for the current project, is, through controlled field experimentation and measurement, to disentangle the effects of changing land use from those of disturbance.”

The Pilbara project is as close to a Long Term Ecological Research site as we have in WA. Other sites around the world are up to 40 years old.

“One of the good things about long-term projects is that you can get a good pattern: there’s different vegetation each year, depending on flooding, drought and fires.

“We are looking at whether grazing has had an effect on the biodiversity of the vegetation, but it’s hard to tell with short term projects, whether any effect has indeed come from grazing or whether it was drought or fire or a combination of all of these factors.”

The group is also looking at the impact of mining techniques, particularly ‘dewatering’, where the mining takes place below the water table so the water is pumped out and into a stream elsewhere, effectively dropping the water table.

Hamersley Iron is very keen on data from group member Dr Peter Landman’s research into the decline of the mulga in the Pilbara and the ability of Acacias and Eucalypts to grow in drought conditions.

“It’s great to see my work being used and applied,” Dr Landman said. “Hamersley has been very patient waiting for outcomes, which can be a long time coming in an unpredictable environment. With our work, the company (and other mining industry players) can understand the processes, then fine tune their management in line with them.”

During the collaboration, three PhD theses have been completed (Dr Landman’s is the most recent) and one is ongoing. At least three honours students have worked with the group for their theses, and 15 major papers have been published.

“Our work has been taken overseas as people who have worked on the project take their experience to different regions. Our research is now being applied in the rangelands of Pakistan, in Kurdistan and Wyoming and has also attracted a great deal of international interest from groups working in improving rangeland management.

“On our most recent field trip, we had students and researchers from Canada and Germany. Many of our overseas visitors come to Australia especially to see this unique region and the work we’re doing there,” Dr Grierson said.

Hamersley Iron has also funded some of the group’s side projects. One of them, *Biomass and carbon in vegetation of the Pilbara region*, recently provided information for the National Carbon Accounting System to the Australian Greenhouse Office, as part of its reporting requirements for the Kyoto protocol.
Medals, trophies and a Tonka truck

A yellow toy truck was a popular winner during the recent Australian University Games in Sydney.

The UWA men’s hockey team (which won Bronze) has a Tonka truck as a mascot. It travels to all games and is central to the ‘Tonka Haka’ which the team performs before each game. The truck was awarded its own bronze medal and was chosen as the Australian University Green and Gold hockey team’s mascot, for the coming international competition.

UWA won the Spirit of the Games trophy, for the team that best demonstrates the spirit of the university games. This was at least partly due to UWA fielding a team of 93, despite 47 of them losing their Ansett air tickets.

The students were runners-up for the Doug Ellis Trophy, for the best result per population. The team brought home four team bronze medals (men’s hockey, women’s rowing four, women’s waterpolo and men’s tennis) and two individual gold medals (Hannah Ozturk for athletics and Amy Ash for women’s Tae Kwon Do).

UWA came 19th overall from a field of 45 universities. Seven athletes were selected in the All Australian Green and Gold teams and will join the Tonka truck for international competition.

Genomics pushes the frontiers

The words ‘human genome’ are as likely to start an argument these days as ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘war against terrorism’.

It is apt that the Institute for Advanced Studies has chosen the theme Navigating the Minefield for its second phase of the 18-month program, Genomics, Society and Human Health.

It will be launched with a free public forum at the Burswood Theatre on Wednesday November 14 at 7pm, with some inspiring speakers, including Archbishop Peter Carnley, an outspoken commentator on social issues; Professor Roger Short, the Wexler Professorial Fellow at the Royal Women’s Hospital, University of Melbourne and a campaigner for human embryo stem cell research; and Professor Bob Williamson, from the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, who will paint a picture of how genetics will be affecting the practice of medicine in 10-20 years.

Professor Short recently wrote: “The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was split 6-4, in August, on the issue of using human embryonic stem cells from surplus embryos for research. The committee also proposed a three-year moratorium on the production of cloned embryonic stem cells. There were five lawyers on that committee, including its Chairman, but not one single individual with a scientific degree!

