Teaching excellence recognised in national awards

Griffith Health had three academic staff recognised recently in the 2007 Carrick Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning.

Dr Kym Macfarlane and Jenny Cartmel from the School of Human Services were recognised for their efforts in reconceptualising practicum experience for students in the Child and Family Studies program. Their Circles of Change model facilitates critical reflection by the student during their work-integrated learning placements in early childhood settings.

Associate Professor Keithia Wilson from the School of Psychology was also recognised for her motivational approach to student success from engagement through to graduation.

All ten Griffith submissions for the Carrick Citations were successful this year with each recipient awarded a $10,000 professional grant.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Professor John Dewar said the success rate was indicative of Griffith’s high standard of teaching and focus on student needs.

“These awards are highly prestigious within the university community. They help us celebrate and reward our teachers who demonstrate the highest level of professionalism and enthusiasm,” Professor Dewar said.
Foundation Year update
Surveys of almost 600 students in the Foundation Year program on the Gold Coast have returned an overall positive experience of the program’s first semester.

The evaluation found first year students from the Schools of Pharmacy, Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, Dentistry and Oral Health and Medical Science responded well to one of the unique features of the Foundation Year – a combined science laboratory program.

“Students rated the lab program highly not only for skill development but also for the opportunity to develop peer support networks,” according to Dean of Learning and Teaching Associate Professor Nick Buys.

The common first year program was introduced to improve consistency of teaching and assessment across core content areas such as biochemistry and physiology, but also to enhance opportunities for students to engage with peers in other health disciplines.

“Health services these days require health professionals to work in multidisciplinary teams and our students have the opportunity to study with and get to know students who will be going into those other professional roles,” Associate Professor Buys said.

The evaluation showed that students also appreciated user-friendly resources such as the Foundation Year CD – a package of lecture and laboratory notes, revision questions, and assessment support materials.

Additional supports such as online study groups and a Common Time program providing social and academic support were welcomed by those who used them, but may be modified for better accessibility in future years.

Griffith showcases its expertise in aged care
An ageing population, increasing demand for high quality residential care, and a chronic shortage of nursing staff to provide that care, are important factors driving the teaching and research agenda in the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Recently published research provides insight into the particularly complex area of caring for people with dementia – a condition that affects one in 15 Australians over 65 years of age and one-in-four over 85 years.

One study led by Professor Wendy Moyle found that although residents with dementia had significant problems with memory and language, they could still contribute meaningful and reliable information about their quality of life.

Some of the factors that most influenced their wellbeing included meaningful activities, the ability to at least partially care for themselves, self-esteem and social networks.

“These are areas that nursing and personal care staff can influence in their daily practices,” Professor Moyle said.

“We can’t do much about the progression of their dementia but we can take an interest in people, treat them with respect, encourage purposeful activity including self-care, and foster positive interactions with family and friends.”

Professor Moyle’s expertise in dementia care has also attracted funding from the federal government to develop a new course on decision making in dementia care.

The course, one of a suite of courses being developed within the Eastern Australia Dementia Training and Study Centre, will be introduced into the aged care strand of the Bachelor of Nursing and the Master of Advanced Practice – Gerontological Nursing from 2008.

Griffith’s track record of clinical aged care research outcomes and positive interactions with industry partners has also led to the creation of a new research fellow position in aged care.

Dr Lorraine Venturato has just been appointed to the position which is jointly funded by Griffith’s Research Centre in Clinical and Community Practice Innovation and RSL Care, an aged care provider of independent living, residential care and homecare services throughout Queensland and New South Wales.

Deborah Oxlade, executive manager of service development for RSL Care, said the joint venture was one way of building strategic research capability within the organisation.

“We have partnered with Griffith on a number of projects in the past. This post-doctoral position gives us more opportunity to initiate the research questions and give us a better understanding of the models of care, organisational structures and clinical governance that supports best practice.”

Dr Venturato’s research interests include the development of clinical leadership within aged care settings – to create job satisfaction and address workforce shortages, as well as focussing on quality of care and clinical outcomes.

“Skilled staff are the key to the provision of quality care. Aged care is particularly so because we are labour dependent rather than dependent on high-tech solutions.”

