New School Name and Website

At its 20 November meeting, Senate approved the School’s proposed name change. From 1 January 2009 SMMS became The School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences. The Faculty of Science officially came into being and the new SCMB website also went live on this date.

LEARNING

Chemistry Podium opens

The $1.1m Chemistry Podium space opened, providing a space for students to undertake private study and group work and to make presentations, as well as engage in social contact with other students and staff. This space has been well-used by students throughout the year, has been the venue for class poster presentations, and has hosted events such as Honours Information Week, Majors Information Day and the official opening of the Centre for Organic Photonics & Electronics.

Future Scientists Program

In May, the School launched the Future Scientists Program, a joint initiative with Kelly Scientific, the world’s largest scientific staffing firm. The aim of the program is to place talented and enthusiastic second and third year Chemistry students with local industry, either for vacation work or ongoing part-time work. A number of students participated in 2008.

Young Queenslander of the Year

UQ Bachelor of Science student Homa Forotan was named the 2008 Young Queenslander of the Year. Ms Forotan, who took Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology courses during the year, arrived in Australia in 2005 as an Afghan refugee and went on to achieve an OP1 before being awarded a Group of Eight scholarship. She is active in the UQ Muslim Student Association and radio 4EB ethnic broadcasting for Afghans, and is keen to promote harmony between cultures and a positive image of refugees and the Islamic faith.

Teaching Awards

Associate Professor Lawrie Gahan received a Faculty of Biological and Chemical Sciences Teaching Excellence Award in October. Professor Paul Young, Head of the Molecular Virology Unit in SCMB, was awarded the 2008 David White Excellence in Teaching Award. This award is given by the Australian Society for Microbiology in recognition of excellence in the teaching of, and/or innovation in the teaching of microbiology in Australia.
**DISCOVERY**

**SMMS does well in ARC and NHMRC grant rounds**
SMMS achieved a success rate of 27% in the October 2008 ARC Discovery Projects round, compared to a UQ average of 25%, a Faculty (BACS) average of 21%, and a national average of 20%. An application for an ARC Linkage grant was also successful. The School’s success rate for NHMRC Project grants was 33%, compared to a UQ average of 31%, a BACS average of 29%, and a national average of 27%. Two SCMB staff are on the interdisciplinary team in receipt of UQ’s largest grant in the NHMRC round, worth over $1.8m.

**UQ leads nation in publication citations in SCMB disciplines**
The 24 November edition of Campus Review newspaper included a list of the top three Australian institutions in 21 fields, 2003-2007, according to total citations based on papers published and cited in Thomson Reuters-indexed journals. UQ was placed first in the SCMB fields of Molecular Biology/Genetics, Biology & Biochemistry, and Microbiology, and was placed third in Chemistry. Chair of the School’s Research & Research Training Committee, Professor Paul Bernhardt, said that although some of the success would be attributable to UQ Institutes, the results indicated that the School’s research core business was in the top echelon of Australian universities.

**Trailblazers**
A team of SCMB staff and students were winners in the Open category of the 2008 Trailblazer Awards presented by UQ’s commercialisation arm, UniQuest. Dr Joanne Blanchfield, Professor Paul Burn and PhD student Melissa Foster received $7,500 for their project concerning the development of fully synthetic vaccine constructs that are able to more accurately mimic the surface antigens of infectious organisms for which traditional vaccine strategies are not applicable, such as HIV and Staphylococcus aureus.

Ms Therese Seldon, a PhD student enrolled jointly with SCMB and the Mater Medical Research Institute, was a winner in the Student category for her project ‘Reject Detect - diagnosing solid organ transplant rejection’.

SCMB’s Emeritus Professor John de Jersey was a team member in another winning entry in the Open category entitled ‘Improved sera for automated biochemistry testing’.

**Award for Excellence in RHD Student Supervision**
Professor Michael Jennings won a 2008 UQ Award for Excellence in Research Higher Degree Supervision. Mike encourages his students to become immersed in the field of research early, enabling them to attend conferences very early in candidature. Another innovation is the involvement of senior PhD candidates in the supervision of honours students, and responsibility for operational and collaborative roles in management of the laboratory’s various research programs.

**Rodger Dallas Morgan Memorial Postgraduate Travel Award in Virology**
Rodger Morgan was a friend and neighbour of Professor Paul Young who took an active interest in Paul’s research. When Mr Morgan passed away, he bequeathed a sum of money for the advancement of Paul’s research. Paul has chosen to establish a travel award for PhD students in the field of virology, funded from the bequest, which has been invested by UQ’s Advancement Office. The award, which is expected to be made for the first time in 2009, provides $2,000 towards the cost of attendance at a conference.

**Teaching Grants**
Dr Gwen Lawrie was awarded a 2008 UQ Strategic Teaching & Learning Grant for her project ‘Increasing the relevance of first level chemistry through authentic assessment.’ This follows on from the successes of Professor Ross Barnard, Associate Professor Lawrie Gahan and Associate Professor Mark Riley in the 2007 grant rounds.

