

Message from the Head of School

Dear colleagues,

The year that was 2010 is now fading into memory. There have been many highs for the School, and we should be quite proud of our collective achievements.

Communication of research achievements continued in 2010. During the Session 2 mid-session break, the School's second annual off-site research day was held at the newly renovated Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving club. Chaired by Brett Neilan, the day included presentations by Ian Dawes, Michal Janitz, Alan Wilton, Noel Whitaker, Hazel Mitchell, Belinda Ferrari and Torsten Thomas. The final presenter was our newest School member, Dean Merlin Crossley.

Multiple academics met with success in both the Dean's office and at the Chancellery. Congratulations to Noel Whitaker on his promotion to Associate Professor, to Anne Galea on her promotion to Lecturer, and to Federico Lauro for his promotion to Research Fellow, all effective 1 January 2011.

The School also had success in the Academy of Science. Congratulations to Mark Tanaka on being awarded the prestigious Australian Academy of Science's Moran Medal for research in statistics. This Medal recognises outstanding research by scientists under 40.

The School's teachers continue to perform above the general high standard of the Faculty. As recently as yesterday, Dr Louise Lutze-Mann and Mr James Krycer were recognised with Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Generally, the renovations have kept on track. While many of us would have liked to see a mirror of the Lowy Cancer Research Centre, progress one room at a time must be acknowledged. With some luck and a nip of good fortune, this progress will continue.

Socially, the School had a number of communicative events. This year's Melbourne Cup made good use of the newly renovated Samuels Tearoom. Many thanks to all who contributed to the event, especially Kylie and Penny for organising the sweeps and catering.

Following the festive season comes the season for grant writing. I would like to encourage academics to think about their grants early and to discuss their proposals broadly. The Faculty has a range of resources that can be helpful in enabling grant success.

All the best,

Bill



RAT News

Research

- Congratulations to all BABS staff who were successful in the recent Cat 1 grant announcements. The School was awarded \$1.748M for 5 ARC Discovery Projects, compared to \$2.370M for 4 grants in 2009; and \$1.315M for 3 NHMRC Project Grants compared to \$213k for one Development Grant in 2009.
- A new BABS PhD top-up scheme for APA scholarship holders will commence in 2011. There will be 15 supplement packages awarded in total: 5 for new students, 5 for those commencing their second year, and 5 for those commencing third year. Details are available on the School's website:
<http://www.babs.unsw.edu.au/prizesscholarships.php>

👉 The BABS PhD of the Quarter award was launched in October. It comprises a \$100 Westfield gift voucher and a Certificate. Inaugural winner Ignatius Pang, supervised by Prof Marc Wilkins, advised: "I would like to thank the School for the prize, I'm thrilled!"

Admin

- A reminder that the **UNSW Christmas/New Year** shutdown is from Wednesday 22 December, reopening on Tuesday 4 January 2011.
- We have taken delivery of two electronic whiteboards – bookings can be made via the HOS admin office.
- The School recently became a member of AusBiotech, Australia's biotechnology industry organisation:
<http://www.ausbiotech.org/>

Teaching

👉 Students from BABS BIOT3091

Professional Issues in Biotechnology shone

in the 2010 Australian School of Business's Peter Farrell Challenge Cup business planning competition. Congratulations to Course Coordinator, Dr Wallace Bridge on this success.



👉 The 2009 BABS Prizegiving ceremony was held in November. Congratulations to Tamar Kapterian, Wooi Fang, Keith Friedlander, Eliza Courtney, Laura Cook, Gee Chong Ling, Sarah Finlayson, Abhinav Rajkumar, Marie Kidd, Elizabeth Blaber, Shady El-Wahsh, Amanda Lawson and Samantha Chia.



👉 First year student Hayley Barker is the inaugural holder of the new BABS Industry Partnership scholarship with Bioclone Australia. The stipend is \$10,000 over four years, with the opportunity to spend time at Bioclone during the scholarship.