“If we are to turn Australia into a Knowledge Nation, we need to start with a scientifically informed Parliament, not one that seeks to use the cobwebs of the law to impede scientific progress.

“As we discover how to induce embryonic stem cells to differentiate into all the tissues of the body, we will usher in a new phase of medicine that will have particular impact on the lives of the elderly, who are increasingly in need of ‘spare parts.’

“The embryonic stem cell, as the mother of all cells, has undreamed-of therapeutic potential, especially if we can use therapeutic cloning to re-create our own embryonic stem cells.

“Is it ethical to allow the moral attitudes of the few about when human life begins to stand in the way of basic medical research that could benefit the lives of so many?”

The launch promises to be a dynamic start to more informed inquiry about the ethical, legal, medical and personal aspects of genetic advances.

The Institute of Advanced Studies thanks Burswood Resort for providing its premises free of charge for the event.
Compassion drives auction

The auction of art at Cullity Gallery in aid of injured artist Drewfus Gates was “successful beyond all hope”.

Organiser, artist and friend of Drewfus and Cheli Gates, Gareth Gorman, said he had hoped the auction would raise $60,000 but a preliminary total, the day after the auction, stood at $110,000.

More than 1000 people went through the gallery on the day of the auction and the day before, most of them making donations to the gallery, which totalled about $660.

All but eight of the 240 paintings reached their reserve price and were sold to support the Gates family. Mr Gorman thanked Patrick Beale, the head of Architecture and Fine Arts and UWA for use of the gallery.

He was also grateful for the assistance of Guild Catering, which planned to run a refreshment stall outside the Gallery. The inclement weather forced them to move back into the Guild Café and gallery patrons didn’t walk that extra 20 metres, so the café lost money.

Mr Gorman offered to recover their losses but Francois Leuenberger, function co-ordinator for Guild Catering, said they were happy to make a loss for a good cause and did not want to take the money raised for Drewfus Gates.

“It’s heartwarming to see so much compassion and willingness to give, from everybody,” Mr Gorman said.

Election campaigns always bring out the tricky questions.

Just who did win that by-election in 1998? How many times has the Government changed in Australia? How long was John Curtin Prime Minister?

The answers to these and thousands of questions about Australian politics are now at your fingertips, thanks to an ambitious project from the Department of Political Science.

Although it wasn’t his prime intention, Associate Professor Campbell Sharman’s newly-launched Website, Australian Government and Politics, enables the ordinary punter to sound like an expert in discussions leading up to the Federal Election.

The site, at elections.uwa.edu.au (note no www at the beginning of the address) lists the results of every state and territory election since 1890 and all the House of Representatives and Senate elections since they began in 1901. All Ministers, State Premiers and Prime Ministers are there and you can compare percentages, look for patterns and find out surprising facts such as that in the first Western Australian election, 19 of the 30 seats were uncontested.

Professor Sharman said high proportions of uncontested seats continued through the early part of the 20th century because candidates were chosen by their local branches and, if people were happy with their local representation, they didn’t bother putting up another candidate.

He started work about six years ago on the database that sits underneath the Website. Together with Dr Jeremy Moon, he was granted funds from the Australian Research Council in 1995 and they worked on it for three years. The data is continually updated.

“Before 1984, there were no political parties printed on ballot papers, just the names of the candidates. Fortunately, Colin Hughes from the Australian National University did a lot of research in the 1960s and produced a handbook of Australian politics, with all the candidates’ parties listed. A further two supplements takes us up to 1984. Without that information, this would have been an impossible task,” Professor Sharman said.

The hundreds of hours of designing the framework and entering the data have resulted in a user-friendly site which everybody from high school students to government officials will be able to access easily. The funding to get the database onto a Website came from a Centenary of Federation grant.

“If people want more information, they can contact us through the Website and we can send them more data,” Professor Sharman said.
A major study into the health status of West Australians with mental illness has produced worrying results with implications for Australia’s health care system.

The study, by the Centre for Health Services Research at UWA’s Department of Public Health and Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science, examined the health of 240,000 West Australians who have used mental health services between 1980 and 1998. They represent at least eight per cent of WA’s population and could be up to 20 per cent.