“Without research and the development of an evidence base for aged care practice, we can’t highlight aged care as a sophisticated speciality area and worthwhile career path for nurses.”
Female officers fit in well with previously male dominated workplaces

Occupations such as police and correctional officers have shaped up well as careers for women, with the new workplaces proving to be supportive and satisfying work environments.

A survey of 359 correctional officers across Queensland has shown female officers in particular enjoy high job satisfaction and the support of their colleagues and supervisors. The positive findings contrast with the popular perception that policing and corrections might still be tough boys’ clubs that overtly or subtly exclude female members of the workforce.

Researcher Amanda Biggs, a PhD candidate in the School of Psychology, said correctional officers worked in environments that had potential for high stress.

“A great deal of research about women in corrections focuses on the additional challenges they face working in a traditionally masculine work environments. So it’s pleasing to find women in the study felt included in informal social networks and have mentors or role models at work”.

Ms Biggs said similar results had been shown in the police force.

She said correctional officers felt they do a great service for the community in terms of supporting the rehabilitation process of offenders.

“While there has been a perception that ‘soft skills’ or stereotypical feminine traits such as the ability to negotiate or communicate well are not valuable, that is no longer true in these environments.”
National role for pharmacy student
Third year pharmaceutical science student Lisa Goldsmith has been elected vice president of the National Australian Pharmacy Students’ Association (NAPSA). Lisa originally studied nursing and worked as a registered nurse in hospitals for about six years before deciding she needed a change. She said nursing was a physically demanding job and she had become more interested in how medications worked. A career change to pharmacy seemed an attractive option. Lisa will graduate from the Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science at the end of this year and then study for an additional 18 months in the Master of Pharmacy program. In her role as NAPSA vice president, she will help oversee activities such as providing education programs for pharmacy students which complement their university studies. These include short courses in first aid, wound care and alternative therapies. Lisa plans to work in hospital pharmacy – at least for the first few years of her new career.

Health students help Red Cross
Griffith students including more than 70 medical students and 28 pharmacy students rolled up their sleeves and donated blood in August as part of a national effort to increase blood supplies during the winter colds and ‘flu season. Griffith University Medicine Society president Alicia Smith said students were proud to get behind the blood drive, organised in conjunction with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. “It’s a fantastic initiative that has the capacity to make a very real difference in someone’s life,” she said. “By encouraging students to donate during this time, we are aiming to boost the number of donations and hopefully add to the pool of regular donors.” Each donation can help save up to three lives.

Dinner in the dark
The School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science held an interesting dinner at CJ’s restaurant on the Gold Coast campus recently – with guests required to eat and enjoy their meals while blindfolded. The aim of the event was to enhance empathic responses in entry level physiotherapy students, particularly to people who have vision impairments. Many students were surprised to find just how poorly their blinded perceptions matched reality. However despite the fumbling and insecurities, everyone who attended the evening found it to be highly memorable and great fun.

Anne Ferguson, a Griffith law student who has a visual impairment, was the guest speaker. She reminded the diners of some usually inadvertent behaviours, such as not saying goodbye to a person with vision impairment before leaving their presence, which can demonstrate ignorance or a lack of respect for such people.
New initiatives to enhance the student experience

The Health Group has boosted its commitment to reviewing and improving the experiences of its first year students with a $70,000 investment in a student orientation and engagement plan.

First year advisors from all Schools have been involved in planning and implementing activities that help develop students’ capability, their sense of purpose in their study program, and offer opportunities for social support.

Associate Professor Keithia Wilson, from the School of Psychology at Mt Gravatt campus, introduced a unique Just in Time initiative for students who failed or received only a borderline pass in their first assessment of the year. Failing students were given the opportunity to reflect on their performance on their first assessment item with the aid of a self-directed workbook, followed up with intensive one-on-one problem solving sessions with their first year tutors.

“Our aim was to lift their self-efficacy and reduce the non-submission rate for the next assessment item.”

She said 89 per cent of students who participated in the intervention went on to submit their second assessment item and all of those students passed.

This compared favourably with a 78 per cent submission rate and 80 per cent pass rate by students who did not have access to the Just in Time intervention.

The School also introduced a peer mentoring program for first year students, a half semester POP (Psychology Orientation Program) providing academic and social support for students, and Intensive Training and Development for new first year tutors to support high quality teaching.