A/Professor Rob Yang's SSP: And how I learned to carve a pumpkin

I have been working at Professor Peter Tontonoz's laboratory for the past 3 months. Prof. Tontonoz is an investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Research Institute and a professor at UCLA. He is a well-known scientist in the areas of nuclear receptors and fat cell development.

I have been learning how to make retroviruses to express genes and short hairpin RNAs in mammalian cells. I am also learning assays to quantify fat cell development. The students and postdocs work extremely hard here, typically 10 hours a day and 6 days a week.

We did have some fun before Halloween. Each member of the lab carved a pumpkin and Prof. Tontonoz served as the judge to pick the winner. I didn't win, but I carved my first ever pumpkin. See attached photo and pay attention to the left corner.



In early January I will fly to New York city to give a seminar at the Cornell Medical School. I will then visit the National Institutes of Health and attend a diabetes/obesity conference in Colorado. I will be back at UNSW in January after Australia Day.

A/Professor John Foster's SSP & Fulbright Senior Scholarship: Neutrons, Dogs, Lasers and Customs

My Fulbright Senior Scholarship was spent at the McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine in Pittsburgh, establishing a promising collaboration that will investigate the novel combination of our laser-activated, thin film surgical adhesive 'SurgiLux®' and an extracellular matrix (ECM) developed by my hosts. The combination of these two technologies holds great promise for the fields of wound repair and tissue engineering. The ECM, currently in over a million patients, has amazing powers that stimulate cell differentiation and tissue regeneration and complements SurgiLux®, which supports wound repair by avoiding suture trauma and other related disadvantages. Plans have been made to initiate animal trials using dogs at the Institute given its expertise in surgery and tissue response. I have made ECM and conducted preliminary investigation combining the two, and a manuscript is already submitted.

Neutron beam time at the research reactor and meetings with colleagues from ANSTO and Forschungszentrum-Jülich GmbH, support our studies into characterisation of biomacromolecules. The November sun is shining for a change in a wintery Germany, the vineyards are barren and the harvest has not been good after a wet summer. I arrived in Garching for the second leg of my SSP in the aftermath of the famous Oktoberfest, the cold, wet wind bites me to the bone after the rather hot, dry inner city summer in Pittsburgh and I realise I am unprepared clothes-wise. A quick trip down Kaufinger Straße just off from the majestic Neu Rathaus in nearby München solves my problem and I am once again baffled as to why everything seems so much cheaper here than in Australia.



Preparing ECM from a pig's bladder

The final leg of my trip will be to Bangkok and Chiang Mai, where I will meet with academics and former PhD students of mine and cement collaborations established during the recent UNSW-CMU 2nd annual workshop.

On a social note, we took a totally unplanned vacation in Rome where I ended up sharing a beer with off-duty Kevin Rudd in Piazza Navone and had Mass in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican during the canonisation ceremony of Mary McKillop. It's been a long hectic, time and I am already longing for the routine of home, and to initiate all the tasks I have committed to.

Science in the Pub

An innovative free Science event has been introduced in Sydney, funded by the Federal Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The event is organised by COSMOS magazine and the Royal Institution of Australia, in association with Science in the City. It brings Science into the everyday lives of people in a pub setting, and involves a panel of three speakers being interviewed and having an interactive discussion about a particular topic.