The results, contained in a report, Duty to Care, launched at UWA by WA Health Minister Bob Kucera, have caused concern among health and medical professionals, consumer groups and government and non-government organisations.

They show that people with mental illness are among the most marginalised in society, with the illness affecting all aspects – social, economic and health — of their lives. Key findings of the study included:

- Death rates from all main causes are higher in people with mental illness with the overall death rate of people with mental illness being 2.5 times higher than the general population of WA.
- The rate of suicide among people with mental illness has been steadily increasing. Now, almost half of all suicides in WA occur in people who have used mental health services.
- People with mental illness are less likely than others in the community to receive treatment for heart disease and other illnesses.
- People with mental illness were at higher risk for all types of injuries, particularly drug related poisonings and injuries inflicted by others. They were all more likely to suffer injury from medical misadventure (errors made by health services).

The authors of the reports were Dr David Lawrence, Professor D’Arcy Holman and Rebecca Coghlan from Public Health and Professor Assen Jablensky, Head of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science.

Professor Holman said: “People with mental illness have more physical illnesses than the general population and it appears to be poorly managed by the health system. They are already a marginalised and vulnerable group and these findings raise doubts about equity in the delivery of health care for their physical illnesses.

“Not only do people with mental illness have high rates of physical illness due to factors such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, obesity, poor diet and other lifestyle factors, they are also less likely than others in the community to have their physical illness diagnosed. This leads to lower hospital admission rates and higher than expected deaths. It also raises questions as to whether people with mental illness get appropriate care for their physical health problems.”

Professor Holman said the problems could be addressed effectively only if the State and Commonwealth Health Departments worked together with consumer groups.

“This is because the Commonwealth funds general practice and the State funds the public sector mental health services and hospitals, and these are the services that must join forces to tackle the problems,” he said. “Every mental health patient needs a general practitioner or equivalent primary care service that can take care of their physical health as well as share in the management of their mental illness.”

Professor Holman said the study could not have been done without the existence of the WA Record Linkage Project, which was established by the Department of Public Health and the WA Health Department’s Health Information Centre.

“The WA Linked Database links together major sources of health data for all the WA population. It is unique in Australia and is one of only a very small number of similar systems in the world,” Professor Holman said.
As a child, Professor Klaus Schulten said, he wanted to understand living systems.

“I have now come much further than I ever dreamed of,” said the Institute of Advanced Studies’ current professor-at-large.

As Professor-at-large over the past few weeks, Professor Schulten has been running master classes and seminars on bridging the gap between life sciences and physical sciences.

He is Professor of Physics at the University of Illinois and also has affiliations with chemistry, biophysics and computational biology.

“My university was one of the first interdisciplinary institutes,” he said, adding that he was pleased to hear about UWA’s impending academic restructure.

“You know, these disciplines, chemistry, physics and so on, are not that old. They were ‘invented’ in the 19th century when modern universities were built. Universities from the middle ages just had natural sciences, medicine and law. But things changed.

“And now they have changed again. There are so many opportunities at the interface of the life and physical sciences; take, for example, biomedicine, which uses methods from both physics and chemistry.”

Professor Schulten’s classes showcased ten case studies of the two strands of science coming together.

“Students today have great opportunities for discoveries and careers in the future,” he said.

Professor Schulten was nominated as a Professor-at-large by the Departments of Physics and Pharmacology and the Crystallography Centre.

“Makes me sound like an escapee doesn’t it!” … current Professor-at-large, Klaus Schulten.

At the annual presentation of the University’s safety awards, UWA itself was a winner.

Worksafe WA awarded the University a Worksafe Silver Award of Achievement for its recent audit of UWA health and safety procedures and its professional approach towards safety.

UWA was assessed on indicators in five areas: management commitment, planning, consultation, hazard management and training.

Professor Di Walker, Head of the Department of Botany, was presented with the departmental safety award for her department’s well-established safety committee, safety action plan, annual safety forum and its vastly improved chemical hazard management.

