WELCOME

This magazine was created to be part of a conversation between Tasmania and its University. It is a conversation about transforming lives, building economies and communities, and creating impact through research and learning. Most of all, it is a conversation about our future.

This second issue of O2T, like its predecessor, highlights that we are guided by the three core themes of our strategic document, Open to Talent, after which this magazine is named. Those themes – students, research and community – steer the University’s pursuit of excellence in a practical way, through somewhat challenging and uncertain times, in the face of increasing competition, scarce resources and a rapidly changing world.

They are reflected in our achievements, some of which are showcased here – the success of our students and graduates in the prestigious Rhodes and John Monash Scholarships, the world-class research conducted at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies on the Hobart waterfront, and the award-winning Southern Gospel Choir.

We are confident a focus on our themes is the best way to secure a vibrant, sustainable future for this University and the beautiful island state it serves.

– Professor Peter Rathjen, Vice-Chancellor

HOW TO CONTACT US

General inquiries
Telephone: (03) 6226 2999

Postal address
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 51
Hobart TAS 7001

CRICOS Code: 00586B

utass.edu.au

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PAIR ON THE RIGHT RHODES

University of Tasmania boasts not just one but two Rhodes Scholars this year as arts student Robert Hortle joins Asian studies student Samuel Forbes on a prestigious academic journey. By Cherie Cooper

It is widely considered the world’s most prestigious scholarship, so the University of Tasmania is thrilled to have not one but two Rhodes Scholars for 2014.

Samuel Forbes, 24, an Asian studies student who won the Tasmanian Rhodes Scholarship last November, will be joined at the famed University of Oxford by fellow University of Tasmania arts classmate Robert Hortle, 24. Robert, an international relations student, was one of just three outstanding applicants nationwide to win an Australia-At-Large Rhodes Scholarship and the first University of Tasmania student to win the scholarship since 1995.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said the performance of the two graduates – and that of Fernando do Campo, who has won a 2014 Australian Cultural John Monash Scholarship – was outstanding.

“We are certain these scholars will continue to achieve in their respective fields and serve as a stellar example for arts students,” Professor Rathjen said.

Fernando’s John Monash scholarship will allow him to study a Masters in Fine Arts in at Parsons in New York, one of the world’s most renowned art and design universities.

Australia-At-Large Rhodes Scholarship winner Robert Hortle holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honours from the University of Tasmania. At Oxford he plans to undertake a Masters in Development Studies, focusing on the understanding of change and inequality in developing countries.

“When I was seven my family moved to Tonga for three years – that had a big impact on my life course and led to me wanting to help those living in developing countries,” Robert said.

Tasmanian Rhodes Scholarship winner Samuel Forbes holds a Bachelor of Arts in Japanese and Chinese and a Graduate Certificate in Arts (Asian Studies) from the University of Tasmania and a Masters degree from Nanjing University. His research focus is neurolinguistics and psycholinguistics, particularly in child language acquisition.

“As we understand why very young children acquire language so quickly, then we can look at things like how adults can better acquire a second language,” Samuel said.

Professor Rathjen said it was accepted that the University of Tasmania was known for the strength of its marine science, its medical research and its status as Australia’s finest teaching university.

As demonstrated by these three graduates, the University has excellent arts programs.

Classmates an Oxford Double Act
Pair on the Right Rhodes

Established in 1903 under the will of Cecil Rhodes, the Rhodes is the oldest international graduate scholarship program in the world.

Rhodes’ vision in founding the scholarship program was to develop outstanding leaders who would be motivated to fight “the world’s fight”, “esteem the performance of public duties as their highest aim” and to promote international understanding and peace.

A Rhodes Scholarship covers all university and college fees, a personal stipend and return airfares.

The Monash Scholarships were established with a dual purpose – recognition of civic and military leader Sir John Monash, and encouragement for Australia’s talented graduates to obtain postgraduate qualifications to better equip them for leadership roles.

A Monash Scholarship provides funding for up to three years of full-time postgraduate study at any outside Australia.
RESEARCHERS KEEP FINGER ON THE PULSE
MARATHON HEALTH STUDY

The world’s biggest and longest respiratory health study began in Tasmania in 1968 and continues to collect data that will potentially improve the quality of life for future ageing populations. By Lana Best

In a small medical consulting room tucked away in a corner of the University of Tasmania Rural Clinical School at Burnie, one woman is methodically gathering data for the biggest and longest respiratory health study in the world.

It’s called the Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study (TaHS) and its aim is to help medical scientists understand the factors that, over a lifetime, cause the development of lung diseases and allergies.

Former aged-care nurse Francis Jack is employed two days a week by the University of Tasmania to test the study participants.

As a part-time research assistant, Mrs Jack has been conducting skin prick tests to check for allergies such as grasses, dust mite, moulds, various food groups and animals, and also perform comprehensive lung function tests.

Each participant is also required to fill in an extensive health questionnaire.

The TaHS began in 1968 and since then a picture has been steadily built up of a large group of people, their eating and smoking habits, their exercise regimes, their home and work environments, the cleaning products they use and the illnesses they have had – and a lifetime later that data is available to TaHS researchers and may improve the quality of life of future populations.

The number of participants has dwindled to about 5000 and this year, as they all turn 53, the core “children” are being tested again. While 75 per cent of participants live in Tasmania and are being tested at the Rural Clinical School, at the Launceston Clinical School and at the Medical Science Precinct in Hobart, staff at the study testing centres set up around the country are helping to collect information from Tasmanians who “emigrated”.

