Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday, 25 May, 2016

Shooting for the stars: Tech guru’s gift enables University of Tasmania’s first Endowed Chair

Businessman, researcher, inventor and University of Tasmania alumnus Dr David Warren today gave a $2.6 million gift which will enable the first Endowed Chair in the institution’s 126-year history.

The gift will make possible a $5 million Endowed Chair in the field of astrophysics bearing Dr Warren’s name. It is a field in which he studied as an undergraduate, honours and postgraduate student in the late 1970s and early ‘80s.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said the gift – the largest single private donation in the history of the University - marked an historic day.

“Dr Warren is an inspirational example of the power of education,” Professor Rathjen said.

“A student of physics and astronomy with the University, he used that to build a stellar career and maintained an active engagement in high-level research. He has been a significant contributor to the life and energy of the discipline here.

“Now, using capital which has resulted from his education, ingenuity and hard work, Dr Warren is reinvesting in research and education into the future.”

Endowed Chairs are funded from the interest of the endowment into perpetuity.

Dr Warren’s studies led him into the world of software and electronic design. He was founding member and non-executive director of tech company Altium Ltd, which creates Computer Aided Design (CAD) software used by engineers to create printed circuit boards. Altium Ltd is now the world’s leading provider of such CAD software, with clients including Space X, NASA and BMW.

He is an energetic advocate for the power of education, growing up in the 1950s in the then-new Launceston suburb of Kings Meadows, attending Punch Bowl Road State Primary and Kings Meadows High schools, and Launceston Matriculation College (now Launceston College).
His father worked for the Department of Main Roads and his mother worked part-time as a comptometer (business calculator) operator, before training as an infant teacher.

“My Dad was a tradesman who spent 30 years painting the white lines on the roads,” he said. “He was pulled out of high school at the age of 12 to work in his parents’ guest house and always resented not having any further education.”

As a result, Dr Warren’s parents always told him he would have to go to university to make something of himself, and supported his move to Hobart at the age of 19 to begin his undergraduate degree in 1975.

“My parents knew enough to know the way out of poverty was education – that I would lead a more exciting and more prosperous life if I had an education,” he said.

The Endowed Chair will enable a permanent professorship in astrophysics under a model used for centuries by some of the world’s most prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. It will be offered to an academic leader with an outstanding research track record, who will bring the University into global collaborations, lead research and supervise select PhD students.

“This gift by David Warren is significant in many ways,” Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology Professor Brian Yates said.

“It will take an academic and teaching effort, which is already of world standing, and move it up an echelon.”

Information released by:
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Phone: Jason Purdie – 0455 838 945
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au