

Message from the Head of School

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to my inaugural BABS Quarterly as Head of School, and thanks to Michele Potter for producing yet another polished and professional newsletter.

I'd also like to thank my predecessors, Bill Ballard and Noel Whitaker. Bill presided over some of the greatest changes in BABS since our inception, and pushed through the most extensive renovations that the School has seen. As acting HOS, Noel was (happily) not content to take just a caretaker role, and helped push through a number of new initiatives of his own that we will continue.

I'm fortunate that Louise Lutze-Mann has agreed to continue as Deputy Head of School. As we all know, Louise is a fine and innovative teacher and wears another hat as our Director of Teaching. This ensures that teaching, a fundamental mission and core business of the School, is well represented on the School executive. Other members of the executive have kindly agreed to stay on for the year.

BABS is a large and diverse School. This can be a strength but also a challenge, so a few initiatives we are rolling out in the last months of 2013 are directed at increasing contacts and cohesion within the School. We are encouraging new research collaborations within BABS through small seeding grants, and reinstating PhD exit seminars, mixing them up with internal speakers so that we all catch up with everyone's latest research findings. These Friday afternoon seminars are to be followed by Happy Hour to encourage lively discussion spilling over into the Wilton Room.

We also have a BABS symposium organised for early November to be held at the Coogee Bay Hotel, convened by Wallace Bridge together with his trusty BABSOC/EISSOC crew. Themed "Improving Tomorrow through Science", this event will give PhD students and postdocs an excellent opportunity to present their work to the School in a snappy and accessible way. I for one am really looking forward to it.

All the best,
Andrew

RAT News

Research

• The Faculty's interdisciplinary grants scheme promotes collaboration among researchers from varied disciplines. This year, 20 applications were received, 9 proposals were funded, with 3 received by BABS academics:

- **Kevin Morris** with Tracie Barber (Eng): *Realtime imaging and analysis of enhanced gene delivery in microfluidic mechanoporation devices.*
- **Mike Manfield & Chris Marquis** with Robert Patterson & Gavin Conibeer (Eng): *Net-negative carbon in energy supply – integrated marine methanogenesis of algal biomass.*
- **Andrew Brown** with Kerry Rye (Med): *How is the final enzyme in cholesterol synthesis controlled in the context of cardiovascular disease?*

Each project received \$5k with a further \$20k to be awarded if an A/A* paper is published or an ARC/NHMRC grant is won within the next 2 years.

• Prof **Rick Cavicchioli** is all packed up and ready to head south in early October on his third expedition to Antarctica. The purpose of this trip is to monitor ecosystem stability in model marine-derived Antarctic lake and near-shore systems.



Teaching

A/Lecturer Rebecca LeBard is co-author on a paper about 'the maths problem' in science education. The solution may lie in boosting the confidence of students to transfer their maths skills to the study of science, and the ideas will be of interest to those designing new curricula. USYD's Rosanne Quinnell is co-author, whom Rebecca advises was her biochemistry tutor in her second undergrad year! The paper can be viewed [here](#).

Admin

The new UNSW publications database, ROS, has been launched. Login is zID and zPass:
<https://ros.unsw.edu.au/login.html?returnurl=default.html>

Postdocs news

Dr **Cassie Mak** and Dr **Alister Funnell**, postdocs from the Crossley lab, have had papers accepted for presentations and will join other local and international speakers at the prestigious 2013 ComBio conference in Perth from 29 September-3 October.



Cassie's talk, "Investigations into the functional role of a novel PU.1 isoform regulated by a Krüppel-like factor transcription factor" describes a novel isoform of the Pu.1 protein whose transcription is initiated through an alternative retroviral promoter responsive to Klf3. This new isoform may be important in aspects of haematopoiesis.

Alister's paper, "Repression of chimeric transcripts emanating from endogenous retrotransposons by the sequence-specific transcription factor KLF3" addresses the mechanisms by which mammalian cells ensure that invading retroviral DNA elements are specifically recognised and silenced.



Student achievements

- Two BABS PhD candidates excelled at the 2013 Faculty Postgraduate Research competition. **Josie van Dorst** (supervised by Dr Belinda Ferrari) took out first place and a prize of \$5k; **Angela Chilton** (supervisor Prof Brett Neilan) was a runner-up, receiving \$3k.
- PhD candidate **Jose Burgos-Portugal** (supervisor Prof Hazel Mitchell) was awarded an EMBL Australia travel grant of \$3k to present at next year's PhD Symposium at the EMBL Institute in Heidelberg. One organiser of the symposium is joint EMBL/BABS PhD candidate **Simone Li**.

INDIGO V voyage – second leg



Dr **Federico Lauro** and a multinational crew have resumed their scientific expedition to sample the waters of the Indian Ocean, setting off from Mauritius in early September. While preparing to depart Port Louis, the team was

interviewed by the Mauritian local news, met with University representatives, and had an interview with Business Week. The voyage can be monitored on the entertaining blog: <http://indigov.unsw.edu.au/>

BABS PhD student awarded 3-year scholarship

Congratulations to **Joshua Swift**, recipient of the inaugural Steggle Science Scholarship, valued at \$180,000 over three years. This scholarship, between the Faculty of Science and Baiada Poultry P/L, developed from a longstanding relationship between Baiada and A/Prof Julian Cox (Faculty of Science), with a view to funding research beyond the traditional areas of collaboration.

Josh will be investigating poultry vaccine technology and immunological response to specific mammalian cells. He will be undertaking his studies in BABS under the supervision of Dr Louise Lutze-Mann, with co-supervision by A/Prof Julian Cox, Prof Mark Baker (Macquarie University) and Dr Tony Pavic (Baiada). The scholarship was formalised through a signing on August 12 between Dean Merlin Crossley and Mr Simon Camilleri, Managing Director of Baiada, with most of the project team in attendance (Josh is second from the left).



Hands-on multi-tasking

School Office staff member **Liz Daly** takes her role as facilities admin coordinator seriously, recently attending to a quick painting repair on L2.



Pitter patter of little scientists

Congratulations and best wishes Tech Officer **Elessa Marendy** and husband James on the arrival of daughter Lily Maree, born on 27 August, and weighing in at 2.55kg.