Mandy Bennett, of Devonport, can’t even remember her first test for the study when she was just seven, but she dutifully turned up to the Rural Clinical School laboratory a few weeks ago and gave up two hours of her time.

“It’s not hard to do and it’s exciting to think that by playing my small part researchers might one day figure out ways to prevent asthma and other respiratory problems, or learn things like why some people are affected by smoking more than others. Plus, the bonus is I am effectively having my health monitored regularly for free!”

Professor Haydn Walters, University of Tasmania Professorial Fellow and Director of the Centre of Research Excellence for Chronic Respiratory Disease and Lung Ageing in the Faculty of Health, is co-director of TaHS. (His former student, the University of Melbourne’s Professor Shyamali Dharmage, is the other director).

Professor Walters said he was always amazed at the response rate, often as high as 80 per cent, and the amount of analysis the data made possible.

“For instance, it shows us that asthma is still common, about 43 per cent of the total population has suffered from it at some time, but it also shows us that about half of adult asthma actually started in recent years, rather than in childhood as had been thought.

“In children it’s predominantly boys who suffer, in adulthood it’s predominantly women.”

Further information: www.tahs.com.au
Sharing key to learning

By engaging schools, diverse cultural groups and the broader community, the University of Tasmania fosters enduring friendships and opens doors to education, enlightenment ... and fun. By Lana Best

A Ravenswood Heights Primary School student hangs off the arm of a Hawthorn footballer during an Active Launceston kids’ yoga session and finds out how strong you can get by exercising.

Groups of high school students work together identifying intestinal worm eggs in faeces in the University of Tasmania Newnham campus microbiology lab and a newfound fascination with science is born.

A Nepalese nursing student is shown the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony by an Ethiopian computing student during Harmony Day celebrations and a cultural barrier is broken.

The ability of Tasmania’s only university to engage its community and nurture it through education is not always as obvious as a full lecture theatre – but on a daily basis its influence is far-reaching.

Promoting cultural diversity and recognising how it enriches the University’s internal and external communities is also important and, like all forms of community engagement, is a core mission for the University’s engagement and development departments based in Launceston, Hobart and Burnie.

The Newnham campus shares its facilities with more than 100 community organisations and, by doing so, brings thousands of local people to the campus to be involved in many varied activities.

Off campus, there are many situations where the University is building awareness and appreciation of newcomers to the state, stimulating public conversation and debate, and forming partnerships that benefit people of all ages and backgrounds.

One recent success story was the partnership formed between the Hawthorn Football Club and Active Launceston, a community health initiative managed by the University of Tasmania in partnership with the Launceston City Council.

Five Hawks players joined children from Ravenswood Heights Primary School at the Ravenswood Child and Family Centre to take part in a yoga session aimed at teaching the children how to stretch their bodies and minds through storytelling and relaxation exercises.

University of Tasmania Schools Outreach Project Officer Adele Wilson said the summer Science Experience in Launceston was also a great success, with 28 high school students taking part in hands-on science workshops to get an idea of future job prospects.

“The students bonded quickly and many new friendships were made – they have formed a Facebook group to keep in touch,” she said.

And just over a month ago Harmony Day celebrations were organised for all three University campuses in Tasmania.

There are 2600 on-shore international students studying at the University of Tasmania from 102 countries – ranging from almost 800 from China down to 35 countries with a single student represented.

In a free, family-friendly event every Tasmanian had the opportunity to mingle with the students, enjoy multicultural entertainment and food and celebrate diversity.

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Home sweet home

Own bathroom? Check. Own kitchen? Check. Ample storage? Check. This is on-campus living where new apartments offer students all the comforts of home with added convenience. By Anna Osborne

For second-year Biomedical Science student Steffi Ivory, her new surroundings in the recently opened Newnham apartments in Launceston are like home sweet home.

Steffi has joined a growing list of students eager to secure their residencies, with the 180 studio apartments fully subscribed since opening in February.

“I love these apartments,” Steffi said. “There is everything you need here and your own space, which is great.”

Modern and roomy, the new self-contained apartments have been built with university students in mind.

Designed by Tasmanian architects Morrison and Breytenbach, each apartment features a kitchenette, study space, storage and bathroom set in modern surrounds with ample privacy.

“I have my own kitchen and lots of storage,” Steffi said. “Power, water and heating are included, which is convenient.”

The Newnham apartments are part of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) – a joint initiative of the Australian and state governments – designed to help relieve pressure on the supply of affordable housing for eligible students across the state.

This is Steffi’s second year living away from home; a cost-saving decision by her to pursue her career ambitions.

“I’m from Burnie and have wanted to study Biomedical Science for a long time, so I came to Launceston,” she said.

“I don’t own a car and, besides, it would be at least a two-hour drive every day. It’s easier to live on campus. It’s handy. I’m in walking distance to everything.”

There are 770 studio apartments being built by the University of Tasmania across

All the mod cons: Students enjoy comfortable living quarters with the convenience of being close to all amenities; Above, Biomedical Science student Steffi Ivory, of Burnie, in her new studio apartment.