The Department of Zoology, the Animal Care Unit and the Office of Facilities Management’s maintenance workshop were finalists for the departmental award.

Jack Kirkness won the individual safety award. Mr Kirkness is a senior technical officer in the buildings department of the Office of Facilities Management. He has worked on building sites for many years, making safety a primary concern. He received several nominations for his vigilance in applying safety guidelines and his implementation of safety induction programs for UWA contractors.

Other finalists for the individual award were Cathy Smith (Human Resources), Francois Leunberger (Guild) and Bill Wilson (Geography).

A special award of achievement went to Brad McManus, the managing director of the Guild, for making risk management a priority for student clubs.

Full details of the awards are on the Web at:
How do we know what to do and say in the situations we participate in each day? How do we select the style of talk and other behaviour required by each new context?

What processes underlie our ability to produce patterns of written or spoken language, patterns that meet the specific requirements of laboratory reports, essays, conference papers, final chapters, lectures, tutorial presentations or coffee shop chat?

There is an illusion of effortlessness about the production of skilled behaviour in familiar situations that might discourage us from thinking about how it’s done. But one widely accepted set of metaphors used to conceptualise what could be involved draws on ideas about generalised cognitive schemas – mental templates, if you will. These, once activated, provide default structures of generalised expectations about what is or isn’t done or said in a particular context. Trigger part of the complex of linked possibilities and the whole is activated — ready to generate actions, responses and language appropriately modified to suit the specific setting that provided the trigger.

I think about this model quite a bit with regard to the challenges faced by many students. How long do these internalised templates take to sediment themselves into the synapses? What conditions are required for activation to be maximally effective, for the output generated to become consistent with lecturers’, supervisors’ and examiners’ expectations? To what degree can already established templates be modified to meet culturally unfamiliar demands? Can they be overridden? Are there hazards for the person if they are? Is there anything students themselves can do to speed up the acquisition and appropriate schemas? How can academic staff help and is it our responsibility – or anybody else’s – to do so?

I’ve filled in several ‘working life’ type surveys in recent years and each time have found the absence of questions relating to postgraduate supervision extremely puzzling, both in terms of recognition of the importance of research supervision in the life of the university and in terms of the pressures and tensions the supervision experience can generate in academic life.

For many students and their supervisors, the question of how the required level of proficiency is to be realised in practice is an open one, capable of causing months or years of uncertainty, or even anguish.

One thing I do know is that it is highly unlikely that a student in the final stages of drafting and redrafting a thesis will be in a fit state to begin learning aspects of grammar, rhetorical organization, or even the new vocabulary required to bring the work to the required standard for submission. Some progress may be made to be sure, under the pressures imposed at that time. But beyond that, such pressure is not generally conducive to language development. Internalised templates for language use or any other kind of behaviour, including ways of thinking and being, are not acquired in weeks or even months in most cases; they’re built up slowly, incrementally, over much more extended periods of time.

With the implementation of the new national Research Training Scheme and its funding restrictions, it has become imperative that departments and faculties find ways of streamlining the process of research supervision to ensure timely completion of theses and dissertations. This must be done, I believe, without compromising the standards we are proud to maintain at this university.

The proposed Centre for Student Learning to be set up under the recommendations of the working party of the Review of Strategies to Meet the English Language Needs of UWA Students has a mandate to deliver increased language and literacy support to students and their lecturers across the university.

It is particularly heartening to note the emphasis on early intervention in the working party’s recommendations. For instance, it is recommended that students at all levels receive “early and regular feedback on their literacy skills and how to develop them if needed”.

I don’t suppose there can ever really be a ‘last word’ on the question of levels of proficiency required in oral and written expression for UWA students – there are too many different specific situations and considerations to take into account for that to be possible. But acknowledging in a practical way, with the commitment to fund changes, that students and staff need more support on literacy and language issues is an important first step, one which is welcome, timely, and sensible.
Winning work on offshore structures

UWA graduate Dr Steve Neubecker has been awarded the D.H. Trollope Medal from the Australian Geomechanics Society.

