

## Message from the Head of School

Dear Colleagues,

Overall Honours and Postgraduate numbers are good in 2010. Figures out this week show an increase in Honours numbers from 53 in 2007 to 67 for 2009. We have also had a significant rise in the number of Postgraduate students from 25 enrolments in 2007 to 38 for last year and 41 already this year. With a modest increase in PhD enrolments, a large proportion of this rise can be related to the successful introduction of the MPhil program, which now boasts 20 students. At the Higher Degree Committee meeting figures were also out this week for PhD completion times for 2007-9. Of the 10 Schools in the Faculty of Science, BABS ranked 6th with an average of 4.2 yrs to complete a PhD. Our goal is 4.0 yrs.

I had a meeting with Postdocs/Research Associates on 3 June. There will be a monthly seminar to complement the School series, and one School-sponsored social function annually. Also, we now have a notice board for this community near the school office. A list of those who wish to be included in this group is currently being compiled on the notice board.

As discussed in the April Staff Meeting, I put a motion to the School Executive that we pay half the page charges for manuscripts accepted in A\* journals in 2010. This motion was passed and \$10,000 has been set-aside for this purpose.

As many of you know, we had a significant incident in the Microbiology practical class on 2 June, 2010. This incident was handled with compassion to the individual involved and extreme courtesy to all others in the class. I wish to congratulate **John Wilson, Louise Lutze-Mann, Hazel Mitchell, Nedhal Elkaid, Rohan Panwar and Andrew Collins** on their proactive and stellar analysis of the situation. Student demonstrators that also deserve commendation are Pann Pann Chung and Nigel Lewin.

Finally, I will be in Estonia attending a mitochondrial bioenergetics meeting and then frolicking in Russia for the next three weeks. DHoS **Andrew Collins** will be acting in my place while I am away.

Best

Bill Ballard

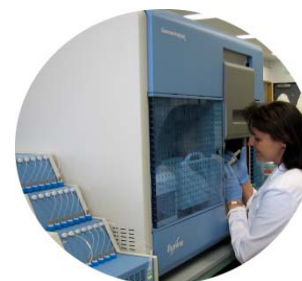
## RAT News

### Research

**Katherine Jackson** recently returned to BABS, to work on a 454 sequencing project that is a collaboration between **Andrew Collins** and **Bruno Gaeta** of UNSW, and Andy Fire and Scott Boyd of Stanford University. **Andy Fire** and **Craig Mello** won the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their discovery of RNA interference. Since 2007, the Fire laboratory has been using 454 technology for the study of miRNA, and in 2009 they initiated the first study to apply this technology to immunoglobulin gene rearrangements. To analyse their sequences, they turned to the UNSW Immunogenetics group. The first fruits of this collaboration were seen in early June, with the publication of their work in the *Journal of Immunology*. In this paper, they describe how deep sequencing of gene rearrangements can be used to infer the genotype of the immunoglobulin gene loci. These loci are so complex and include so many highly similar genes that their sequences have only been fully assembled once before. Using this approach, Andrew, Bruno and their students have been able to genotype sixty individuals, and have identified surprising variation within the population. Katherine will now be working with the Fire laboratory to learn how the major gene deletions that they have seen impact upon immune function.

### Ramaciotti Centre Award

In April, the Ramaciotti Centre was awarded Illumina CSPro certification. This is a collaborative partnership with Illumina dedicated to ensuring the delivery of high quality data and excellent service. The Ramaciotti Centre is one of only two Illumina GALx sequencing services in Australia to have obtained this award. This follows on from our recognition as the only Affymetrix Certified Service Provider in Australia. These awards confirm our status as one of Australia's leading genomics service providers. The Centre would like to thank **Dr. Karolina Janitz** for all her hard work in achieving Illumina CsPro status for the Centre.



An ABRS Grant of \$30K was awarded to **Dr Shauna Murray, Dr Mark Brown**, Bob Moore of Flinders University and Mona Hoppenrath of the Senckenberg Institute in Germany. They will be studying the biodiversity of benthic alveolates, a group of eukaryotic marine microbes, in the Indian Ocean north west of Australia. They will analyse molecular genetic and genomic, as well as morphological data, to identify novel lineages of alveolates and to understand this unique and little known ecosystem.