It’s easier to live on campus. I’m in walking distance to everything.
The bare white walls of the Academy Gallery at Launceston’s Inveresk campus are silent, but speak of such promise. It is on and within these walls that gallery director Dr Malcom Bywaters and others weave together showings of local, national and international impact. Dr Bywaters, seemingly comprised of equal parts energy and creativity, is setting up the exhibition, *Afghanistan: John Martinkus*. Martinkus, a University of Tasmania journalism lecturer, was engaged by the Australian War Memorial as its official cinematographer to the conflict in 2011. This showing is a collaboration with the Australian War Memorial. These threads – impact, interest, collaboration, engagement – are core to a national standard facility which has become a bona fide cultural hub in Tasmania’s northern city. “A gallery is a vehicle for teaching and learning,” Dr Bywaters says. “If art is provoking discussion we are winning and, as educationalists, we should be provoking that kind of discussion.” The Academy Gallery is a Level A Museum Gallery – meaning it has appropriate temperature and humidity controls to host major exhibitions.

Later this year it will house *Luminous World*, selected works from the Wesfarmers Collection, arguably the most prestigious corporate collection in the country. It is also an incredibly flexible space – moveable walls can be suspended from tracks in the ceiling in myriad ways.

For more information about the University of Tasmania’s various gallery programs visit [www.utas.edu.au/visual-performing-arts](http://www.utas.edu.au/visual-performing-arts)

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**APPETITE FOR CHANGE**

The addition of 180 studio apartments to the Newnham campus is complemented by a new catering and dining development, The Walk. Various catering venues, once dispersed across the campus, are now consolidated in the one location and centrally positioned on Queen Elizabeth Walk. The modern facility is home to a feast of menu choices and dining options, where staff and students can choose between a large outdoor seating area or the winter warmth of a fireside lounge.

“The transformation of this precinct has met with great approval with staff and students fully embracing this new development,” University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said. “The precinct is buzzing with students and staff, creating a vibrancy which is at the heart of a great university community.”

Techne Architects were principal consultants on the project.

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**GALLERY A PLACE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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OVERSEAS AND LOCAL STUDENTS BOTH WIN
NEW GOAL TO GO GLOBAL

In a bold initiative, the University of Tasmania plans to double international student enrolments within five years, building on its reputation for delivering the goods and sharing the rewards. By Jodi De Cesare

The University of Tasmania has an ambitious new vision – to double international student enrolments within five years. To do this, the University is embarking on an exciting phase to offer unique opportunities to entice students to our shores.

With an excellent reputation for teaching and learning (ranked among the top two per cent of the world’s research universities), Australia’s fourth oldest university is building on its strengths to ensure the international students who are attracted to Tasmania receive exactly what they need.

“We’re looking very closely at the global competencies we expect our graduates to have,” says Professor Peter Frappell, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement). “We’re going to train people to become global citizens with the skill sets needed for the global knowledge economies of today and the future. This involves making sure our own students have international experience, by having international students here, and making sure the University and its population is very much integrated with surrounding communities.”

And there are solid, practical initiatives being implemented to achieve this outcome. A revamped curriculum incorporating broader international content and options such as internships are two of the main innovations behind the mission.

“By having a student population of many cultures, classes can start looking at ways to solve problems from different cultural perspectives,” Professor Frappell says. “And by opening up the digital revolution to higher education, we can have a music class, for example, beaming into a US class, that’s beaming into a German class and interacting with a movie-making company in Indonesia. We will have an internationalised curriculum, and what we then produce are graduates who go out with the mindset and the skill set that’s necessary to work across a range of cultures across the globe.”

Importantly, the University has attracted high-level support and co-operation from the Tasmanian Government, particularly in its missions to Asia, its Tasmania in the Asian Century policy, and the development of co-ordinated training opportunities for international students.

“We’re working with the State Government and a number of other industry bodies such as the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania to develop a short-term course to give international students the right skills as they get part-time work, and we pay for the training,” Professor Frappell says.

“We’re also developing an internship program, where we place international students into Tasmanian business, industry, government or even research organisations to gain experience and the opportunity to be immersed in the workplace while they study for their degree.

“This gives employers an opportunity to understand different cultures, which helps build community acceptance, plus it means students can potentially get a job here, or if they return home or, as a globally competent citizen, go somewhere else in the world, they’ve got the beginnings of a network by being placed here. So that’s how we value-add to the students’ qualifications and what I call the Tasmanian advantage.”

This advantage is in addition, of course, to the multitude of other strengths that Tasmania offers such as a lower cost of living, smaller cities, availability of accommodation, a welcoming community, a clean natural environment, fine food, a relaxed lifestyle and low crime rate.

Professor Frappell is backed by a passionate team who are excited about

We’re going to train people to become global citizens with the skill sets needed for the global knowledge economies.
International Students

being part of the largest and most ambitious international student enrolment drive in the Australian university sector.

"International students play an important role in internationalising the experience and profile of any global university," says Mr Andrew Holloway, Executive Director of International Strategy.

"Most universities would regard having about 15 to 20 per cent of their total enrolments from international sources as being a desirable attribute. About 13 per cent of our enrolments are onshore international students, so we’re looking to double that.

“We’ve always done relatively well in most Asian countries such as Singapore, particularly in medicine, pharmacy and law, but we’re not well represented in places like Indonesia, India, Europe, South America and China. So our targets are to grow current source countries and expand into new territory.”

