

## Message from the Head of School

Dear colleagues,

BABS is living up to UNSW's maxim of "never stand still" because (just in case you hadn't heard) we are moving – and moving in a BIG way. Some of us are already in the process, and this time next month most of us will be well and truly ensconced in our new home – the aptly-named Biosciences East (E26).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the professional team that we have carefully built up over the past few years, largely with this move in mind. In particular, Geoff Kornfeld has been living and breathing this project since its inception in 2012, and is doing an amazing job. And now we're at the pointy end of this huge and complicated endeavour, Geoff would have every justification to feel like 'a juggler running out of hands'. As he is fully occupied with daily operational matters, working with the moving teams and, no doubt, troubleshooting, we ask that you send any queries to the School inbox: [babs@unsw.edu.au](mailto:babs@unsw.edu.au) rather than to Geoff directly.

While we can't escape the upheaval due to the move, please remember that it will be worth it in the long run. Ask people who moved into the new Wallace Wurth or Material Sciences Building, and they would agree. It's a little like moving from student digs, where you made do sitting around on milk crates, to a properly furnished apartment where you could while away the hours marvelling at the comfort of an upholstered chair with back support. We'll look back at our old labs and processes a bit like those milk crates, and marvel at how we endured these conditions for so long.

Speaking of moving, BABS is in an exciting race to sequence a critter courtesy of PacBio. Building on Alan Wilton's legacy, Bill Ballard has had a longstanding research interest in dingo genetics, and plans to "sequence the genome of a pure desert dingo called Sandy. Sandy and her two siblings were just three weeks old when they were inadvertently stumbled upon in the harsh central Australian desert not far from the Strzelecki Track. They were dehydrated, could barely walk, and were close to death. Fortunately, the three amigos were saved and raised under idyllic surrounds by Barry Eggleton – a man who has now devoted his life to them."

You would've had to have been living under a rock not to have heard about this competition – perhaps the same rock that the arch rival, 'Brad' the pitviper, is hiding under. I would like to say that it is a hard-run race, but snakes don't have legs. And I would like to say that the race is neck-and-neck, but I'm not sure if snakes even have necks\*, or perhaps they are all-neck, which would be an unfair advantage. My point is that we shouldn't allow ourselves to be beaten by a snake. Support our native fauna and vote for Dancing with Dingoes: <http://www.pacb.com/smrt-science/smrt-grant/pag2017/dancing-dingoes/>

You can catch Bill and the dingoes (and a pink poodle) on the UNSW Library Lawn from 2:30-3:30 pm on Wednesday 5 April. Technically, Wednesday is the last day for voting, but as a wise man has pointed out: "The snake strikes at night, so if we can push during the day on Thursday (April 6), we may see ourselves catching up and winning as the snake sleeps." Go Sandy Go!

Best wishes,

Andrew

\*They do.

## RAT Research

- New \$40k Faculty Goldstars for ARC and NHMRC 'near misses' were awarded to **Vladimir Sytnyk, Jai Tree, Paul Waters** and **Rob Yang**.
- In the latest Category 1 grant rounds, a total of 11 DP18 and 22 NHMRC project grants have been submitted by BABS researchers.