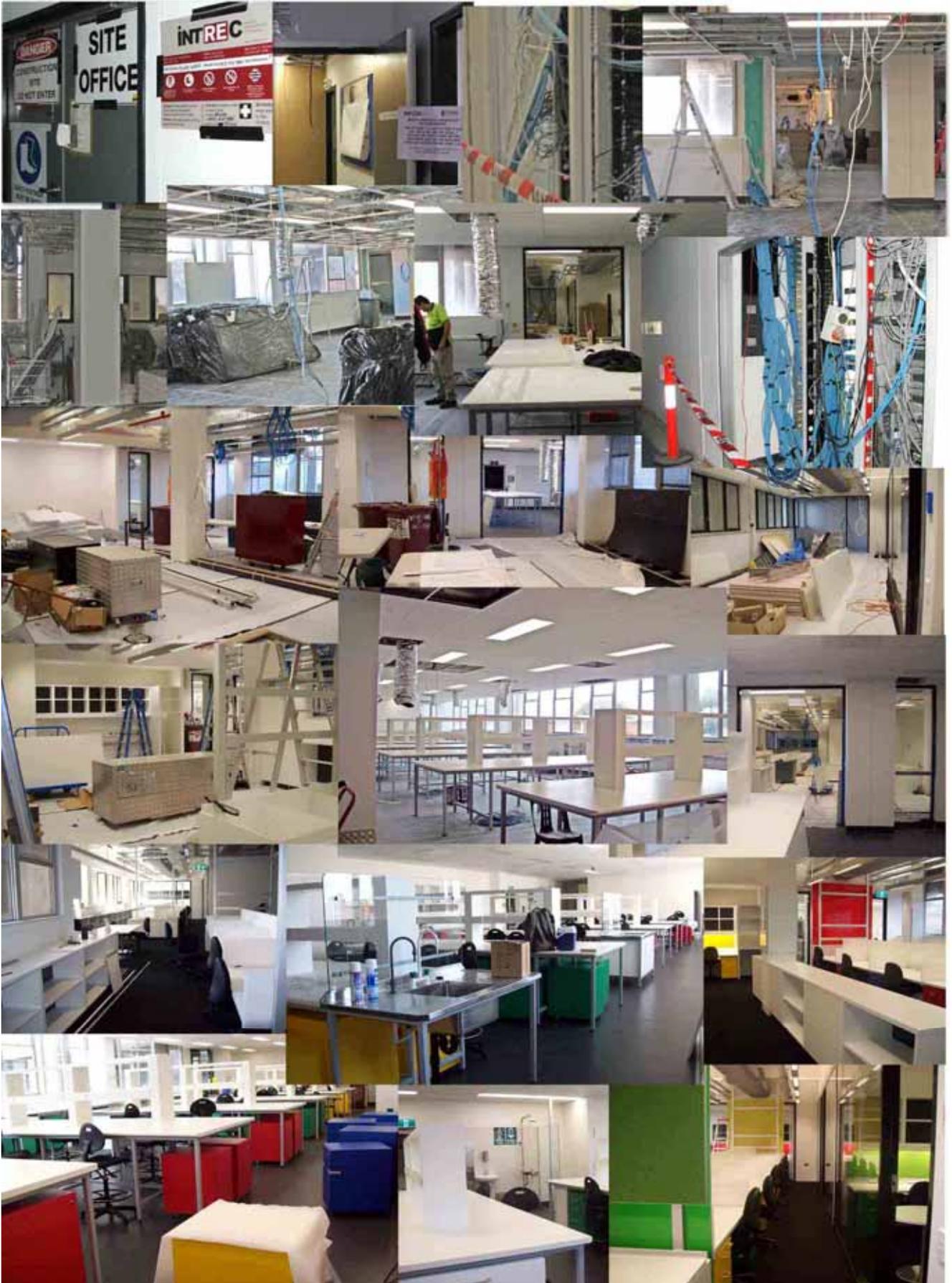
Senior Lecturer Brendan Burns was a panelist for the September event held at the Harlequin Inn in Pyrmont. the topic was "What Have Animals Ever Done For Us?" Chaired by Wilson da Silva, editor of COSMOS magazine, Brendan can confirm it is a night of fun with real science, stimulating discussion, a few laughs, together with door prizes and free drinks. You can read more about the event on facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=37235&id=133664506649646&ref=mf>



Biosciences Building Level 2 – New home for Bioinformatics, Crossley, Lutze-Mann and Whitaker Labs

The major building work that commenced on Level 2 in August has now been completed, with handover to the occupants taking place during December. A warm welcome to the newly arrived Crossley lab team from USYD.



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