Mr Holloway and Mr Anthony McHugh, the Manager of International Student Recruitment, agree the priorities are to build on the strengths in specialised faculties such as the Australian Maritime College (with 35 per cent of international students) and the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, as well as a renewed focus on international recruitment in the Tasmanian School of Business and Economics, with initiatives such as 100 first-year bursaries valued at $10,000 each for 2014.

Other key areas of focus include boosting internationalisation of local students through outbound/study abroad and exchange programs, as well as a renewed focus on global engagement highlighting the importance of partnerships with other research institutes of equal standing and government organisations around the world, to create further opportunities in research, teaching and learning.

A prime example of these global partnerships is a memorandum of understanding signed recently with the Nursing Federation in Aceh, Indonesia,
It’s not just about your English skills, it’s about how you interact – can you talk about the footy, the fishing?

performance. For example, about 40 per cent of graduates of the major offshore program at Shanghai Ocean University entering the workforce secured sought-after positions with foreign companies.

"If you were to pick one key driver for students coming here to study, it’s outcomes, and these are very hard jobs for employment, it’s not just about your English skills, it’s about how you interact – can you talk about the footy, the fishing?” she says. "Big companies take you to morning tea for job interviews to see how you may interact with colleagues and clients. This is something we’re trying to help with; this is the environment that will give them that edge when they go into the workforce.

“When international students come to Australia, they naturally tend to interact with people they’re familiar with, but the environment here provides more opportunities to make friends with local students. It’s less intimidating because it’s not “us and them” – everyone is seen as a student; they’re not an international student, they’re a student of the University of Tasmania."

Activities run by the Student Centre, Community Friends Network teams, the size of the University and logistical help with such things as opening a bank account, finding accommodation, or buying a car, all contributing to the ability to mesh with the local community.

“We have international clubs that domestic students also join,” says Ms Shih. "There are no barriers, no isolation. This type of interaction is a major drawcard and gives international students that advantage. They become more confident in going out there and getting that job – not one in a Chinese restaurant. It’s providing the whole package.”

Passionate team: from left, the Manager – International Student Recruitment, Anthony McHugh; International Scholarships Officer Sharmila Prajit; the Associate Director – Future Students, Pam Shih; and the Executive Director – International Strategy, Andrew Holloway.
University of Tasmania student Isaiah Lahai has overcome great adversity to become a symbol of harmony and understanding in Tasmania.

Mr Lahai arrived in Tasmania in 2006 after living in refugee camps in Guinea for 14 years, having fled civil war in Sierra Leone.

"I believe I have a role to play. By sharing our stories, refugees will educate the wider communities to better understand the plights of being a refugee and embrace us," he said.

Mr Lahai is a member of the Glenorchy Diversity Community Council, Chair of the Multicultural Policy Review Reference Group for the Tasmanian Government 2013, a former chairman of the Sierra Leone Liberian Union of Hobart and a founding member of the African Communities Council of Tasmania.

He has also served as a member of the Multicultural Affairs Advisory Council, advising the former premier of Tasmania.

In 2011, he was awarded the human rights award for his role in advocating for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Tasmania.

Mr Lahai’s commitment to helping create harmony and understanding for refugees in the community was recognised again on Australia Day this year when he was awarded Citizen of the Year, a title he shared with Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support network founder Emily Conolan.

When war broke out in his country in 1991 Mr Lahai arrived home to find his family and neighbours had fled the conflict. After running for a day, he rejoined his family, but what followed was more than a decade of living in refugee camps.

"This is how refugees run away – it is not like being a migrant. They are going not because they want to, but because of things beyond their control – fear of killing, fear of death.

"As a young man, I thought all hope was lost. The only thing to live for was my wife and four kids," he recalls.

"What happened in Sierra Leone is unspeakable. I am lucky to be alive and to be here in Tasmania.

"But there have been challenges. I have been bullied and racially abused, I have been bashed.

"I want to build a foundation so one day the African refugee community in Australia will not be viewed as refugees, but as Australians."

Mr Lahai said his lecturers at the University of Tasmania were inspiring and quoted his hero, Nelson Mandela: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.

"My purpose is to ensure that one day all of us will embrace each other as fellow humans, living harmoniously together," Mr Lahai said.

"This is my purpose, my dream – this is what I believe."
Grads share a day at the office

Australian Maritime College graduates move on to the coolest careers around the globe. Recently they were asked to share their experiences in the AMC Around the World photo competition.

Responses came from alumni in both seagoing and land-based roles, from punching through ice on board the Aurora Australis and working on mega offshore structures to those responsible for ship broking and engineering design.

They came from all corners of the globe – as far afield as Antarctica, Africa, Malaysia, Norway and the Maldives – representing the truly diverse nature of careers in the maritime sector.

Pictured is a cross-section of entries in the competition. These photographs and profiles will be used to help inspire the next generation of AMC graduates.

1. LANDON KIBBY (front right) works as a project engineer in the offshore oil and gas sector and is pictured with his team on the deck of a barge. “I reckon my career is great because it’s fast-paced and about the heaviest form of construction an engineer can be involved in,” he says.

2. CHRISTOPHER HAWTONE is a graduate engineer at Ocean Installer in Stavanger, Norway. This photo was taken from the bridge of the CSV Normand Clipper as he tried to escape some rough weather west of the Shetland Islands.