Completing his PhD with the UWA Geomechanics group in 1995, Dr Neubecker went on to apply his research at Advanced Mechanics, where he is currently working on offshore floating structures.

He has been continuously collaborating with the Department of Civil and Resource Engineering.

The Trollope Medal is a biennial award for an outstanding paper on either theoretical or applied geomechanics by an author under the age of 35.

For Dr Neubecker, the award was based on a series of significant journal publications arising from the work on drag anchors that he carried out during his PhD.

He provided a summary of the anchor design methodology that was developed in his PhD work, and then proceeded to illustrate how these and other methodologies are applied in his current projects. The publications were all written in collaboration with Professor Mark Randolph.

The staff of the Department of Civil and Resource Engineering warmly congratulates him.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia

The Institute of Chartered Accountants CA Achiever program is an award of paid work experience within a Chartered Accounting firm to the top 20 first-year commerce students studying the core accounting unit at each university. The objective of CA Achiever is to provide commerce undergraduate students with the opportunity to gain vocation experience in a chartered accounting environment. This will contribute to their understanding of the CA profession and may assist in their decision in choosing a suitable career path as a CA.

In addition, the purpose of the CA Achiever is to provide Chartered Accounting employers with access to outstanding commerce undergraduates. This will assist in the graduate recruitment process if firms wish to offer CA Achiever recipients with ongoing vacation work and graduate employment once their degree has been completed.

CA Achiever aims to motivate students to achieve outstanding results in their first semester, first year accounting subject.

The program was introduced into Victoria last year and as a result of its overwhelming success, became a national initiative this year. In WA, BDO, Bentleys MRI and Horwath Perth-Partnership offered 5 placements between them. The calibre of students from each university was extremely high and as a result the selection process was difficult.

A panel of three interviewed 12 short-listed applicants and after much deliberation the five winners were chosen and randomly allocated to one of the three firms.

We are pleased to announce that Tim Malloch, Lisa Soh and Tina Zhou were all successful CA Achievers from UWA, which is an excellent result for the University particularly as there were only 5 placements available. Tim and Lisa will be working with Bentleys MRI and Tina has won a placement with BDO Chartered Accountants and Advisers over the Summer Break. The cocktail party gave all five recipients the opportunity to meet for the first time staff and partners from their allocated firm.

Due to its success the CA Achiever Program will be running again next year and we hope to have even more firms participating in this valuable program. Promotion of CA Achiever will commence on campus next March/April and further details can be obtained by contacting Amanda Dalzell, Careers Marketing and Communications Coordinator at The Institute of Chartered Accountants amandad@icca.org.au or 9420 0400.
Monday 5 November
CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY LECTURE AT THE ALBANY CENTRE
‘The art of the Christian icon’, A/Prof John Melville-Jones. 5.30pm, Albany Centre.

Tuesday 6 November
LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY FLOOR TALK
‘Men and women in Australian society’, Susan Maushart. 1pm, LWAG.

Wednesday 7 November
HISTORY SEMINAR
‘Aspects of police and Aboriginal relations in the 19th-century Kimberley’, Chris Owen. 1pm, Room 1.48, History.

CENTRE FOR WATER RESEARCH/ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS SEMINAR
‘Ecological dynamics in saline lakes’, Dr John Melack, Gleddon Visiting Senior Fellow, Centre for Water Research, Visiting from University of California. 4pm, Blakers Lecture Theatre, Mathematics Building.

Friday 9 November
ASIAN STUDIES SEMINAR
‘Internationalising higher education in China: a study of Xinjiang University’, Yang Rui. 1 to 2.30pm, G.25 Seminar Room, Ground Floor, Social Sciences Building.

Wednesday 7 November
PATHOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Lipoprotein assembly and secretion and vitamin E metabolism’, Dr John Burnett. 4.30pm, Pathology Conference Room, G14, Ground Floor, M Block, QBIMC.

Thursday 8 November
WAGCAP SEMINAR
‘Balance effects on fracture propensity’, David Bruce. 7.45am, WAIMR Meeting Room, Ground Floor, B Block, SCGH.