“Our wrap-around approach for commencing students provides a safety net especially for students at risk such as those who are the first in their family to come to university.”

She said helping students engage with their program had halved the non submission rates for assessment compared to last year and reduced the fail rate by up to nine per cent in one course.

Some of the initiatives across other schools include a tiered mentoring program for oral health students, PharmFirst sessions to complement the Foundation year program for pharmaceutical science students, and Common Time program for human services students.

Fun and fitness as teenagers hip-hop for health

A hip-hop and street dance extravaganza in the Logan Gardens recently was a fitting finale to an innovative health promotion project engaging with local youth.

The joint project led by Griffith’s School of Public Health and funded by Logan City Council has brought Logan high school students together with a number of health, dance and youth agencies to inspire a healthier lifestyle.

Head of Public Health Professor Don Stewart said many young people, especially those from different cultural groups, are not interested in and do not participate in regular sporting or physical activities.

“We are hoping to show that offering street dance and hip-hop is an effective strategy to encourage young people into physical activity. It is also a possible mechanism to engage with them on related issues such as good nutrition,” he said.

He said dancing also offered young people an opportunity to engage with their peers and build self esteem and social connections.

An evaluation of the project is underway.

Students from Mabel Park State High School, Loganlea State High School, Marsden State High School, Shailer Park State High School, Woodridge State High School and Kingston College have been involved in the project.

A competition between the dance groups resulted in a first place trophy awarded to the Marsden students.

Overseas travel wins

Dr Jenny Gamble (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Tracy Ludlow (School of Psychology) have been awarded Ian Potter Foundation Travel Awards. The awards support travel by early career researchers to international meetings with the aim of developing research and relationships with international peers. Dr Gamble travelled to Sheffield, UK to attend the International Network for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following Childbirth. Ms Ludlow attended the 13th European Conference on Developmental Psychology in Germany.

Staff members are eligible to apply with the proviso that matching grants, generally $2,000–3,000, are approved from their School or Centre. www.foundation.ianpotter.org.au
Business plan win for new pharmacists

A team from Griffith University’s School of Pharmacy on the Gold Coast have won an inaugural National Pharmacy Student Business Plan Competition.

The competition, sponsored by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, helps to develop the business acumen of future pharmacy owners.

Team member Brendan Landon said business planning was integral to the success of retail pharmacies especially within a changing professional environment.

“Our business plan reflected the fact that pharmacists will in the near future be remunerated for services including consultations with clients on the management of chronic conditions such as diabetes and asthma.”

He said their plan was based on a proposal to redevelop an actual pharmacy in Robina Town Centre. Their research included a customer survey and an audit of other pharmacy services in the area.

“We took into account the demographics of the area and the fact that many people are willing to pay for extra service such as extended trading hours.”

“We focussed on developing a serviced based pharmacy with a private consultation room for our weight, asthma, diabetes and evidence-based holistic health services. Developing a service based approach will differentiate us from our competitors in the area that are focussed solely on price.”

The business plan project started as a small component of assessment for their business management course in Semester One – the final semester of their Master of Pharmacy.

However with the encouragement of lecturer Phil Woods, the team decided to put in the extra time and effort and make the most of the competition opportunity.

Members of the winning team Rowan Lowe, Brendan Landon, Sean Young and Amin Javanmard graduated from Griffith on July 30 and are now working in community pharmacies in Currumbin, Broadbeach, Tweed Heads and Brisbane respectively.

LiFe Award for Lifetime Research into Suicide

Professor Diego De Leo, Director of the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention and WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Suicide Prevention was awarded a LiFe Award in the category of LiFetime Research by Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). This award is reserved for an organisation, group or individual who has made a distinguished contribution to research on suicide prevention over an extensive career.

Cancer research opportunity

School of Dentistry and Oral Health senior lecturer Dr Jin Gao was an invited speaker at the 9th Australian and New Zealand Head and Neck Society Annual Symposium in Brisbane earlier this year. His presentation, “Over-expression of KLK4 and KLK7 in Head and Neck Cancers”, included research outcomes from the International Visiting Fellowship (China) program and collaboration with the Queensland University of Technology. Potential PhD Scholarships and Research Fellowships are available in the area of oral squamous cell carcinomas, oral maxillofacial cancers and bone metastasis. Contact j.gao@griffith.edu.au or 07 5678 0752.

