

BABS Quarterly

December 2013 Issue 21



Message from the Head of School

Dear colleagues,

2013 has been a big year for BABS – we've had three Heads of School and three new arrivals: Paul Waters, Irina Voineagu and Rich Edwards.

We've had a sprinkling of grant success in what is becoming a more parched environment for science funding. And special congratulations go to our three new Fellows on academic staff: Irina Voineagu with her DECRA, Kevin Morris with his Future Fellowship; and Rob Yang who has nimbly leapt from a Future Fellowship to an NHMRC Senior Research Fellowship.

We had a very successful renaissance of the BABS Symposium at the Coogee Bay Hotel, with PhD students and postdocs showcasing the richly diverse science being conducted within the School. Wallace Bridge did a wonderful job organising the symposium – even going to the trouble of coaching the presenters to ensure high quality and accessible presentations. In recognition of this, Wallace has been presented with the inaugural BABS Outstanding Contributor award.

The BABS Annual Research Day Out (BARDO) was once again held at the Coogee Beach Surf Club, but in a break from previous years, there was a change in format. This year, BARDO lost its 'R' to become BADO, as it focused on overall strategies for the School and not just research, with a special session on teaching facilitated by Louise Lutze-Mann. There was also a mix of short presentations - from Fellows talking about their plans, to academics speaking about their new collaborations within BABS, to a robust NHMRC grant pitching session. Many great ideas were tossed around and I for one felt a real sense of engagement. Throughout the School, I have sensed that there is more eagerness to engage and some genuine collegiality. And I congratulate all of you, because this atmosphere is very much dependent on each individual's willingness to contribute and be positive.

We will need as much positivity and engagement as we can muster within the School as we face the challenges ahead: securing grant funding; maintaining student numbers; and what really is a very exciting project – our new building, which looks set to become a reality.

Thanks to everyone for all their hard work throughout 2013. Wishing you all a well-earned break, so that you can recharge your batteries for another exciting year in 2014.

Best wishes,
Andrew

RAT News

Research

Congratulations to the BABS researchers who were awarded grants through the School in the latest ARC and NHMRC rounds.

ARC Discovery Projects

- Rick Cavicchioli
- Mike Manefield

ARC LIEF Grants

- Mike Manefield, Brett Neilan & Federico Lauro
- Marc Wilkins, Rick Cavicchioli & Brett Neilan

ARC Future Fellowship

- Kevin Morris

ARC DECRA

- Irina Voineagu

In addition, some staff are team members of successful grants through neighbouring Schools or Centres: Rob Yang (LIEF through SOMS); Torsten Thomas & Staffan Kjelleberg (DP through the CMB).

NHMRC Project Grants

- Andrew Brown
- Rob Yang
- John Foster

NHMRC Established Career Fellowship

- Rob Yang

NHMRC New Investigator Grant

- Irina Voineagu

Goldstars

Bill Ballard, Andrew Brown, Merlin Crossley, Hazel Mitchell (2), Kevin Morris, Vladimir Sytnyk.

Faculty Silverstars

John Foster, Kevin Morris

Teaching

- 52 students are enrolled in BABS1201 for Summer Session, the first time the course has run over summer for some years.

Admin

The BABS facebook page is full of interesting posts – and photos – if you haven't already, please 'Like' the page to increase our stats, which are monitored by Faculty marketing. It's easy! Click on the icon (or type in <https://www.facebook.com/UNSWBABS>) and you'll be taken to our fb page; then **click LIKE**



More plaudits for BABS staff

- 👉 Senior Lecturer **Dr Irina Voineagu** received an Establishment Grant (\$74,000) from the Ramaciotti Foundation, which was presented at the Ramaciotti Awards for Biomedical Research gala dinner on 15 October.
- 👉 Following the August visit to UNSW by a delegation from the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, three BABS researchers successfully applied for 12-month collaboration grants with partners at SJTU:
 - Professor **Rob Yang** \$14,500 for the project “Lipid metabolism and its implications in plant and human development”
 - A/Professor **Mike Manfield**, \$13,500 for the project “Establishing a conjoint SJTU-UNSW research initiative on water and wastewater microbiology”.
 - A/Professor **Torsten Thomas**, \$11,000 for the project “Improving food production: Evaluation of biochar for stimulating the microbial nitrogen cycle in agricultural soil”.
- 👉 Senior Lecturer **Belinda Ferrari** has been selected by the Dean of Science to receive this year's Dean's Carers Fellowship. The award consists of \$25K to support her research, and commences in January 2014.
- 👉 Professor **Hazel Mitchell** was awarded a 2013 Outstanding Supervisor Award from the UNSW Postgraduate Research Council in November.
- 👉 Emeritus Professor **Ian Dawes** was honoured by being made a life member of the ASBMB at the 2013 ComBio conference.