Tuesday 13 November
LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY FLOOR TALK
‘Settling our soul: finding our place in a new land’, Tim Muirhead. 1pm, LWAG.

Wednesday 14 November
ANATOMY AND HUMAN BIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Elements involved in the regulation of the expression of the steroidogenic acute regulatory (StAR) gene’, Prof Douglas Stocco, Texas. 1pm, Room 1.81, First Floor, ANHB.

HISTORY SEMINAR
‘Aspects of heritage history in Australia’, Ruth Donovan. 1pm, Room 1.46, History.

IAS FREE PUBLIC FORUM
‘The Genetic Revolution — navigating the minefield’, The Political, Social and Health Implications. Speakers include: Archbishop Peter Crenley, Professor Bob Williamson and Professor Roger Short. This forum heralds the launch of ‘New Frontiers in Medicine’, the second theme in the Genomics, Society and Human Health Programme. Burswood Theatre. For information, please phone Anne Same on 9489 7885 or anne@ichr.uwa.edu.au.

CENTRE FOR WATER RESEARCH/ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS SEMINAR
‘Process complexity at hillslope scale, process simplicity at the watershed scale: Is there a connection?’ Professor M Sivapalan, Centre for Water Research 4pm, Blakers Lecture Theatre, Mathematics Building.

Friday 16 November
CLIMA SEMINAR
‘Biological activity and organic matter in no-tillage systems and their contribution to crop production’, Dr Art Diggle. ‘Getting the best out of crops genetically modified for herbicide resistance’, Dr Patrick Smith. 4pm, CLIMA Seminar Room.

ADVANCE NOTICE
Saturday 24 November
PERTH MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE GROUP END-OF-YEAR PARTY
To be held at 440 Guilford Rd, Bayswater, starting at 7pm. Spit roast, salads, rolls and butter, platters of fresh fruit provided for dinner, followed by convivial entertainment. Cost: $25 per person, payment to Talia Marsh, CI-Dept. of English. Enquiries to Charles Acland on 9423 9428.
ELECTION TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD

Lecturers
The following lecturers have been elected (1 January 2002 to 31 December 2004):
- Dr Hélène Jacqcomard, Department of European Languages and Studies
- Associate Professor Paul Myole, Law School
- Associate Professor Arun Dharmarajan, Department of Anatomy and Human Biology
- Dr Penny Lee, Graduate School of Education
- Dr Nathan Scott, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering
- Dr Myra Keep, Department of Geology

A casual vacancy (1 January 2002 to 31 December 2003) will be filled by:
- Associate Professor Richard Thomas, Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

General Staff
The following general staff have been elected (1 January 2002 to 31 December 2003):
- Ms Diana Christensen, Centre for Offshore Foundation Systems
- Mr Tony Gibbs, Department of Psychology

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN (WA)

Postgraduate Bursary Recipients

AFUW(WA) Foundation Bursary
MIN ZHANG enrolled at Curtin University as a PhD student in the School of Public Health. Her research topic is "Dietary factors in the Etiology of Ovarian Cancer". She now has permanent Australian residency and has to forego her International Postgraduate Research Scholarship. The Bursary will allow her to complete her degree by May 2002.

Mary Walters Bursary
NURA BINTE ABDUL KARIM enrolled at the University of Western Australia as a PhD student in the Faculty of Agriculture. Her research topic is "Fungal endophytes associated with tropical orchids of the Kimberley region of W.A." She will use the Bursary to attend the American Institute of Phytopathological Society Conference and visit Kew Gardens and Cardoba Botanical Gardens in Spain.

Mary and Elsie Stevens Bursary
ILIM enrolled at Curtin University as a PhD student in the School of Applied Chemistry. Her research topic is "Nitrogen containing Surfactants and Oligomers as Inhibitors for the Prevention of Carbon Dioxide Corrosion of Mild Steel." The Bursary will allow her to complete her doctorate before she returns to Indonesia.

Joyce Riley Bursary
SILVIA TOREZANI a graduate of the National University of Salta, Argentina, is enrolled at the University of Western Australia for a M.A. by research in the Department of Anthropology. Her research project is entitled "Latin Americans in Perth - an anthropological study of cultural identity discourse formation in the migration process." She will use the Bursary for fieldwork and for the writing up of her thesis.