Physiotherapy offer helping hands at University Games

Staff and students from the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science were on hand to treat tired and tested muscles recently as volunteers at the Australian University Games on the Gold Coast. Sports physiotherapist Dr Maria Constantinou, a veteran of elite sporting events such as last year’s Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and both the Athens and Sydney Olympics, together with her colleagues Leanne Bisset and Sonia Offord led the physiotherapy team. Their brief included the assessment and provision of advice and treatment on injuries, help with preventive taping, and pre- and post-event massage. More than 6,000 participants from over 40 universities and 28 individual and team sports competed at the University Games.
New program to develop clinical educators

Health professionals who supervise or teach health students in hospitals and other clinical settings now have an opportunity to earn relevant postgraduate qualifications.

Griffith Health has introduced a Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education available from next year which will help develop the skills of health professionals who enjoy teaching students.

Co-convenor of the program and senior lecturer in the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science Megan Dalton said the program recognised the important role clinical educators played in the training of the future health workforce.

“Supervised clinical experience in hospitals and community health settings is a critical component in the skill development of all health students,” she said.

“The health professionals who take on this role do so because of their commitment to developing their profession and typically juggle teaching and supervision with their own workload.”

She said the program would help develop more effective clinical educators, support their job satisfaction and ultimately enhance opportunities for career advancement.

The Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education is relevant for all health disciplines including medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapy, psychology and dietetics.

It will be offered part-time and combine intensive face-to-face workshops with flexible, online delivery, allowing busy clinicians from across Australia to continue working and still enrol in the program.

Dr Heather Alexander, formerly with the School of Medicine and now associate director of the Griffith Institute for Higher Education, co-convenes the program.

For more information: Wendy Harris 5552 8537, w.harris@griffith.edu.au

International conference success

Last year’s International Symposium on Pneumococci and Pneumococcal Diseases 5 (ISPPD5), co-chaired by Pro Vice Chancellor (Health) Professor Allan Cripps, has been recognised by Meeting and Events Australia with a national award for outstanding performance in the Australian meetings and events industry. ISPPD5 presented a unique opportunity for the world’s leading experts on pneumococcal disease to meet and share their knowledge and experiences. Alice Springs was chosen as the location for the meeting because Aboriginal children in Central Australia have one the highest rates of pneumococcal disease in the world. Significant outcomes of the Symposium were the development of a global action plan against childhood pneumonia, a consensus paper on animal models to test new vaccines and publication of select papers in the international journal Vaccine.

QAIHC Executive Development Program

The first cohort of Indigenous managers from Aboriginal Medical Services associated with the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC), have commenced the QAIHC Executive Development Program in the School of Public Health. Participants will receive training in health finance and project management, health policy and planning, strategic decision making in health, and change management in dynamic healthcare systems. The new program is delivered in intensive blocks - designed to fit in with the heavy workload and managerial responsibilities of the participants who come from across the State. The structure reduces the isolation of the distance learner and allows for interaction and group learning across managers and services. As part of this innovative mode of delivery, the program is designed along problem based learning principles with scenarios designed to have immediate applicability to individual Aboriginal Medical Services and their local communities.

Learning and Teaching grant

Griffith has won a national grant of over $75,000 for the Building aspiration in the Logan Region project. The project, chaired by the Head of Human Services Dr Jayne Clapton, is focused on helping Indigenous students to engage in tertiary education as well as raising Indigenous undergraduate enrolments. This two year project is a partnership between Griffith University, Education Queensland and the Southbank Institute of Technology. An Indigenous liaison officer will be employed to engage with local school students and their extended Indigenous community encouraging participation in post-secondary education and training, and to increase access pathways into degree programs in the Logan region.

Professor Emeritus

University Council has conferred the title of “Professor Emeritus” on Professor Ifor Beacham in recognition of his distinguished service to scholarship and to the University.
A delegation from the School of Dentistry and Oral Health attended the International Oral Prosthetics Techniques Symposium in China recently. Senior lecturers John Mackay and Jane Evans were keynote speakers on the topic of dental technology education. The event coincided with celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Tianjin Dental Hospital.