3. KATRINA BEAMS is Third Mate on board the ice breaker RSV Aurora Australis. “My career allows me to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Antarctica and to experience the challenges of navigating in this amazing part of the world,” she says.
4. **MATT BARNES** took this photo on board ASP’s product tanker British Fidelity during a two-week supernumerary voyage.

5. **TOBIAS CLARKE** lives with his family in Central Africa, where he runs his own boat design company and is also engaged in volunteer work helping underprivileged children.

6. **TOM DRAGUTINOVICH** is a deck cadet with Farstad Shipping. “I love the fact that while you’re on board you are a self-contained unit. If something goes wrong, you fix it,” he says.
The Coal River Valley property may look like any other, but scratch the surface and you discover agriculture and stock lessons are being learned in “real time”. By Jodi De Cesare

It’s important that the farm operates on a commercial scale.

“big wins” include research projects into grains, land management and salinity, long-term pasture species, apricots and cherries. In partnership with Hood Wines and Meadowbank initially, it was also instrumental in the early development of the wine industry.

It’s come a long way since 1979 when it was established as a research and teaching farm for the then Department of Agricultural Science, with State Government and University funding and a public appeal.

It’s now managed by local farmers Ronald and Chris Gunn, who look after the commercial enterprises of the farm as well as interacting with the University to facilitate and support teaching and research.

“It’s important that the farm operates on a commercial scale to provide a backdrop for teaching and research as well as having the flexibility to provide smaller areas to conduct experiments,” says Associate Professor Peter Lane, who teaches agronomy and farm business management within the two degrees in agriculture offered by the University.

“Students might do part of their research in a glasshouse at the Uni, with a bigger trial here which more closely relates to commercial production conditions.”

Students conduct practical sessions on site (alongside the farm dogs Harriss and Cyril), which helps in applying a pragmatic approach to teaching and research and ensures students’ work can be related to a real farm situation.

The farm has a merino breeding flock of 800 ewes, producing about 800 lambs a year. Another project has been looking at the effect of Omega-3 fish oil supplements on sheep meat quality.

“An ex-student is conducting a trial into a new cereal crop, another is researching soils and the CSIRO is conducting a maize/corn trial where a membrane is put over the plants to warm the soil, to get crops to grow earlier.”

Ronald Gunn points out that the farm is also used for research and trials by other agricultural companies and consultancies. Serve-Ag, for example, is conducting a longer-term trial into different grass species to test persistence.

Other commercial enterprises leasing farm land include Frogmore Creek Wines and seedEnergy Pty Ltd. This co-habitation has advantages in that the enterprises potentially stand to benefit from the University’s research and they offer teaching and learning opportunities for students.

One project with exciting potential is that of Dr Tina Acuna, who secured a Grains Research and Development Corporation grant to investigate water use efficiency in cereal crops in high rainfall areas.

“The grain project is interesting because Tasmania is a net importer of grain and with the expansion of the dairy industry, there’s going to be more grain used,” Mr Gunn says. “So even though it’s not a new industry, there’s quite a lot of scope for producing grain in Tasmania.”

As part of the School of Land and Food, the farm is in prestigious company. The School challenges students to respond to the world’s most pressing issue: to feed a growing global population while safeguarding our natural resources for the future.

Combining the disciplines of agricultural science, food systems, geography and spatial science, the School encompasses the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), which also has operations at Elliott, Burnie, Forth, Prospect and Crespy.

TIA’s success in industry collaborations is highlighted in two recent major projects – it gained $10 million in funding for a five-year international research collaboration called “Pathways to Market”, looking at the conditions under which food is produced, processed, transported, stored and sold. Ultimately, the aim is to improve the quality of food products.

The second project – a $4.5 million research collaboration with Woolworths supermarkets and Houston’s Farm – aims to develop a culture of innovation to increase industry productivity, expand markets for Australian foods and increase choices of fruit and vegetables.

Lay of the land: Though it may look like an ordinary farm, the University’s 320ha Coal River Valley property has been the scene of much learning, teaching and exciting research for more than three decades. Pictured right are farm managers Chris and Ronald Gunn.
THE SWEET SMELL OF CLONING SUCCESS

It’s taken nearly 40 years, but Bob Menary has produced a boronia variety that promises big rewards. By Lana Best

Bob Menary brushes past boronia bushes at a commercial boronia farm in southern Tasmania and their dainty bell-shaped flowers release a burst of exquisite perfume.

But the University of Tasmania Emeritus Professor with the School of Land and Food is not interested in the aroma – he is keen to meet the next big challenge for Professor Menary and his Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture team was propagating the improved variety in numbers large enough to support an industry – micro-propagation to make hundreds of thousands of clones from the one perfect plant. This step alone took eight years using a patented tissue culture technique.

By the early 1990s, nearly 15 years later, his boronia was better than anything that came before it and the resulting clones were being commercialised by Essential Oils of Tasmania under an exclusive licence.

Rogers from the sale of extracts from the clones allowed Professor Menary to continue his research into new selections and finding the perfect propagating techniques.

“The aim is always to develop boronia with the best possible oil composition, oil yield, a neat, uniform canopy shape to make harvesting easier, as well as disease resistance and longevity to lengthen the timing for replanting,” he said.

“All of these factors impact on the economic return to the farmer, something that had not been adequate to support the boronia industry in years gone by. “I wanted to develop boronia that achieved, when you did the economic analysis, a farm-gate oil value that was far greater than the cost of farming and harvesting.