## Administration

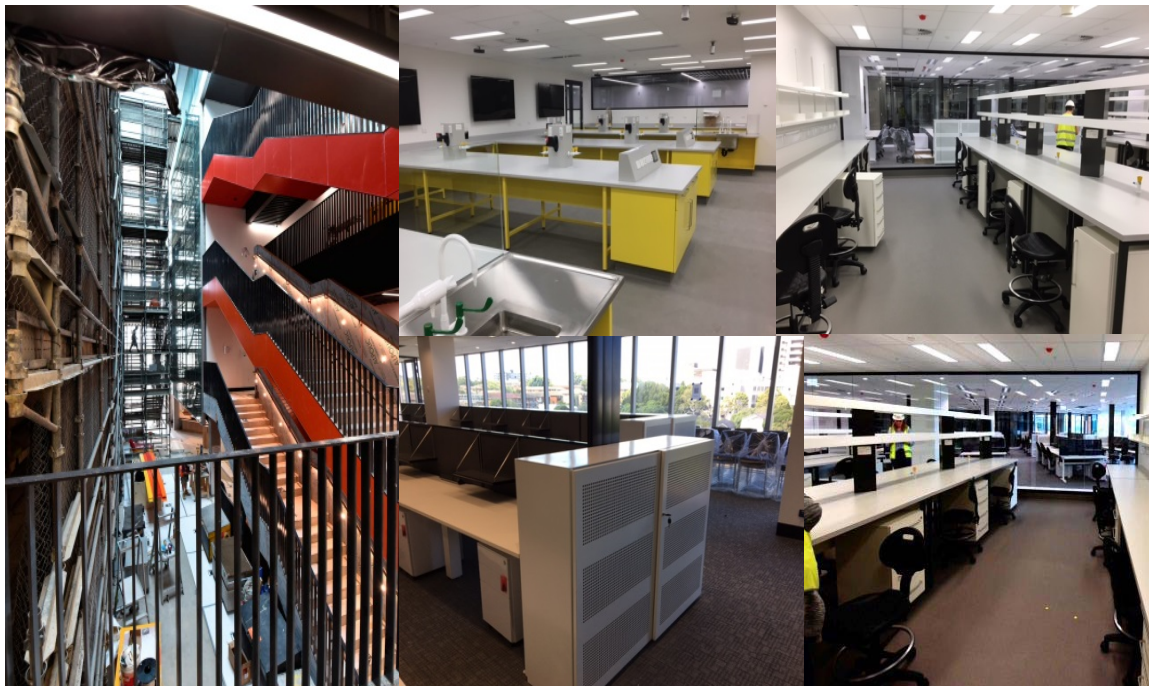
- Four new Senior Lecturers have been appointed as a result of our recent recruitment program: **Megan Lenardon** and **Dominic Glover** in Biotech and **Emily Oates** and **Fatemeh Vafae** in Bioinformatics/ Systems Biology/Medical Genomics. We look forward to welcoming them.
- The Faculty has a new Library Outreach Librarian, **Toni Emma Le Roux** and a new GMO Grants Officer, **Thom Callaghan** who will visit the School shortly.

## Teaching

- Our teaching teams are being ably supported this year with some new staff: we welcome **Marlene Tsie** who is replacing Jani O'Rourke as Teaching Laboratory Manager; **Vivian Yeung** as admin assistant to Louise Lutze-Mann and **Lucy Jo** as A/Lecturer Blended Learning. We also welcome **Alice Bishop-Ebiember** as the new BABS student advisor in the BSB office.

## Our new building

With only 3 weeks or so before the School's move into the new building begins, lab staff and students are doing lots of prep work to try and ensure the relocation will go as smoothly as possible. We are looking forward to taking up residence in the state-of-the-art facilities and enjoying the benefits of a modern scientific research environment and cutting edge teaching labs.



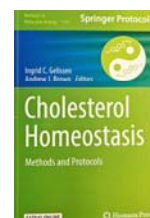
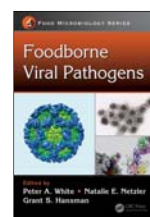
## 'Trash to treasure' for some local schools

Kudos to Dixie Papast, who organised for some excess glassware, furniture and other goods being discarded by our labs in preparation for the move to be donated to local schools. Matraville High, St Spyridon College and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Kensington have all been very appreciative. Dixie and the School were thanked in the OLSH newsletter, and we have received some pictures of budding scientists making good use of some of our cast-offs. Well done Dixie!



## BABS staff in the news

- **Peter White** has published a new book *Foodborne Viral Pathogens*, which provides a comprehensive review of all the current major foodborne viral pathogens, and reviews new viral detection technologies and applications. Peter and his PhD student **Natalie Netzler** are authors of three chapters and are also editors of the book.
- **Rich Edwards** featured in an online EMBL-ABR network interview in February, where he outlined his perspective on bioinformatics and a range of issues including the challenges for life scientists and medical researchers in the data-driven science era. [Read it here.](#)
- **Andrew Brown** is co-editor of a new book, *Cholesterol Homeostasis: Methods and Protocols*. This volume of Springer's Methods in Molecular Biology series brings together a compendium of 'How-to' guides for many key techniques in tackling the investigation of cholesterol homeostasis.
- Research from **Ruiting Lan's** group helped identify the source of an unprecedented outbreak of streptococcal disease where more than 200 people became ill and 39 died in the Chinese province of Sichuan from infection of the bacterium, which is found in pigs. The study was published in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.



