BANKSIA ASSOCIATION

As Vice Chancellor, I have placed a strong emphasis on strengthening the University community. As part of this vision, I worked with the Office of Development and Emeritus Associate Professor Don Smart to create a new association that would reconnect the University with a special group of individuals who had made an impact on the University during its 30 year history. From here, the Banksia Association was born.

Membership includes a number of key groups including past external members of the University Senate, individuals who had been awarded Honorary Degrees and Emeritus Professors and Associate Professors. The goal of the Banksia Association is to further develop connections with Murdoch University and to involve members in the growth of the University in the future.

It seemed fitting to hold the launch of the Banksia Association as part of the celebration of Murdoch University’s 30th year and on Wednesday, 30th November 2005, I hosted an evening function at the University for over 100 guests, many of whom had been involved with the University in its earliest days.

Guests enjoyed a wonderful evening of camaraderie and fellowship and heard what the future holds as Murdoch University celebrates its 30th year.

The feedback on the evening was very positive with many guests commenting that this was the first time they had been on campus in over 20 years.

Further Banksia Association events will be held in 2006 to consolidate and build on the initial positive response to the Association’s formation. Other categories of membership are also being considered and it is likely that the number of members will grow quickly in 2006.

LEARNING AND TEACHING PERFORMANCE FUND

Murdoch University has reinforced its reputation for excellence in teaching and learning through success in the 2006 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. Only the top 14 universities received funding and Murdoch will receive $2.034 million in 2006.

The Fund will distribute a total of $54 million for 2006, increasing to $82 million in 2007 and $109 million in 2008. Of the other WA universities, The University of Western Australia also received funding ($2.580 million) but neither Curtin University of Technology nor Edith Cowan University were ranked in the top band of institutions.

The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund was introduced under the Commonwealth Government’s reform package Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future to reward higher education providers that best demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning for domestic
students with the aim of enhancing the status of teaching and learning in universities to promote the overall quality of undergraduate education.

Universities were assessed in two stages. The first stage determined each institution’s eligibility to receive funding. Successful institutions demonstrated a strong strategic commitment to learning and teaching, probation and promotion practices, support for professional development in learning and teaching for staff, and systematic student evaluation of teaching.

The second stage assessed universities on the basis of three broad areas:

- **Student satisfaction**, comprising data from the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) on ratings of generic skills, good teaching and overall satisfaction;
- **Outcomes**, including data from the Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) on students in full time employment and further full time study; and
- **Success**, including attrition and progress rates for commencing students.

Institutions were then ranked in broad bands, with only the top band receiving funding.

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**IRUA EUROPEAN UNION CENTRE**

The European Union has given notice that the Innovative Research Universities Australia bid for funding for a Europe Centre has been successful, with Murdoch a part of the consortium involved.

In 2005 the EU gave notice of its willingness to offer funding to two or three Australian universities interested in establishing a Europe Centre, expected to co-ordinate teaching and research on contemporary Europe, with special emphasis on the EU itself. The three successful applicants were ANU, where an existing centre was re-funded for a further three years, Monash, and the IRUA consortium.

The IRUA campuses involved are Latrobe, Macquarie, Newcastle, Griffith, Flinders and Murdoch. The headquarters of the Centre will be located at Latrobe and Macquarie and over a three-year period those two universities will each be contributing approximately $500,000 to match the $1,000,000 likely to be made available by the EU. The four outlying universities will not be making a direct financial contribution but will incur some incidental expenses by participating in the Centre’s activities, which will include enhanced undergraduate offerings on contemporary Europe and a comprehensive programme of seminars and conferences.

Murdoch will receive funding to cover half the cost of a Lectureship in Modern European History for three years to help it bring its teaching in this area up to par. We are already relatively strong in European law and Professor Moens is introducing a new unit in that area. It is probable that during the life of the Centre Murdoch will have the opportunity to organise a major international conference around one of the Centre’s themes.

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**2006 ADMISSIONS**

Murdoch University has just completed the first stage of the 2006 undergraduate Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) admissions process.

With funded growth associated with the 1,285 Commonwealth supported places awarded to the University from 2005, Murdoch has been in a position to make over 3000 offers to new students for admission to undergraduate courses in 2006.
Although the number of TISC applicants to Western Australian Universities was down approximately 8%, Murdoch attracted nearly 3000 first preference applications.

