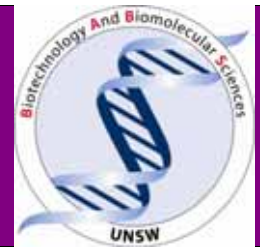


# BABS Quarterly

December 2009 Issue 5



## Message from the Head of School

Dear colleagues,

I observed a cocktail of great pride mixed with a touch of sadness as I MC'd the departure of seven staff on 27 November. The gang of 7, listed below, contributed broadly throughout the School and they will be missed. I hope they enjoy the Pinot Noir I selected.

Overall, 2009 has been a solid one for BABS. We totalled some \$4.75 million in category grants, led by the Future Fellowship awarded to A/Prof Robert Yang. Adding to impressive research careers, Brett Neilan won his third Eureka award and was named NSW Scientist of the Year in his category, and John Foster was one of two UNSW researchers to be awarded a 2009 Fulbright Scholarship.

In terms of postgraduate students, 20 PhD students and 1 Masters student completed. In addition, 54 Honours theses were completed and examined in November. It is my hope that some individuals who completed their PhDs explore international opportunities and some of our Honours students return to BABS as PhD students.

And now some good news about space. Andrew Collins and I were told in the corridor by Jani O'Rourke that \$12 million has now been received by the University to begin renovation of the Biological Sciences Building. The Acting Dean Scientia Professor Ian Dawes confirmed this budgetary allocation later the same day. Of course, this will mean upheaval of space allocations in 2010 but is expected to be highly beneficial for student teaching, and possibly research activities as well in 2011.

As the year winds down, I wish to acknowledge the support of the Executive Committee and the office staff. In particular, Andrew Collins, Peter White and Michele Potter have helped to keep BABS moving forward under what has seemed, at times, to be opposing forces.

*With best wishes for the festive season,  
Bill*



## RAT News

### Research

Congratulations to the many BABS staff who were successful in the recent grant announcements.

- NH&MRC – John Foster
- ARC Discovery – Rick Cavicchioli, Federico Lauro, Malcolm Walter (including an ARC Professorial Fellowship), Ian Dawes, Marc Wilkins, Staffan Kjelleberg, Torsten Thomas, Suhelen Egan and Diane McDougald.
- ARC Linkage – Mike Manefield, Torsten Thomas and Staffan Kjelleberg (UNSW's largest linkage grant)
- UNSW Goldstar Awards – Andrew Brown, Belinda Ferrari, Volga Bulmus and Vladimir Sytnyk
- LIEF grants – Brett Neilan, Volga Bulmus, Hazel Mitchell, John Foster, Ian Dawes and Michal Janitz

And a reminder for those intending to submit an ARC Discovery application in the forthcoming round, you are urged to contact Professor Peter Baverstock as soon as possible, as Peter can provide strategic advice in the early stages of developing your proposal, and more technical advice in the later stages.

[p.baverstock@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.baverstock@unsw.edu.au)

### Admin

- All the Professional and Technical roles in the new BABS structure have now been filled.
- Kylie Jones has now taken up her new role of Administrative Officer. As well as acting as Executive Assistant to the HOS, Kylie will look after the School's marketing and other events, and assist Wolf Nittel with some finance tasks. Kylie will also continue to manage the School's PhD students, with Christina Dimova in the Teaching Office looking after Honours students from 2010.

### Teaching

- Semester 1 2010 sees the launch of the University's new online learning platform, Blackboard 9. Christina Dimova has undergone training and has set up the Blackboard template for all BABS courses. Please contact Christina in the first instance with any queries.

## Farewell to staff under Faculty of Science redundancy scheme



Friday 27 November saw the departure of seven staff from BABS, whose combined service totalled 158 years. We had already said goodbye to Kate Kennedy in October, and Friday's function farewelled Jiewei Wei, Ghada Hanna, Malcolm Noble, Steve Gouras, Sue Jackson, Russell Cail and Wendy Glenn. Seven of these staff had 20+ years of service, with Wendy Glenn being the outright winner with 43 years 7 months – a truly remarkable achievement. Wendy will still be seen around the corridors as she has been granted a visiting appointment and will continue assisting in her old lab on a voluntary basis.

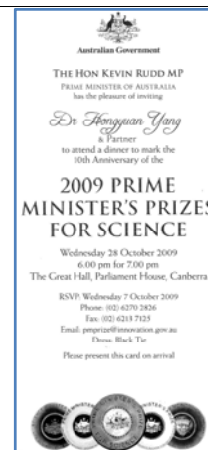


## Staff achievements

- In September, Genome Web News reported that Rick Cavicchioli's team and collaborators at the J Craig Venter Institute have identified a way to determine whether marine microbes are specialised to grow in nutrient-rich or nutrient-poor environments based on their genomic content. The work was also the subject of a feature article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*.
- Brett Neilan was the winner of the NSW Scientist of the Year in the category of Environment, Water and Climate Change Sciences for his groundbreaking work on the genetics of toxic blue-green algae.



- As part of his ARC Future Fellowship award, Rob Yang attended a dinner at Parliament House in Canberra, and met Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (*thanks for the loan of the suit Alan!*)



- Ruiting Lan has been promoted to Associate Professor from January 2010.

- Alan Wilton's research project tracking genes that cause a specific type of deafness in people and Australian cattle dogs was front-page news in the Health section of *The Australian* on 19 September. The featured photo shows Alan up close and personal with Ned, one of Bill Ballard's Australian cattle dogs.



- In September, the Schizophrenia Foundation presented Louise Lutze-Mann's lab with a cheque as a contribution towards their research revealing that anti-psychotic drugs could help treat some major cancers.



## Student achievements

- A project by Honours student, Elizabeth Blaber (supervisor Brendan Burns) looking at loss of bone density and muscle wasting experienced by astronauts was presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Space Sciences conference in September and picked up by ABC Science: <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/09/28/2698631.htm>
- Congratulations to BABS PhD student Jeremy Chenu, supervised by Julian Cox and co-supervised by Peter White, who won the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology's prestigious John Christian Young Food Microbiologist Award for his Honours work on "The simultaneous detection of *Cronobacter* ('*Enterobacter sakazakii*') and *Salmonella* on a chromogenic agar plating medium".

## Official Opening of Recombinant Proteins Products and Biofuels Labs



Funded under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), these two labs, managed by Chris Marquis and Peter Rogers, were officially opened on 18 September by Hon. Jodie McKay MP, NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Hon. Richard Marles MP, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation and Industry.



## Melbourne Cup 2009

The first Tuesday in November saw BABS many staff offering the usual 'sure-bet' suggestions on how to pick the winner of the Cup ... and a rank outsider streaked home past all the favourites, in true Melbourne Cup tradition.



## Pitter patter of little scientists ...

Congratulations to Dallia Catzel and family on the arrival of Daniel in October – two weeks early, but Dallia reports all is going well.

