New era dawning for health education

The future of health education looms magnificently on the Gold Coast with the creation of a multi-million dollar Health and Knowledge Precinct to rival the best in the world.

On target to open at the end of 2012, the new Gold Coast University Hospital and Griffith Health Centre bring new opportunities for health professionals, academic researchers and students to realise their talents in state of the art surroundings.

Leading professionals and cutting-edge facilities signal a revolution in health services for the wider Gold Coast community, with an even greater focus on the treatment and prevention of chronic disease.

Exciting days await for future students of medicine, biomedical science, pharmacy, dentistry, nursing, midwifery, social work, psychology, physiotherapy, speech pathology and nutrition and dietetics.

Medicine student Charles Noonan, pictured adjacent to the site of the Griffith Health Centre and in the shadows of the new hospital, will be among the first cohort of graduates to work and learn in the $1.76 billion hospital as a junior doctor.

Med students in right place at right time. Story page 2.

In this issue of Pulse meet the health students at Griffith University who take their studies overseas, who take their interests into exciting new areas of research and who take their university education into jobs that make a difference:

- The wide range of employment options pharmaceutical science promises (page 3)
- How our dental science students are changing lives in rural Australia (page 4)
- From the School of Public Health to the Brisbane flood clean-up (page 5)
- Psychology student researches school yard bullying (page 5)
- The medical science student investigating cane toads in Singapore (page 7)
A doctor’s life always awaited students Isabel Ewing and Charles Noonan – it was just a matter of getting there.

“I was really sick as a kid and had to see a pediatric respiratory physician a lot. And I liked him. That introduced me to the world of medicine,” Isabel (21) recalls.

Along with an early and natural grasp of physics, chemistry and mathematics at school, she also developed an appreciation of counseling from her mother, a psychologist.

“I’m a people person. I couldn’t imagine myself in a job in medicine without being a people person. “Symptoms and diseases are all the same but it’s the patients and the different effects the diseases have on their bodies and their lives that are really interesting.”

Isabel and Charles will be among the cohort of 2012 Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery graduates whose first steps as junior doctors will be through the wards of a new Gold Coast University Hospital.

“The $136 million health centre represents Griffith University’s largest investment in a single building in its 40-year history. All Griffith Health programs on the Gold Coast will be together on the one campus, enhancing opportunities for multidisciplinary education in health.”

Amanda Mabin

Amanda Mabin remembers clearly her friend’s upbeat attitude on his return from a rehabilitation session.

He had travelled from Mackay to Brisbane shortly after the accident that had left him a paraplegic.

“Was really sick as a kid and had to see a pediatric respiratory physician a lot. And I liked him. That introduced me to the world of medicine,” the 20-year-old says.

She was uplifted by the experience which heavily influenced her decision to study the Bachelor of Human Services at Griffith University.

She jumped at the opportunity to incorporate a postgraduate element into her studies when a Master of Rehabilitation Counselling was combined with the program in 2010.

She says the chance to fast-track her way through university and emerge with a high level qualification was very attractive.

“I would like to work with young people in the areas of injury and disability. It’s great to help young people find out all the things they can still do after an injury.

“I’m enjoying what I’m learning. The placements give you great work experience. It’s an academic study with real life experience.”

To broaden her scope she also volunteers as a support worker for the Spinal Injury Association.

Her first university placement with an employment business in Fortitude Valley opened her eyes to the various areas where she can apply her skills.

She spent 100 hours helping the company to source work for people with disabilities and drug and alcohol problems.

She says the two parts of the degree program mean there is a broad international field where she can focus her energies and career in future.

“It’s a qualification I can take anywhere.”

Taking inspiration could take her anywhere

Live it up: Amanda Mabin’s studies are literally proving an experience of a lifetime.

Right time, right place for doctors in waiting

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Along with an early and natural grasp of physics, chemistry and mathematics at school, she also developed an appreciation of counseling from her mother, a psychologist.

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Isabel and Charles will be among the cohort of 2012 Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery graduates whose first steps as junior doctors will be through the wards of a new Gold Coast University Hospital.

“It’s exciting for the whole Gold Coast and for Australian medicine,” Isabel says.