In 2006, course cut off scores for Murdoch undergraduate courses range from 62 to 96. Demand for most Murdoch courses has remained strong, with more than 80 per cent of applicants having a TER score of 70 or above.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff from the Prospective Students and Admissions Centre for working throughout the Christmas period to ensure a successful 2006 admissions process. I would also like to thank all academic and administrative staff who supported student recruitment activities and initiatives in 2005 in the lead up to this admissions round.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Murdoch University Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Bolton AO, CitWA, was named the WA Australian of the Year 2006. Professor Bolton was recognised for his contributions to the community as a professional academic and a communicator of ideas. The announcement was made on 26th November 2005 at a function at Government House by His Excellency the Hon David Malcom AC.

- The Good Universities Guide for 2006, an independent national publication, has again awarded Murdoch the top, five-star rank for student satisfaction. Murdoch has attained this rank for the tenth time in eleven years, maintaining its outstanding reputation for teaching excellence. Murdoch is the only university in Australia to have achieved this standard. This ranking is derived from independent surveys of recently graduated students and therefore represents a vote of confidence from our students.

- The Department of Defence has recommended the establishment of a Strategic Studies Scholarship program to support students enrolled in the Security, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism course at Murdoch. The Department has provisionally agreed to funds two scholarships of $5,000 each year for three years. In addition to financial support, the Department is exploring the possibility of scholarship students undertaking occasional research tasks that will help further their understanding of security and defence issues. Professor Sam Makinda and the staff of the Office of Development are to be congratulated for the development and successful submission of the scholarship proposal to the Department of Defence.

- Professor Rudi Appels has been appointed by the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Kim Chance MLC, to the Ministerial Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) Specialist Advisory Panel Group. This reflects Professor Appels’ research expertise and scientific credibility in this area.

- Murdoch University media graduate Olivia Rousset won a prestigious Walkley Award for her SBS Dateline Report titled “Inside Indonesia’s Sex Trade”. Olivia has been reporting for Dateline for the past 5 years. During this time she has travelled to Iraq, PNG, Indonesia, the US, Ethiopia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Bosnia, Israel, Kosovo, Fiji, Eritrea and East Timor filming, reporting and directing her own stories.

- Professor Nick Cost has been appointed by the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Kim Chance MLC, to the steering committee for a GM feeding trial for animals to be coordinated by the Institute of Health and Environmental Research Inc. (IHER). IHER is a not-for-profit research institute with a scientific interest in the safety of genetically modified (GM) organisms, particularly those destined for food.
STAFF CHANGES

Pro Vice Chancellor (Regional Development)
Professor Kateryna Longley, Pro Vice Chancellor (Regional Development) has retired from the University after 20 years academic and administrative service.

Professor Longley began at the University as a Lecturer in the English and Comparative Literature Program. She assumed broader management roles within the University including Dean of the Former School of Humanities and Executive Dean of the Division of Social Sciences and Education. She was appointed to her current role in June 2002 and has progressed the University’s strategic directions in the regions.

In recognition of Professor Longley’s distinguished scholarly contribution and sustained service to the University, I have confirmed her appointment as an Emerita Professor of Murdoch University from 1st January 2006.

Director, Corporate Services
I am pleased to announce the appointment of John LeCras to the position of Director, Corporate Services. He joins the team in Corporate Communication and Public Relations with a specific focus on:

- Brand Management;
- Marketing and the coordinated profile building of the University;
- Stakeholder development; and
- Media and Communications

John is a journalist and communications specialist who has worked in all major news mediums, commencing his career as a newspaper reporter. He worked in commercial television as a reporter and spent ten years as the senior producer of Seven News. John was appointed Director of News at Seven Perth in 1996 and in 1999 his role was expanded to Director of News and Current Affairs.

After 20 years in the media, John elected to take a break from frontline media management and established a public relations function for the HBF Group. Whilst at HBF John acted as the Group’s Marketing Manager and in 2003 established HBF’s member advocacy program. This included the creation of the HBF Family Doctor program and HBF Action for Healthy Kids, an initiative designed to target childhood obesity. During his five years at HBF John acted as the Group’s main media spokesperson as well as coaching and training senior executives to conduct media interviews. His role included jointly assisting in the establishment of a range of new communication channels, including a series of magazines targeting key life-stage groups within the HBF membership.

NOTABLE EVENTS

- In November 2005 the University launched the on-line Course Fee Calculator (http://handbook.murdoch.edu.au/fees/). This allows domestic students to calculate the cost of their course for 2006 based on their unit selections.
- On the 16th November 2005 Dr Lars Bejder, an internationally renowned dolphin researcher, gave a presentation on the topic “Linking short and long-term effects of wildlife tourism on Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in Shark Bay, Australia”. In his address Dr Bejder spoke on whether “benign” human activities have harmful cumulative effects to wildlife populations. This event was hosted by the Division of Science and Engineering.
• The institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy (ISTP) continued the ISTP Public Lecture series for 2005 with an address from Dr Carmen Lawrence, MHR for Fremantle on 17th November 2005. Dr Lawrence spoke on the topic “How can we save our withering democracy?”.