The alveolates include the dinoflagellates, which are an unusual group of microbial eukaryotes, many of which produce toxic polyketide compounds. Some of the toxins produced have been investigated for their therapeutic value, while others are a problem for human health and aquaculture industries.

Research will start later this year and continue for 3 years.



## Staff achievements

**Professor Adrian Lee**, former Head of Microbiology with us, has just been awarded an honorary Doctorate of Science from Deakin University for his contribution to research in Microbiology and his significant role in the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning.

Professor Lee was one of the first to receive the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence at UNSW and he was the inaugural recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award of the Australian Society for Microbiology. He was one of the first Associate Members of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Regional Teacher Training Centre based at UNSW and has been a WHO Consultant in Medical Education. It was his commitment to improving the quality of teaching at UNSW that saw him take up the position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement) in 2000. Professor Lee retired in 2006 after more than 37 years of service at UNSW.

**Dr Alan Wilton** went on the Save Fraser Island Dingo March in Brisbane in May, and has been made a patron of the Society (along with Bill Ballard).



On the 9<sup>th</sup> April, BABS was host for the Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Heads of Discipline (HoD) meeting, organised by **Dr Louise Lutze-Mann**. This meeting brought together HoDs from around Australia, was preceded by a dinner at Coogee (in the pouring rain!) and was opened by ASBMB past-secretary **Professor Merlin Crossley**.



The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for HoDs to discuss research issues such as funding, grant success rates, benchmarking and discipline threats. School management issues such as finances, infrastructure and staff / post-graduate student recruitment were also covered, as was the role of societies such as ASBMB (the current President, **Professor Ian Dawes** suggest that we need more members of BABS staff and students in the society!)

The day concluded with discussion of teaching-related issues, including student retention, the role of practical classes and teaching innovation. The overall conclusion is that many of the issues we deal with in BABS are common in universities across Australia.



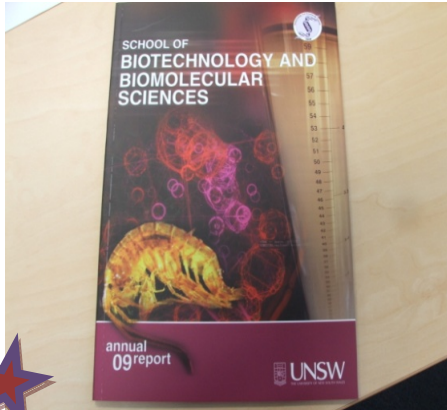
## Good news regarding UNSW's "Inventor of the Year" 2010

**Helder Marcal** (Bio/Polymers Research Group) is a finalist in the Student category  
**A/Prof John Foster** ( Bio/Polymers Research Group) is a finalist in the Biomedicine category  
**Prof Brett Neilan** is a finalist in the Environmental category

Check out: [http://www.unswinventorawards.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=27](http://www.unswinventorawards.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=27)

## Admin

**2009 ANNUAL REPORT out and distributed!**



**New Flexi days Policy** for Staff is available from the HOS office and commences 1 June 2010. Please discuss with your supervisor.

## Farewell Dr Frances Foong

Frances commenced in BABS as a Lecturer in Biotechnology in 1993. She leaves BABS as a permanent staff member on 15 July, but will return as a Visiting Fellow. Frances graduated from University of California in 1992 and took up an instructorship at the Harvard School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences Public Health, during which she help set up a Biotechnology company, Xenometrix Inc. Frances was also Project Leader at a Colorado biotech company that developed toxicity assay kits using genetically engineered cells. Frances was a Rotary Foundation International PhD Scholar from 1988-199.

## Lowy Store

Several issues have been raised regarding the Lowy Store. BABS is working together with the Store to resolve these, but in the meantime you are asked to please be patient and remember they have recently relocated and there are bound to be teething problems. To assist the store, please nominate one person per Lab for your deliveries, preferably the Chief Investigator, with their name, email, phone, lab and research centre, room and building on every order.



# Cheers from Michele!!

as she continues to wend her way through the most beautiful unspoilt parts of Italy, Switzerland and France.

We hope **Penny** made it to the UK and France despite flying through volcanic ash, as we expect her to return next week!

## Opening of renovated Samuels Tearoom



Many thanks to **Penny** for all her hard work on this project!