“Forever it’s exciting to think that we will work in a Gold Coast hospital with such new technology, so much more space and ultimately better patient outcomes.”

Unlike Isabel, Charles (23) was unsure about his career and studied engineering and architecture, before finding his way to medicine through science.

“I had convinced myself I didn’t want to do medicine because I didn’t want to do chemistry.”

His advice to any young student stricken with uncertainty is to be calm. “Don’t worry, you’ll find your path. I love it now.”

His first placement at Gold Coast Hospital brought confirmation. “It’s great. We get taught by the people who do it every day.”

He also is excited about the prospect of working as a junior doctor at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

“It looks like it will be incredible. There will be so much more space; doctors, patients, everyone will be grateful for that. The improvements for patient confidentiality will be wonderful.”

Check out your options for a career in medicine at Griffith University’s Pathways to Medicine information evenings in Brisbane on 16 May and on the Gold Coast on 18 May.

griffith.edu.au/medicine

Right time: Isabel Ewing and Charles Noonan will learn their trade as junior doctors in the surrounds of the new Gold Coast University Hospital.
Opportunity knocks for pharmacy enthusiasts.

Inspirational figures played key roles in the career-forming decisions of Master of Pharmacy students Ariadne Williams and Mitch von Itzstein to study at Griffith University.

From an early age Mitch had an avid interest in medical research and was inclined to follow in the footsteps of his uncle, Professor Mark von Itzstein, director of Griffith's renowned Institute for Glycomics.

Griffith's Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science was an obvious choice when Brisbane State High School student Mitch assessed the options for his career path. "It was one of the reasons I chose to go to Griffith. The program is structured so you get a full science degree and in that a little more exposure to research and general science rather than being entirely pharmacy centric. You get a broader exposure to science and therefore broader career options."

Ariadne Williams initially studied Biomedical Science at Griffith University and it was a pharmacology course given by Dr Roselyn Rose'Meyer during the final semester that made her mind up to take Pharmaceutical Science. "She was inspiring. She presented a different perspective on what pharmacy was about. The way she explained things just switched something in my head and I knew this was what I wanted to do.

"She talked about how drugs work in the body and how to make drugs and it resonated. I decided this was for me."

On completion of their Masters program Ariadne and Mitch start a 12-month internship at Gold Coast Hospital, after securing the only two placements available from about 100 applications. "We’ll be evaluating the charts of patients and ensuring they are getting the right medication," says Mitch. "We will also work with doctors to decide on the treatment options. In the hospital we can get much more involved in the treatment options."

Canadian native Ariadne is also looking forward to being on ward rounds. She is hopeful the opening of the new Gold Coast University Hospital will generate the employment opportunity for this to become a long-term career reality. "It’s an inspirational thought to think I can do something different every day. Every patient is different, every line of treatment is different. Pharmacy is a lot of work but so rewarding in the end."

Griffith University’s Pharmaceutical Science degree is a high-quality, stand-alone three-year program offering graduates a wide range of employment prospects in management, sales, marketing, manufacturing, research and development, and clinical trials. Graduates also have the option of added value in the form of a Master of Pharmacy, an 18-month postgraduate program that reinforces industry knowledge and develops clinical skills. Commonwealth Grant Scheme places are now available for the Master of Pharmacy.

Decision making: Ariadne Williams and Mitch von Itzstein are looking forward to taking part in the decision-making process that benefits patients.

Gettings down to the body basics

The School of Anatomy, one of the leading anatomical facilities in the country, underpins health education at Griffith University. Students of medicine, dentistry and oral health, physiotherapy and exercise science, pharmacy, biomedical science, and nursing and midwifery all learn the basics at the school near the Gold Coast Hospital.

The school’s relocation to the university’s Gold Coast campus on completion of the Health and Knowledge Precinct at the end of 2012 will see it quadruple in size. At present the facility includes a laboratory with a capacity for 180 students, plus independent learning laboratories, a histology and pathology laboratory, and an embalming and dissecting suite with cadaver storage and preparation areas. Top trainers are dedicated to teaching and research in gross histological, pathological and radiographic anatomy, including dissection.