“Eventually, I developed five clones that had the potential to do that and this is the second season that they’ve been harvested in Tasmania.”

Making boronia pay is now an economic reality, not only because of the amazing work with genetic material achieved through Professor Menary and his team, but also the development of a mechanical harvester designed to easily head the shapely boronia bushes.

By applying science to nature, the harvesting cost of boronia has dropped from $8 a kilogram to $1 a kilogram.

Professor Menary expects production to treble over the next five years as the new boronia cultivars grow and plants reach maturity.

Mr McEldowney says the cosmetic industry, aromatherapy industry and food industries were all looking for more boronia oil, and he’s now in talks with international producers of natural perfumes who want to use quality boronia oil in future products.

The aim is always to develop boronia with the best possible oil composition.
A new year full of promise

It was a joyous occasion when Orientation Week heralded the beginning of studies on University of Tasmania campuses in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

The start of semester one on March 3 saw the lecture rooms, libraries and cafes fill with new and returning students, the air palpable with promise and expectation.

More than 30,000 students are enrolled at the University this year, about one-third of them new to academe.

On the eighth floor of a new state-of-the-art research facility, 28-year-old medical researcher Clare Smith looks out on a landscape of rolling hills and leafless trees in Worcester, a city about an hour’s drive west of Boston.

It’s one of the first sunny, spring-like days on the University of Massachusetts Medical School campus, after what has been a hard winter. In Worcester, 2.15m of snow fell and temperatures dropped as low as -20°C.

That was a new experience for Dr Smith, the tall, bright-eyed Tasmanian finalist for this year’s Young Australian of the Year. She grew up 17,000km away in Dromedary.

Dr Smith moved to Worcester in July last year to be a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of UMass professor and microbiologist Christopher Sassetti, who is working on finding new treatments for tuberculosis.

Remarkably, Dr Smith had no previous experience researching tuberculosis. Rather, she’s an international leader in the field of malaria.

As a PhD student at the University of Tasmania’s Menzies Research Institute Tasmania, she discovered a promising new malaria treatment that is now undergoing drug trials.

Her first meaningful encounter with science actually occurred at Menzies when she was 15. A week-long work-experience program introduced her to medical science and research.

“I don’t know what prompted me to say ‘I want to go to have a look at medical research’ – I genuinely don’t know, but I’m glad that I did,” she says.

Outside the lab, Dr Smith loves cricket and represented Tasmania when she was young, but soon turned to rowing. She rowed during her teenage years, first with Glenorchy Rowing Club and then with Buckingham Rowing Club.

She then turned to coaching the under-17 and under-19 women’s teams at Buckingham Rowing Club.

Club captain Gordon Stewart says Dr Smith was a role model for the younger rowers. “Clare’s ability to inspire people to aim for higher goals was infectious,” Stewart says.

Dr Smith’s contract to work in the USA is for three years and she’s not sure what will happen next, though she would like to return home one day to Tasmania and her family.

Rachel Rohr
One perfect day you might glimpse below a seal frolicking in the Derwent; on another, the HMAS Tobruk, its deck lined with saluting sailors, might glide past the tearoom windows. From the third-floor balcony you can look over the Hobart CBD with Mt Wellington in the background.

However, the views are just a pleasant distraction for the 290 staff and students who occupy the University of Tasmania’s $45 million Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) headquarters. Cementing Tasmania’s reputation as a global leader in research and teaching, the building houses five purpose-built, state-of-the-art laboratories, a 92-seat waterfront lecture theatre and a public exhibition area.

It allows, for the first time, co-location of researchers from IMAS, the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Co-operative Research Centre and the Integrated Marine Observing System.

Melbourne-based John Wardle Architects was the lead firm, working with Hobart’s Terroir on the design of the facility, which was constructed through a joint venture between John Holland and Fairbrother.

Its environmental credentials include a unique seawater heat exchange system to regulate the temperature of the building. It also boasts outstanding bike facilities to encourage staff and students to commute by bicycle.
Its environmental credentials include a unique sea-water heat exchange system to regulate temperature.

Above: IMAS building front view; the foyer spectacularly displays the ice core drill used for the Law Dome drilling project in Antarctica which reached bedrock at 1200m in February 1993; the 92-seat lecture theatre which looks out over the Derwent River.

Clockwise from far left: Professor Gustaaf Hallegraeff looks through a microscope with former premier Lara Giddings, IMAS Executive Director Professor Mike Coffin, Senator David Bushby and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen; Mike Stoddart, Sir Guy Green and Vanessa Goodwin; Alderman Bill Harvey, Lord Mayor Damon Thomas, former Chancellor Damian Bugg and current Chancellor Michael Field AC.
ONLINE COURSES MEET DIFFERENT NEED
MOOC: DON’T BE SPOOKED

The doomsayers warned online courses would damage universities, but the University of Tasmania was delighted with the outstanding success of its first foray and is launching its third. By Jodi De Cesare

Dr Jess Melbourne-Thomas co-presented with Professor Craig Johnson the IMAS MOOC, Marine and Antarctic Science. Topics covered included how life evolved in the sea, what oceanographers do and some of the technologies they use, and the role of the ocean in shaping and regulating our climate.

The doomsayers warn MOOCs are to universities what Amazon was to book stores. MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses – bringing education to the masses for free – would be a death knell for many, they declared.