## Titans of Teaching awards for Semester 2 2016

As announced at the February staff meeting, **Nirmani Wijenayake** topped the student scores for best large course as well as best lecturer; **Vladimir Sytnyk** won for smaller courses and **Andrew Brown** for smaller lectures. Congratulations to all!



### BABS UNSW Inaugural Scientia Fellow



**Irina Voineagu** has been awarded one of the inaugural UNSW Scientia Fellowships, one of the cornerstones of UNSW’s 2025 Strategy. A primary goal of the program is to enhance UNSW research performance by attracting and retaining exceptional researchers at the highest level relative to career stage.

Reinforcing her impact in the world of scientific research, Irina was awarded a 2017 June Griffith Fellowship and also



received the prestigious Women In Science Award at this year’s Lorne Genome Conference. Sponsored by Illumina, this award recognises an early career scientist up to 10 years full-time equivalent (FTE) after their PhD.

### BABS students in the news

At the Australian Proteomics Society (APS) Conference in February held at Lorne, **Marc Wilkins’** lab and **Gene Hart-Smith** had the good fortune of blitzing the talks and prizes. Gene was invited to give a talk in the session on model organism proteomics, and PhD students excelled: **Joshua Hamey** was selected to give a full talk, and was



awarded a ‘Students of APS’ (SOAPS) prize; **Daniela Smith** was selected to give a lightning talk and was also awarded the judges’ unanimous prize for best poster; and **Aidan Tay** won a poster prize for his outstanding work. PhD student **Daniel Winter** didn't win a prize this time, but did win a prize at the same conference last year.



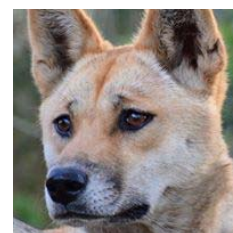
### New Colombo Plan Exchange Program



**Wallace Bridge** is Program Convenor of the New Colombo Plan, under which four BABS biotech students will gain an insight into Indonesia's emerging biotechnology industry by participating in an exchange program with 3L Institute, a private university established in Jakarta in 2014 to provide support for the growing biotechnology industry.

### Ballard Lab Pure Desert Dingo DNA Study

A proposal by **Bill Ballard** to study the DNA of a 2-year-old dingo called Sandy is one of five finalists in the World’s Most Interesting Genome competition, competing for a \$20,000 Pacific Biosciences SMRT Grant. Progress and voting tally can be followed on the project’s facebook page [Dancing with Dingoes](#). Online voting will decide the winner and closes 5 April – watch this space!



### Farewell to Dr Jani O’Rourke

After almost 40 years at UNSW as a student and staff member, all of them in BABS in its various iterations, Dr **Jani O’Rourke** retired on 17 February. Jani most recently held the role of Professional Officer/Laboratory Manager, but her early research days formed the basis of her thorough knowledge of all things lab-based. That period of her career was highlighted by her former PhD supervisor now Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee at Jani’s farewell function. Her solid contributions to teaching and teaching support were acknowledged by Hazel Mitchell, Ruiting Lan and Louise Lutze-Mann, all of whom worked closely with Jani over many years.



### Ex HOS in 2017 Australia Day Honours List

Professor Peter Gray was awarded an Order of Australia in this year's Australia Day honours for "distinguished service to science in the field of bioengineering and nanotechnology". Peter was Head of Biotechnology from 1988, a position he held for 14 years prior to the formation of the new School of BABS. He was a founder of the Australian Biotechnology Association, which subsequently became AusBiotech, and is well known to many current BABS staff.



**BABS Facebook** Our [facebook](#) 'likes' are now 932, up from 882 in December 2016.



If you would like something included in the next BABS Quarterly please email Michele at [m.potter@unsw.edu.au](mailto:m.potter@unsw.edu.au)