About 1400 Griffith University health students who use the anatomy laboratory each year. It is also visited by students from a number of local high schools and is used for surgical training and workshops run by external groups.

griffith.edu.au/anatomy
Unlocking the science of sport

When she’s not in a Griffith University exercise physiology lab studying the effects of oral contraception on endurance athletes, Bachelor of Exercise Science graduate Sarah Joyce can be found pounding Gold Coast pavements and clocking up her own kilometres.

Sarah (28) has recruited 36 athletic volunteers, including 12 men, for a PhD study into the effects of oral contraception on female athletes.

“The prevalence of oral contraception among recreational and elite female athletes is high. It is currently estimated that as many as 80 per cent of elite female athletes are taking oral contraception. Despite this, little is known about its effect on exercise response and athletic performance.”

Sarah, a native of Tasmania, started studying exercise science in 2007 with a career in physiotherapy in mind but soon discovered a taste for physiology.

“I became interested in how the body’s systems – the cardiovascular, respiratory, metabolic and musculoskeletal systems – integrate to work together. My main aim is to provide valuable information to female athletes and their coaches on the effect of oral contraception, with a view to optimising athletic performance.”

The 18-month study will assess the effect of a low dose of oral contraception on body responses to exercise, specifically the cardiovascular responses to aerobic exercise.

Sarah says that current literature suggests that oral contraception use may have detrimental effects on endurance performance. “My personal interest is in endurance sport. I’m enjoying the research because I’ve found the right topic for me.”

Students fill gap in rural dental service

It was the sense of utter isolation that first struck Kylie Arnot when she found herself 900km from home in the northern NSW town of Brewarrina.

“I realised how often we take the small things for granted, things like there being a dentist just down the street,” says the first-year dental science student from the Gold Coast.

Kylie (30) was among a group of 10 Griffith University dentistry students who made a huge impact in the little town of 1100 residents during a three week placement at the start of the year.

In its third year, Griffith University’s Brewarrina Rural and Remote Dental Project exposes final-year students to potential careers in rural communities, while also addressing an extreme lack of dental services in remote areas.

The nearest dental clinic to Brewarrina is about 100km away. “Many of the Indigenous people do not have transport to attend the larger cities for dental treatment, so they let their teeth and mouth problems go,” says local resident Lynette McHughes, one of the beneficiaries from the Griffith influx.

The students and a supervisor operated the dental clinic in Brewarrina from mid-February to March, examining patients, giving oral hygiene advice and emergency treatment where necessary.

Kylie completed her degree in Oral Health Dental Science in 2009 and is in the second year of her Graduate Diploma of Dentistry.

She has also been part of a similar HOPE4HEALTH project in Cherbourg. “It has had a significant and lasting impact on me personally and I intend to continue working in rural, remote areas and Indigenous communities,” she says.

“Other students should just be a part of it and embrace it. It was a big change, but it has been a great learning experience.”

Students fill gap in rural dental service

“Country life: Kylie Arnot (left) is among a group of Griffith students making a difference to lives in the bush.
Honours student Natasha Briffa has always been interested in why people do what they do.

Studying a Bachelor of Psychological Science at Griffith University was an obvious choice for the Gold Coast student when her attentions turned to tertiary studies.

Now in her fourth year, the 21-year-old is focusing on a form of human behaviour that intrigues and challenges her – schoolyard bullying.

“When I was at school I knew kids who were bullied,” she says. “People sometimes choose to ignore the fact that bullying exists. It is important to understand why it happens in the first place.

“I’m interested in bullying intentions and what factors influence being a bully. It’s such a big issue now and is increasingly prevalent in primary schools.”

She believes that attitudes towards bullying must change among young children.

Determining the factors that influence these attitudes is an important stepping stone towards effective interventions in the future.

“I am looking at the impact the peer group can have on the bully’s intention. What behaviours do they see as acceptable?

“What kind of behaviour does the bully use to improve their position in a group? Can the group prevent bullying by not facilitating the bully’s intentions?

“A lot of the focus is often on one child, the bully, but there is a bigger picture to be considered.”

Studying psychology has trained Natasha to be more observant and aware of people’s actions and behaviour.

On completion of her studies she would ultimately like to practise clinical psychology.