But the University of Tasmania is launching its third MOOC after phenomenal success with its first. The latest foray into the MOOC world is headed by the University’s Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies through the consortium Open2Study, with more than 1300 students enrolled in its Marine and Antarctic Science MOOC. It follows the world’s first MOOC on dementia, which attracted 9300 students from more than 60 countries.

Retention rates were impressive, and 300 went on to study units for a Bachelor in Dementia Care degree. It’s ranked third in the world for completion rates and first for length of course. Within 10 days, this year’s iteration attracted 5748 registrations.

The University’s second MOOC, also developed through the Open2Study program of Open Universities Australia, was Indigenous Studies and attracted 1200 enrolments on its first run.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education) Professor David Sadler obviously disagrees with the doomsayers’ verdict. He sees the MOOC phenomenon as something far more intrinsic to the institution’s values.

“My sense is that we are doing something quite different here,” he says. “And there’s a principle that’s come out of this which is around not just our alignment to our research agenda – although that’s important – not just the way in which we enhance and not duplicate our existing provision, and the potential for flow-on enrolment, but there’s a commitment to social good and social justice.”

The headline MOOC, Understanding Dementia, developed by the University’s Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, was instrumental in giving participants much-needed confidence to take the next step to a degree.

“MOOCs are changing the way in which we deliver online education,” says Prof Sadler. “People are showing a hunger for online education, but I’d argue that if you look at the dementia one and its marketing impact, the online enrolments into the Bachelor of Dementia Care, they’re actually complementing our business model, not undermining it.

“There’s another element of the dementia course that’s really important – those who studied the MOOC are overwhelmingly older, overwhelmingly women and overwhelmingly first-instance Australian. In most cases, it was their first taste of online education.

“We think we hit a workforce that’s in care homes or similar environments that probably doesn’t have previous tertiary education and may well have emotional and confidence barriers to formal study. The positive experience they’ve had has actually encouraged quite
Ours has been a much more strategically driven agenda. We’ve applied principles around social justice.

a number of them to carry on; we’ve had overwhelmingly positive feedback.

“That’s important in terms of our participation agenda – we want to encourage more people to study tertiary education – but it’s also a good example of the partnership with peak industry bodies and has generated a lot of interest both nationally and internationally.”

Although MOOCs have been embraced by universities around the world and the University of Tasmania has gained much from jumping on board, it’s a careful, tentative approach to the future.

“Ours is more of a niche strategy and very much around the particular strengths of the institution,” says Professor Sadler. “Ours has been a much more strategically driven agenda. We’ve applied principles around social justice, speaking to our research and around business models.

“We’re a leading Australian university in research; we’re tracking about ninth in Australia, and it’s about finding ways in which we make the strengths of Tasmania visible to the world and also remembering our students in that process. In other words, there is a reflection of our research strengths into the curriculum.

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Different roles: Professor David Sadler says online courses can complement university education.

MEANING OF MOOC

The first MOOCs emerged from the open educational resources movement of the 1990s, the term MOOC being coined as recently as 2008.

At an elementary level MOOCs are:

1. Massive, in relation to the number of students that can participate at any one time. They can involve hundreds or thousands of students.
2. Open, in that they are freely accessible anywhere in the world.
3. Online, in that all learning activities, content and engagement happen online.
4. Courses. They have a start and finish time. A MOOC has some structure and its content is sequenced.

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The MOOC strategy isn’t just about showcasing the University ... it’s about positioning the University as a university of progress, a university of social justice.

"The business model is critical because the MOOC agenda is probably now almost 'last year' to a certain extent. People realise the world hasn’t collapsed and MOOCs are actually quite expensive to run. Moving in a more measured and modest way meant we haven’t made a huge financial impost on the institution. And the social justice aspect has been really, really important. It’s provided, outside of the research agenda, an international rationale for what we do and consistent with the concept of a university that’s driven by values. It’s also been very useful in opening up doors internationally,” Professor Sadler says.

One of those doors is that of the Open Educational Resource University (OERu), a global consortium of 26 universities (part-funded by the Commonwealth of Learning to promote education and development in the small states of the Commonwealth), each offering two units to allow students to construct their own degree very cheaply. Aligned with UNESCO and with a commitment to social good, it was a coup to be invited to join, says Professor Sadler.

“This is a very worthy thing for us to be a part of, very consistent with our goals. We’re not challenging our major international student recruitment markets so it’s more about democratising education,” he says.

“I get frustrated with the claims about MOOCs bringing education to the masses in the world. If you look at the record of who studies these kinds of MOOCs, they’re largely people already qualified to the level of degree so essentially people are doing this either for professional development or out of interest. There’s nothing wrong with that but I don’t think we can make the claim, as a headline claim of a MOOC, that it’s bringing new learners in or that it’s democratising education. That’s why I love the dementia MOOC, because we can make that claim. The agenda that we’ve got with the OERu also allows us to make that claim.

"The MOOC strategy isn’t just about showcasing the University – that’s very important – it’s not just about the financial sustainability of the University through either better marketing, better branding and/or online enrolment, but it’s about positioning the University as a university of progress, a university of social justice.”

So what of the doomsayers?

"There’s been a lot of hyperbolic writing that MOOCs are going to smash the model of universities and lead to domination by a few big brands – Harvard, MIT, Stanford and Berkeley – and if these prestigious places are willing to offer their courses free to the world, why would anyone want to do anything else?” Professor Sadler says.