• The Office of Regional Development and the Office of Corporate Communications and Public Relations participated in the 2005 Rockingham Spring Festival held on the 19th and 20th November 2005. The festival attracts over 45,000 visitors to the Rockingham region. It has developed strong links to the community and showcases the potential and vibrancy of the region. The team from the prospective Student Services and Admission’s Centre was there showcasing our undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the mobile caravan.

• The inaugural Vice Chancellor’s Forum on Linking Teaching and Research was held on the 23rd November 2005. Professor Alan Jenkins, Westminster Institute, Oxford Brookes university and Associate Practitioner for the Higher Education Academy UK was the keynote speaker and he was also a Visiting Fellow to the University for a few days after the forum. The forum was well attended by staff from across the University, reflecting the general interest in research around teaching and learning as well as the specific interest in the putative links between teaching and research.

• On 25th November 2005, Murdoch University and the Science Teachers’ Association of Western Australia (STAWA) held a one-day showcase with presentations from over 45 of Western Australia’s most innovative science researchers, teachers and industry representatives.

• In November Murdoch University’s Art Collection in conjunction with ARTOPIA celebrated the inaugural Living Artists WA Festival with three exhibitions, each dedicated to profiling unique and celebrated Western Australian Artists – Julie Dowling, Galliano Fardin and Theo Koning. These exhibitions were located in the library and included items from the University’s collection, loans from the artists and the galleries who represent the artists. The exhibition showcased examples of their work and mapped the development of their careers.

• At the invitation of the School, I opened the Annual Exhibition of Graduating Students’ Work at the Curtin School of Art on 2nd December 2005. In addition to the graduating students and staff of the School, the event was attended by members of the wider art community, art curators and art collectors.

• The Centre for Everyday Life in the School of Media, Communication and Culture held a public lecture presented by Professor Mike Morwood on the topic “The Hobbits of Flores: Discovery of a New Human Species” on the 6th December 2005. This lecture described the new species discovered on the Indonesian island of Flores, nicknamed “Hobbit”, who lived between 95,000 and 12,000 years ago. The lecture also discussed the wider significance of the discovery.

• Supported by Murdoch University, the Women’s Auxiliary of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society presented Elizabeth Millett on the topic “Sage and Onions – a reminiscence of Sir Walter Murdoch by his granddaughter”. In her address Mrs Millet shared stories of her grandfather who became part of the fabric of her life, including his love of gardening, formal meal times seated at the dining table and his interest and passion for literature.

• In a ceremony on 10th February 2006, I presented certificates to those students who successfully completed the indigenous Pre-Law (Koora Koodidj) and Pre-Sustainability (Wangkiny Boodjar) programs. A total of 13 students graduated and entered undergraduate programs at Murdoch.

   The Pre-Law program began in 2000 and over 60 Indigenous students have participated in the course, with approximately half taking up Law or Legal studies. Last year saw the first Bachelor of Laws graduates from the Koora Koodidj program and two were recently
admitted to the bench. The Pre-Sustainability course has run since 2003 and has afforded 12 Indigenous applicants the opportunity to study in Sustainability. The pre-programs offer an alternative entry pathway for indigenous students who don’t have the appropriate educational background. They have proved successful and allowed many indigenous students to realise their dream of obtaining a formal university degree qualification.

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

• On 17th December 2005 a new offshore agreement was signed with the Singapore Manufacturers’ Federation for the delivery of the Master of Business Administration and Master of Human Resource Management in Singapore.

• A new offshore course agreement was signed on 20th December 2005 with KDU College SDN BHD of Petaling Jaya, Malaysia to add Murdoch’s Bachelor of Science with majors in Computer Science, Games Technology, Internet Computing, Information Systems Development and Multimedia Information Systems and the Bachelor of Business Informatics to the programs currently being delivered offshore through the College.

• The three year Bachelor of Science (Chiropractic)/Bachelor of Chiropractic will be delivered in Tokyo following the signing of a new offshore course agreement with Chiropractic Education Japan and NET Co. on 12th December 2005.

• Two new international student exchange programs have been entered into by Murdoch. A five year agreement allowing the exchange of two year-long or four semester-long students each year has been signed with Uppsala University in Sweden. An agreement with Ithaca College, USA enables the exchange of two semester-long or one year-long student in any one year.