“It’s a good feeling to know you’ve got the ability to keep the public safe,” says the 45-year-old who graduated from Griffith University in 2010 with a degree in Public Health.

“In a lot of jobs you mightn’t have that power. You’re able to make a difference straight away.”

The opportunity to study Public Health at Griffith, while also doing a cadetship with Brisbane City Council, came about after Scott spoke with a Griffith University representative at a trade fair.

“I always liked the environment and I always liked the idea of making a difference and helping a place like Brisbane to stay clean and healthy.”

He was out of town when Brisbane was flooded in January.

On his return, one of his first roles, was to help a paint manufacturer severely affected by flood inundation to resume operation while ensuring the safety of the local community and surrounding sensitive areas was maintained.

“We did what we could to get them back on track without compromising health, safety and environmental issues.”

His multi-faceted job as an environmental health officer also involves policy writing aimed at protecting the natural environment, and investigating air pollution and environmental incidents like oil spills.

“There are a lot of things you can do with the degree. I believe the Public Health program can open a lot of doors.”

griffith.edu.au/psychology

Taking action: Natasha Briffa wants to make a change in the school yard.

griffith.edu.au/public-health

In the public eye: Scott Beard has put his Public Health degree to immediate effect.
Take nursing to the next level

As a child Netchanok Sritoomma dreamed about growing up to be a doctor.

However, top marks in a high school test in her native Thailand presented her with the opportunity to study nursing and she has never looked back.

She followed her Bachelor of Nursing with a Master in Medical and Health Social Sciences before working as a nursing lecturer at the Christian University of Thailand. Evidence-based research has always played an integral part in her nursing career and she leaped at the chance to take her interest in complementary medicine a step further by undertaking a PhD at Griffith University’s Research Centre for Clinical and Community Practice Innovation.

Her focus is on chronic low back pain in older people and the potential to relieve this pain through Swedish massage using aromatic ginger oil. Ginger has been used as an anti-inflammatory and anti-rheumatic for musculoskeletal pain and Netchanok is optimistic that her PhD research will demonstrate a greater reduction in pain intensity than previously identified. She will compare the effects of Swedish massage as a superficial massage with the effects of traditional Thai massage as a deep tissue massage where oils are not used.

A total of 120 participants will be massaged twice a week for five weeks, involving 30 minute sessions at an award-winning health tourism hospital in Thailand. The data will then be analysed at Griffith’s Nathan campus.

“In nursing we study the effect of care interventions. In this study we are asking what is the quality and effectiveness of the pain relief using different types of massage styles,” she says.

“Nursing is different from medical care. In nursing we give holistic care. We take time with patients, we understand them and give them things that they need. We give patients both physical and psychosocial care and explain things to them. Nursing is an art and a science.”

Piecing together an inspiring career

Second-year student Nicole Bradley has a plan and Griffith’s Bachelor of Midwifery program is a key part of it.

To that end she has already studied architecture and anthropology, and has a degree in business communication from Griffith University.

The Bachelor of Midwifery program is now the perfect fit for her and, perhaps, the final piece of her personal jigsaw.

“I will draw on all of that knowledge, from the environment in which a woman gives birth to cultural differences about breast feeding.”

Nicole describes the teachers at the Logan campus as brilliant and is excited about what she is learning and how she can apply it to her future career.

The innovative nature of the course both teaches and encourages students to recognize birth as the positive, uplifting experience that it is.

“Education is important in birth and especially the way we present that education. Empowering women and challenging fearful perceptions of birth are crucial,” she says.

“Too often we hear about the risks involved. Very rarely does a woman feel her body is beautifully designed to give birth.”

She sees the post-natal role of the midwife as involved, educative and very much integrated into the life of the mother.

“Midwifery is a very inspiring career, one where you can empower women and follow a privileged journey.”
Taking scientific passion overseas

Biomedical Science student Stuart Sharry wants to give the cane toad a good name.

The fourth-year honours student was awarded more than $50,000 in the annual Prime Minister’s Australia Asia Endeavour Awards to research cane toad venom, using cutting-edge technology at the National University of Singapore.

During the next 12 months the 20-year-old will investigate the possibility that cane toad venom could have anti-cancer, antibiotic and pain-killing qualities.