BABS staff in the news

Mike Manfield's remediation work on detoxing industrial contamination with bacteria was shortlisted for the Australian Innovation Challenge, an annual initiative run by *The Australian* in association with Shell and Innovation Australia. Judges select finalists conducting ground-breaking research across seven professional categories, with the aim of helping commercialise and bring to life the country's best ideas. Mike's work was covered in *The Australian* as well as on the Faculty of Science and UNSW news website. In addition, the work was showcased in the [ARC 2012-13 Annual Report](#) (p.37) tabled in parliament.

Ramaciotti Centre news

Dean Merlin Crossley congratulated Ramaciotti Centre Director **Professor Marc Wilkins** on the Centre's recent Federal Government NCRIS II funding success. The Centre was awarded \$813,000 and the NSW Systems Biology Initiative (SBI) received \$300,000. In addition, CRIS funds announced earlier this year saw the Centre receive \$287,000 and the SBI \$300,000. Marc advises that both the Centre and the SBI look forward to further growing the School's and UNSW's capabilities in genomics and bioinformatics, and serving the local research community.

In November, the Centre announced a new research partnership with the Australian Wine Research Institute, which will see metagenomics applied to analyse wild wine ferments from around Australia. This will provide an understanding of the ecosystem of yeast and bacteria in Australian wine production and how that works as part of a successful ferment. This exciting new partnership was highlighted on the Faculty of Science news site:

<http://www.science.unsw.edu.au/news/research-mystery-wild-wine-ferments>

To top off a great year, the Ramaciotti Centre staff won the **Faculty of Science Staff Excellence Award** for Excellence in Professional & Technical Services, awarded by the Dean at the Faculty Christmas party.



Postdoc news

- 👉 Dr **Laura Sharpe** from Andrew Brown's lab was awarded an Ian Potter Foundation/Travel and Conference Grant of \$2,500 for her presentation 'Uncovering a coordinated and cooperative transcriptional program in cholesterol synthesis'.
- 👉 Two recent BABS PhD graduates **James Krycer** and **John-Sebastian Eden** were awarded 3-year Early Career Fellowships in the latest NHMRC grant round. James is now at the Garvan, and John-Sebastian is at USYD.

Student achievements

Further to PhD student **José Burgos-Portugal** (supervised by Hazel Mitchell) being awarded a travel grant to attend the 15th EMBL PhD Symposium in Heidelberg, José also won a presentation award at the symposium, and said it was great to catch up with joint BABS-EMBL PhD student Simone Li, one of the symposium organisers.

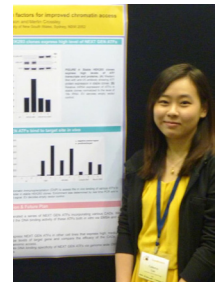


PhD student **Natalia Castano Rodriguez** (supervised by Hazel Mitchell) received the best oral presentation prize at the XXVIth International Workshop on Helicobacter and related bacteria in chronic digestive inflammation and gastric cancer, organised in Madrid by the European Helicobacter Study Group.

Honours student **Claudia Stocks** (supervised by Ruiting Lan) has been awarded the undergraduate student encouragement award from the NSW-ACT branch of the Australian Society for Microbiology. This award is awarded to the best performing undergraduate student from any majors of microbiology in 2012 from UNSW. The award consists of a certificate and \$300.



Crossley Lab's PhD candidate **Catheryn Lim** was awarded the ASBMB (Australian Society for Biochemistry & Molecular Biology) Student Poster prize at the ComBio 2013 conference.



Melbourne Cup



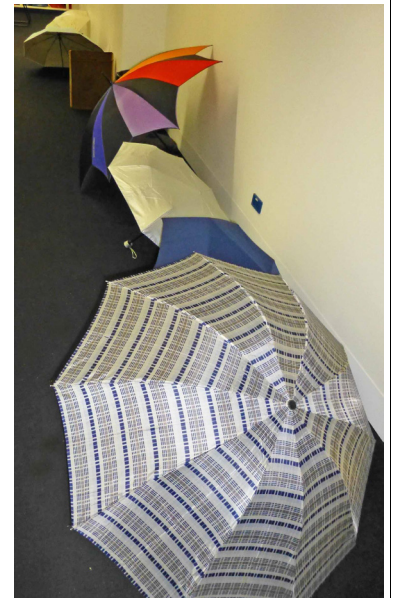
First prize went to Joshua Swift, but José Burgos-Portugal ran a close second!

This year's event included a competition for the best hat – with our PhD students clearly being the most creative.



Rainy days and Mondays ...

A colourful, aesthetically pleasing, unwittingly artistic array of brollies, snapped in the Crossley lab during a recent deluge.



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