“The second camp is sceptical of all that. What the Ivy leagues are not offering is a degree.

"I don’t think there’s any evidence to suggest the world is going down the Amazon model. The one game-changer would be if – at a serious level – the world’s premier universities actually did open up their degrees; if MOOCs qualified for a degree. But there’s a lot of investment in the brand value of those degrees, I think that’s unlikely.

"There will be accreditation of either freely or very cheaply-done online learning to lead to a general degree somewhere. That is happening. I don’t think that challenges the basic operating model of universities. At the University of Tasmania, we’re satisfying a need for education for Tasmanians as well as mainlanders and the rest of the world. It’s not at all clear to me that the lure of some kind of remote accreditation from somewhere else that’s not necessarily of the same quality or equal quality would be attractive, so it actually isn’t changing in the way that the doom merchants were saying 12 months ago; changing the world as we know it.”

Professor Sadler is passionate about open educational resources – exploring a blended model where students can access learning online but combined with “the student experience” in a range of different settings.

“Why the 2012-13 bubble about MOOCs shouldn’t just get a cynical weary response, is that it’s shown us the future of learning; it’s a future of students who want to learn for different reasons, outside of the formal classroom,” he says.

“They want to access resources from their homes and workplaces, they don’t necessarily want to come into libraries. If we can get it right and access students in an online environment where they don’t have an opportunity to come on to the campus, we’re bringing learning genuinely out into the community.”
Choir shares its soul

Tasmanians open their wallets to help send Southern Gospel Choir on tour of the big stages of African-American gospel music with a TV documentary to follow. By Peter Cochrane

How does an all-white choir led by a self-described “farm boy from the West Coast” get to grace the main stages of African-American gospel music? Thanks in no small part to the generosity of the Tasmanian community.

As Associate Professor Andrew Legg, Director of the University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music, prepares to take the Southern Gospel Choir on tour in the US in November, Tasmanians are opening their wallets in support of this unique musical entity. Seventy members of the choir that Prof Legg founded in 2000 – plus 10 support staff – are gearing up for a tour that begins in Dallas and ends in Los Angeles, with a side trip to the Deep South. They will travel between venues in two 60-seat Greyhound tour buses.

The tour will cost about $480,000, with $100,000 already in the kitty – $92,000 of that raised at a dinner and auction in March hosted by the Henry Jones Hotel, with Tetsuya Wakuda in the kitchen and Ray Martin as MC. The latest step in the fundraising campaign involves crowdfunding via the Pozible platform.

“Pozible promotes and facilitates a ‘grassroots’ fundraising campaign, activating a broader section of the community – meaning almost anyone can find a meaningful way to contribute to the choir’s tour – no matter how small the donation, everything helps.”

There are some tantalising incentives to contribute. Donate $100 and the SGC will Skype you from the US, $500 and they will record a song for you, $5000 and you can have them perform in your living room.

Associate Professor Legg’s New York agent has been working overtime on the tour dates, and has kept forwarding new invitations for the SGC to perform in the US.

“The three main venues that we will perform in, however, represent three of the most important facets of African-American culture, community and gospel music,” he said.

ON THE ROAD

The Southern Gospel Choir’s US tour kicks off in Dallas on Saturday, November 16, at The Potter’s House Church. The congregation that day is expected to number about 45,000 – with an additional 15,000 youth church members next door watching the simulcast. The performance will also be broadcast nationally on the Potter’s House TV channel and issued as a DVD recording.

On November 18 the choir will perform to about 200 parishioners at Greater St Mark Missionary Baptist Church in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Its final gig is at the Breath of Life Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Inglewood, California, part of the Greater Los Angeles Area, where the congregation is 10,000-strong.

It’s a youth church so the music will be hardcore African-American hip-hop, which is my kind of music.

The tour – which will be filmed for subsequent screening as a documentary on SBS-TV here – is scheduled to begin in Dallas, Texas, in mid-November. Next stop – and at the other end of the spectrum – is Tuskegee, Alabama.

“Tuskegee is to America what Snug is to Tasmania,” Associate Professor Legg says. “However, it is historically significant as the birthplace of formal African-American education.”

The Tuskegee Institute, a black college, dates back to 1881. Its first principal was a 25-year-old freed slave named Booker T. Washington, who went on to become a famous educator, author, orator and adviser to presidents. Many of the residents in this isolated rural area are the direct descendants of slaves.

“It’s a chance for the choir to learn about the real heart, soul and spirit of African-American culture,” Associate Professor Legg says.

The SGC is back on a big stage for its last performance, where gospel meets Hollywood at the Breath of Life Seventh-Day Adventist Church on the West Coast. It is there Associate Professor Legg will be reunited with his two songwriting partners, Take 6’s Khristian Dentley and Alvin Chea (a trio nominated in successive years for various Grammy Awards).

The choir will have a chance to let its collective hair down here.

“It’s a youth church so the music will be hardcore African-American hip-hop, which is my kind of music,” says Associate Professor Legg gleefully – sounding not at all like a farm boy from the West Coast, or a Conservatorium Director for that matter.
Changing the world is not simple. It takes thought, time, persistence, and insight. But most of all, it takes something extraordinary.

At the University of Tasmania, we’ve made the pursuit of the extraordinary a never-ending commitment. With internationally recognised research and teaching programs, we are ranked in the top two per cent of universities worldwide*. 

*Academic Ranking of World Universities 2013.