Stuart has worked closely with Griffith supervisor Dr S Niru Nirthanan who set up the Neuropharmacology Drug Discovery laboratory at the National University of Singapore before moving to the Gold Coast.

Scientific research is Stuart’s passion and he plans to follow his undergraduate pursuits with a PhD.

“If I did medicine I could help X number of people,” he says.

“Doing research is a bit of a gamble. If you don’t get a result, you help no people. But if you make a breakthrough, you can help lots of people.

“And what you find can be constructive towards other research that’s being done.”

A detailed profile of the composition of cane toad venom could help develop new classes of antibiotics to fight drug-resistant bacteria.

Stuart will return from Singapore to the Gold Coast campus to complete his fourth-year studies before going back to Singapore to the National Neuroscience Institute to do an internship, where he will focus on anti-cancer molecules from cane toads.

In this process, Stuart will also further strengthen research collaborations between Singapore and Australia, in keeping with the Award’s aim to build deep and enduring professional linkages between Australia and Asia.

griffith.edu.au/biomedical-science-medical-diagnostics

The Student’s Story

Working together to work it all out

The patient, a man in his thirties, had a severe type of bowel disease, suffered from depression and abused substances. He lived in a dishevelled house without any form of transport and he had had enough of the health system.

He found himself in the care of five final-year health students from Griffith University – Collette Morris (Psychology), Rebecca Pigg (Pharmacy), Kylie Henderson (Medicine), Olivia Tran (Dentistry and Oral Health) and Social Work student Ian Connop.

The second Australian HealthFusion Team Challenge in September 2010 presented the Griffith health team with a clinical setting to showcase their healthcare talents against nine other University teams from all over Australia. Their talents proved a winning combination.

The Australian HealthFusion Team Challenge is a one-day event where health students have their knowledge and their wits tested presenting health management plans before an invited audience.

A patient with complex needs and multiple disease states is presented to a team of students who must pull their varied professional skills together to get the best result for the patient.

“The judges watched their interaction and how they shared the care, and who was nominated for what responsibility. Their response to the unexpected was what won it,” says Fiona.

“Their approach is not as planned, but they are kid enough to be flexible. It’s an exercise in trust, aimed at improving efficiency by taking out the prestigious national competition in 2010.

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Inter-professional learning is a key research subject for Fiona who is keen to build on last year’s triumph.

Perfect mix: Collette Morris (left), Rebecca Pigg, Fiona Ellem, Ian Connop, Kylie Henderson and Olivia Tran combined for a Griffith triumph.

Image courtesy of HealthFusion Team Challenge.

The Teacher’s Account

Sharing, caring and celebrating

Fiona Ellem is one for the big picture.

It’s what drives her enthusiasm to assemble the best team possible for the annual Australian HealthFusion Team Challenge.

The pharmacotherapeutics lecturer was the teacher who brought together the doctor, the psychologist, the dentist, the pharmacist and the social worker from Griffith’s health student ranks to take out the prestigious national competition in 2010.

“It’s an exercise in trust, aimed at improving efficiency by developing a willingness to share care, and open the lines of communication.”

The fourth-year health students have their knowledge and their wits tested presenting health management plans before an invited audience.

A patient with complex needs and multiple disease states is presented to a team of students who must pull their varied professional skills together to get the best result for the patient.

“They watched their interaction and how they shared the care, and who was nominated for what responsibility. Their response to the unexpected was what won it,” says Fiona.

Sure it was role play but it was role play with a cutting, real-life edge. Teams of future health professionals had to ask themselves how they would handle such a situation for real.

Would they appoint a team leader? Who should that be? Was the medical doctor the obvious candidate or did medical responsibility for a patient fall short of ultimate responsibility?

“We very quickly sorted out our roles,” says Ian who emerged as team coordinator.

“But we could step out of our roles to advise and offer opinions. With some of the professions the attitude was more black and white than with others.”

“We were very aware that the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. Some of the other teams weren’t.

“We actively engaged the client. We talked to him. We asked how we could make the treatment continue to work for the client once he walked out the door.”

Ian, a former shearer, miner and bookshop owner, is now working with clients at Relationships Australia, where he went on practical placements while studying at Griffith.