Dr Gwen Lawrie
COPE Opening
The Centre for Organic Photonics and Electronics, a joint initiative between SCMB and the School of Physical Sciences, was formally opened 18 November by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Paul Greenfield AO. The Centre’s work includes integrated programs in experimental and theoretical condensed matter physics as well as synthetic chemistry. A half day symposium that included invited talks from Australian and overseas scientists was held on 17 November, and was attended by about 100 delegates.

RHD fora and annual symposium
Postgraduate Studies Coordinator, Associate Professor Melissa Brown, ran two discussion fora for the 170-strong group of SCMB research higher degree students again this year. The theme was career options for Research Higher Degree students, with the first session focusing on University research and/or teaching as a career; the other on careers outside of the university environment, including options in government and industry.

The School's fourth annual Postgraduate (RHD) Students' Symposium, held in November, was organized by a committee of RHD students nominated by staff or fellow students from each research floor of the School’s two buildings, assisted by the Deputy Head of School, Professor Mary Garson, and Associate Professor Brown. Professor Mark von Itzstein, the Director of the Institute for Glycomics, Griffith University, gave a plenary lecture entitled ‘The World of Sugars: New Insight into Disease Processes’. There were 12 short talks and more than 30 poster presentations. First prize for an RHD student poster went to Victoria Challinor, while the Honours poster first prize went to Anna Wronski. Best talk first prize was awarded to Abigail Downie. Sponsored prizes were awarded to a further five students.

ENGAGEMENT

Events
Each year the School hosts four annual named lectures. In 2008, Dame Bridget Ogilvie, AC, DBE, FRS, presented the Skerman lecture on the topic ‘The Environment for Science in 2008’. Professor Peter Waterhouse, a Federation Fellow at the University of Sydney, gave the Biochemistry Alumni lecture in which he discussed small RNAs and mobile signalling. Professor Leo Radom, also from The University of Sydney, presented the Dillon Steele lecture on ‘The Mechanism of Action of Coenzyme B12’ as well as the inaugural Alan Sargeson lecture of RACI entitled ‘Transition Metal-free Hydrogenation and Hydrogenolysis’. Professor Margaret Sheil, CEO of the Australian Research Council, visited the School in October and presented the TGH Jones lecture on ‘A New ERA for the ARC and the National Innovation System’. A number of relatives of TGH Jones attended the lecture and were introduced to Professor Sheil afterwards.

In May, Dr Tracie Ramsdale was the guest speaker at the School’s Undergraduate Student Awards night held at the University Art Museum. More than 80 staff, students and family attended.

Graduation ceremonies were held in July and in December; a reception was held for graduands and their guests ahead of the December ceremony.

In December, Dr Craig Williams convened a symposium of UQ & National University of Singapore chemists focused on collaboration in emerging areas such as climate change, nanomaterials, medicine and energy.
Outreach Activities
Staff and students of the School helped stage a number of activities designed to engage future students of the School’s disciplines. These included the Siemens Science Experience, Toowong Academy workshops, microbiology teacher workshop, RACI Titration competition, Enrichment Chemistry for high school students, Experience Science, practicals for UQ Foundation Year students and for international student recruitment agents, TSXPO, and UQ Open Day. The School is currently investigating the number of participants who go on to enrol in SCMB programs and courses, as one measure of the relevance of outreach activities.

Technology Commercialisation Success
Australian vaccine and immunotherapy company, Replikun Biotech Pty Limited (Replikun) announced an exclusive license agreement with UniQuest to commercialise a new West Nile virus vaccine technology developed by Associate Professor Alex Khromykh and Dr Roy Hall of SCMB. The Vice-Chancellor told the May meeting of Senate that the deal was significant for the University on many levels. As well as providing an additional revenue stream to boost their work in this area, it means the researchers can see the benefits of their discovery as having an impact on the quality of life of millions of people in the developing nations of the southern hemisphere.

THE SCHOOL WITHIN

Academic Board members
Congratulations to Associate Professor Melissa Brown and Associate Professor Lawrie Gahan on their election as non-professorial members of the Academic Board. Lawrie has also been appointed as the Chair, Student Disciplinary Board from 2009, following a number of years of service as a member.

Lab refurbishment wins architecture prize
The laboratory fit-out of levels 9 and 10 of the Chemistry Building won a commendation in the Interior Architecture section of the 2008 Royal Australian Institute of Architects Queensland Regional Architecture Awards.

Personal promotions and awards
Congratulations to the following personal promotions recipients: Paul Young (Professor), Ian Gentle (Professor, and a secondment to the Australian Synchrotron), Gary Schenk (Associate Professor), Chris Jones (Level B Research), and Alex Khromykh (NHMRC Senior Research Fellow).

The following professional staff benefitted from position reclassifications: Athol Reid (HEW8), Steven Mason (HEW7), Jill Sheridan (HEW7), Simone Gray (HEW6), and Cheryl Power (HEW5). Classification checks for the positions occupied by David Rosolen and Helmut Land are pending.

Jennifer Falknau was recognised by the Senate at a special ceremony in November marking 25 years of service to the University as a professional staff member. She wishes it to be known that she started work at UQ as a child!