Jill Bradshaw Bursary
KATHLEEN TURNER an Honours graduate of ANU is enrolled at Murdoch University for a M.Phil. She is researching the causes and nature of the current ethnic conflict in Ambon Indonesia. The Bursary will allow her to complete her thesis by mid 2002.

2nd Jill Bradshaw Bursary
CARRIE SONNEBORN a graduate of University of Wollongong, is enrolled at Murdoch University in Physics and Energy Studies. Her research topic is "Industry capacity building needs with respect to market-based approaches to greenhouse gas reduction." She will use the bursary to travel to the U.S. to take up an internship which she has been offered at the National Renewable Energy Research Laboratory, in a field highly relevant to her thesis.

For information email Barbara Hale at afuwwa@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

CENTRE FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Places are available in the following workshops due to close within the next month. Further details are available on the CSD Web page: http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/programme/ or by contacting CSD on ext. 1504 or csdoffice@csd.uwa.edu.au.

- Applying for Discovery Projects: Critical & Peer Review of Applications
- Applying for NHMRC Grants: Critical & Peer Review of Applications

GRANTS FROM THE GENERAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT FUND

Members of general staff may apply for individual grants from the Staff Development Fund to attend courses and conferences. In the last rounds of applications, the following staff were awarded grants:

- Marjan Heibloem, Agriculture, ATEM Annual Conference 2001
- Simone Ross, Animal Care Unit, ANZSLAS Silver Jubilee Conference
- Joanne Castelli, Biochemistry, ComBio2001
- Kate Dorling, Botany, Gas Chromatography Essentials
- Jeff Kealley, Botany, AVCC Leadership Programme for HEW Levels 5 - 7
- Rebecca Steven, Centre for English Language Teaching, English Australia 14th Education Conference
- Anne Gilkes, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, ATEM Annual Conference 2001
- Ke Nguyen, Pharmacology, Implementing a Windows 2000 Network Infrastructure
- Robyn Broadhurst, Public Health, 10th Annual Meeting of the Australasian Epidemiological Association & 3rd Biostatistical Workshop
- Christine Casey, Research Grants Office, ARMS 2001 Research Management Conference
- Claire O’Malley, Research Grants Office, ARMS 2001 Research Management Conference
- Sandra Maynard, Soil Science and Plant Nutrition, Australasian Pacific Extension Network International Conference

Staff interested in obtaining more information about the programmes should contact grant recipients directly. Guidelines and application forms are available from the Centre and at http://www.acs.uwa.edu.au/hrs/policy/part06/5.htm.

ESSENTIAL OILS WORKSHOPS

Walpole 10 November
Toodyay 13 November

Demonstrations of steam distillation process for lavender and native peppermint, oil analysis and much more. Cost: $175. Contact Sandra Maynard at the Centre for Land Rehabilitation.

Email sandra.maynard@uwa.edu.au or call ext 3827.
TO LET
BUSSELTON, older style holiday house close to Broadwater Resort and beach. Sleeps 4 to 6. $550 per week. Contact Lynda on 9387 7332 or lyndam@cs.yline.uwa.edu.au.

FLOREAT PARK. Study leave means that a four bedroom, two bathroom, fully furnished and equipped air-conditioned house with large garden in a good neighbourhood is available for rent for three months, December 2001 to February 2002, inclusive. Close to beach, schools, parks and 15 min. to UWA. Phone 9381 7600 Hayden Smith.

FOR SALE
MAZDA 323 PROTEGE 1999, s/silver, 5 speed, a/c, power steering, CD/cassette/ radio, tinted, immobiliser, under warranty, log book, excellent cond., $17,000 ono. 0414 28 3545 or 9297 1048 (a/h).

4M LONG COILS OF HEAVY DUTY WIRE MESH, various lengths and sizes of white painted chipboard (writing on one side). Originally used as display stands. Offers can be made to Rachel Schmitt in the Prospective Students Office on ext. 7311 or email rschmitt@admin.uwa.edu.au.