He recalls taking the content of innovative justice lectures at Griffith in the morning and applying them to his work in the afternoon.

“Social work can be much more holistic than people realise.”

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Pathways to Medicine Information Evening

Find out more about studying medicine at Griffith University by attending a medicine information evening.

Brisbane
Date: Monday 16 May
Time: 6 pm – 7 pm
Venue: Ian Hanger Recital Hall
Queenland Conservatorium
Griffith University, South Bank

Gold Coast
Date: Wednesday 18 May
Time: 6 pm – 7 pm
Venue: G17 Lecture Theatre 4
Gold Coast campus
Parklands Drive, Southport

To register visit griffith.edu.au/openday

Open Day – Sunday, 14 August 2011

Nathan – Gold Coast – South Bank
Find out more about studying Health at Griffith University by attending Open Day on Sunday, 14 August.

We’ll excite you with the wide range of programs on offer, explain about the different campuses and facilities, impress you with the knowledge and practical experience of the lecturers and remind you how much fun you’ll have as a student at one of Australia’s leading Universities.

We’ll also show you why Griffith University will give you a better start in your future career and prepare you to play your part in the world.

So make sure you come along to Open Day and see how we can help you make a world of difference.

Our Logan and Mt Gravatt campuses’ degrees will be showcased at the Gold Coast and Nathan campuses during Open Day.

griffith.edu.au/openday

The Go Health Go Griffith Experience for Year 10 students

23 – 24 June
Year 10 students on the Gold Coast are invited to participate in a unique two-day workshop in Health at Griffith University’s Gold Coast campus.

The Go Health Go Griffith Experience assists with senior subject selection by showcasing opportunities in medical, physiological and biological sciences and other health related areas of education.

Participants will experience different elements of health degree programs – social, public, biological, environmental and medicinal areas, through practical and theoretical sessions delivered by health professionals and scientists.

Workshop sessions are designed to engage, enthuse, excite and involve participants in areas such as biology, physiology, medicine, pharmacology, anatomy, molecular biology, psychology, clinical skills, disability services and public health.

To register visit griffith.edu.au/go-health-go-griffith

Please note registration closes on 31 MAY and places are limited to the first 100 students.

Go Health Go Griffith Experience

Date: Monday 16 May
Time: 6 pm – 7 pm
Venue: G17 Lecture Theatre 4
Gold Coast campus
Parklands Drive, Southport

To register visit griffith.edu.au/go-health-go-griffith

Health clinics lead way with latest treatment

A range of excellent services are on offer to students, staff and a much wider community at Griffith Health Clinics.

Trained students working under strict supervision use the very latest evidence and technology when working at the university’s dental, physiotherapy and psychology clinics.

Clinical psychologists with at least four years’ training, who are completing postgraduate studies in clinical psychology, operate out of psychology clinics at the Gold Coast and Mt Gravatt.

The most up to date technology and equipment is also available to physiotherapy and exercise science postgraduate students who gain valuable clinical and professional experience working at the Physiotherapy and Active Health Centre on the Gold Coast campus.

The centre offers treatment for acute injury, helps with rehabilitation after surgery, and also focuses on the prevention of injury.

Comprehensive treatment for a range of dental conditions is available at the Griffith University Dental Clinic, near Gold Coast Hospital, to patients of all ages with a variety of dental conditions.

While providing top treatment to the local community, the dental clinic also ensures further training for future technicians, prosthetists, therapists, hygienists and general dentists.

From their third year, senior dental students start working in the clinic under strict supervision by qualified dentists and specialists.

Referrals are not necessary.

Griffith Health Clinics contact details:
Dental Clinic: Ph 07 5678 0220 or email dentalclinic@griffith.edu.au
Psychology Clinic (Gold Coast): Ph 07 5552 8556 or email psychclinic-gc@griffith.edu.au
Psychology Clinic (Mt Gravatt): Ph 07 3735 3301 or email psych-clinic@griffith.edu.au
Physiotherapy and Active Health Centre: Ph 07 5552 9220 or email thephysiocentre@griffith.edu.au

Highly trained: Students work in Griffith Dental Clinic under strict supervision.