

Message from the Head of School

Colleagues,

As usual, for many of us, the first months of the year revolved around the submission of grants. It is my understanding that 20 NHMRC project grants, 12 ARC DPs, 6 Future Fellowships and 14 ARC DECRA were submitted through the School.

The single most fecund investigator was Kevin Morris. Kevin (the machine) Morris submitted two NHMRC (and was co-PI on another), two ARC DPs and a Future Fellowship application. John Foster and Vladimir Sytnyk submitted three category 1 grants. Good luck to all; I hope that your efforts are rewarded with success.

The School had a banner year in terms of publications in 2012. As at 22 March, ResPubs showed 207 HERDC category publications (total including non-HERDC is 226) for BABS in 2012. In 2011 after the audit, BABS had 198 HERDC category accepted (total including non accepted and non-HERDC was 222).

It is a pleasure to report that the quality of teaching in BABS continues to be exemplary. Certainly, the School ethic fosters quality in student learning. In terms of student numbers, the 2013 S1 data clearly show that the School is continuing to be very strong in attracting new students:

- BABS1201 students - 1,029
- New Honours students - 44
- New MPhil students - 7
- New MSc students - 2
- New PhD students - 13

As most will know, my term as HoS finishes on 16 April, so this will be my last quarterly column. There are many people I would like to thank for helping me over the past five years. Notable among these are Noel Whitaker and Andrew Collins the two Deputy HoS. Only one person has remained on the School executive for the full five years – thanks Brett. I would also like to thank the administrative support staff, including Michele Potter and Kylie Jones. Finally I wish to acknowledge an unsung hero of the School who works tirelessly to keep the School moving forward – Jeff Welch.

Bill

RAT News

Research

- BABS researchers Torsten Thomas and Staffan Kjelleberg, together with Peter Steinberg from the CMB, have been awarded \$1,292M in research funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The award spans 2013–2015 and will be used to fund research into the molecular mechanism of bacteria-sponge symbiosis.
- Our newest academic, Dr Irina Voineagu, has been awarded her first grant since joining the School, a \$29,000 Brain and Behaviour Foundation/NARSAD Young Investigator Grant for her project 'Brain Transcriptome Sequencing and Non-coding RNA characterization in Autism Spectrum Disorders'.

Teaching

- Louise Lutze-Mann has won the prestigious 2013 Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education Award. The award will be presented to Louise at ComBio 2013, which is being held in Perth in September.
- The BABS desk at the 2013 Information Day for new students was ably staffed by Brendan Burns, Rebecca LeBard and Caroline Hueston.



Admin

- A reminder for all researchers to ensure they have all their 2012 publications entered in ResPubs as soon as possible, so the Verification process can be completed for 2013 HERDC reporting.
- With the grant submission period for this year now at an end, the School says goodbye and thank you to Sandra Skinner, who provided valuable assistance to researchers in preparing and submitting their grants.

BABS staff in the news

- 👉 Professor Peter White received extensive media interest in mid-January in relation to his lab's identification of a new strain of norovirus last year, named Sydney 2012, which caused an epidemic in Europe over the northern winter. Peter was featured in a segment on the ABC's 7:30 Report and had many radio interviews, newspaper articles and online pieces.
- 👉 A team of international researchers led by A/Professor Kevin Morris received wide media coverage in relation to the discovery of a new mechanism that re-activates genes that have been switched off. It is hoped this should make tumours more sensitive to chemotherapy and prevent the development of resistance to cancer drugs. The findings were published in *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology*.

Student achievements

- 👉 Congratulations to the BABS Honours students who won the following 2012 UNSW University Medals:
 - University Medal in Biochemistry: **Vicky Burns** (supervisor Andrew Brown)
 - University Medal in Molecular Biology: **Lisa Phan** (supervisor Andrew Brown)
 - University Medal in Biotechnology: **Dodampe Abeygunawardena** (supervisor Marc Wilkins)
- 👉 PhD candidate Samantha Chia, supervised by Marc Wilkins, won a prize for best poster at the annual Lorne conference of the Australian Proteomics Society. Her poster described some of our first evidence that protein methylation changes throughout the cell cycle.

BABS alumnus in the news

Professor David Sinclair is the lead author on a paper published in *Science* on 8 March that finally proves that a single anti-ageing enzyme in the body can be targeted, with the potential to prevent age-related diseases and extend life spans. David, who completed his PhD in BABS under the supervision of Prof Ian Dawes, is based at Harvard University but also heads the Lowy Cancer Research Centre's Laboratory for Ageing Research at UNSW. David received extensive media coverage, including an on-air interview for Channel 10's *The Project*.



OWeek 2013 participation



Following a call for fun items for the FoS marketing team to use during OWeek, Kylie Jones tried out the Ramaciotti's novel use of gene chips in this high fashion item, which was christened 'Robotica'. Kylie's main concern was the additional 10kg it added to her weight!

Injury corner

The School's best wishes go to Profs Andrew Brown and Marc Wilkins, both of whom came off second best in recent accidents on their bicycles.



While Andrew is still laid up, Marc is somewhat more mobile, being aided by an iridescent red motorised scooter.

Caption competition winner

Winner – James Krycer:

"Recent studies have shown that student learning is enhanced when the teacher is awake."

Runner up – also James Krycer:

"Yeah, and I just said, 'No food or drink in the lab, hand it over.' Like taking candy from a baby, right?"

If you would like something included in the next BABS Quarterly please email Michele at m.potter@unsw.du.au