WANTED TO RENT
THREE-BEDROOM FURNISHED HOUSE wanted to rent in the vicinity of UWA by visiting Canadian academic and family for 6 months from February 2002. Contact Deb or Paul at 9384 7187 or deborah.dewey@calgaryhealthregion.ca.

POPPIES FOR REMEMBRANCE
Red poppies will be sold on campus on Friday November 9, in preparation for Remembrance Day. The traditional lapel flower will be given in return for a donation towards the families of servicemen and women whose lives were claimed in action. Former postgraduate student, Alec McGonigle is co-ordinating the distribution. He also donates his time as a volunteer in the Visitor’s Centre.

The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning is pleased to announce the successful applicants for CATL Grants 2001. Nine applications for Large Grants (up to $50,000) and 16 applications for Small Grants (up to $10,000) were received.

Successful Large Grants
The following applicants were successful in receiving CATL Large Grant funding for 2001:

- Dr Kevin Judd and Dr Rick McFeat (Mathematics and Statistics), for a project on “Diagnostic and remedial support for basic mathematical skills”, $49871
- Dr David Turner, Dr Julie Plummer, Prof Hans Lambers, Dr Tim Colmer (Plant Sciences), Associate Professor Keith Smettem (Soil Science) and Dr Pauline Grierson (Botany), for a project on “Improved learning outcomes in the teaching of plant biology by catering for student diversity”, $38,989

Successful Small Grants
The following applicants were successful in receiving CATL Small Grant funding for 2001:

- Donella Caspersz, Madeline Wu and Judy Skene (Organisational and Labour Studies) for a project on “Student readiness for working in teams”, $9156
- Professor Ian Eggleton, Dr Juliana Ng and Mr Mark Holub (Accounting & Finance), for a project on “Developing critical learning skills: A student-oriented approach”, $8529
- Khim Harris, (Graduate School of Education), “Teaching for learning: using problem-based learning approaches and a managed learning environment to improve student preparation for lectures and tutorials”, $9795

Dr Suzanne Wijisman, Peter Moore, Graeme Gilling and Paul Wright (School of Music) and Thor Besier (Dept of Human Movement), for a project on “The use of digital video in music performance education”, $8218

Dr Samina Yasmeen, Dr Esta Ungar and Associate Professor James Trevelyan (Political Science), for a project “Concept Builder”, $10,000

Lorna Rosenwax (Public Health), “To develop a networking web-based resource for use by students while they are on their health placements”, $9741

Dr Peter Hammond and Dr Jingbo Wang (Physics), for a project on “Animated Physics”, $5582

Dr Kathryn Hindmarsh (Chemistry), for a project “Developing other methods of assessment in Chemistry 120 to improve student learning”, $10,000

Associate Professor Michael Burton (Agricultural and Resource Economics) and Roberta Bencini (Animal Science), for a project “A research resource for native wildlife management”. $9819

Professor John Considine (Plant Sciences), for a project “Flexible learning in a problem-based learning environment for professional development in Viticulture”. $10,000

Dr Christoph Hinz, Andrew Rate (Soil Science and Plant Nutrition), and Greg Hertzler (Agricultural and Resources Economics), for a project “Spreadsheet tools for teaching and learning in the natural resources sciences”. $10,000

Dr Chris McDonald (Computer Science), Dr Guven Mercankosk (Telecommunications Electronics and Networking Research Group) and Dr Sharon Purchase (Information Management and Marketing), for a project “Cheat network simulator”. $4000

CATL Grants 2001

Bids should be accepted by Monday 19 November with departments to have first option

Departments are reminded that all University equipment available for sale must be advertised in the UWA NEWS. Receipts should be PeopleSoft account code 490 (computing with barcode), 491 (non-computing with barcode) or 493 (items with no barcode). If equipment has an existing barcode please contact extension 3618/2546 for details.

CONDITION refers to the general condition of item ( 1 = as new; 2 = good; 3 = serviceable; 4 = unserviceable). AGE refers to the nearest year.