

Donor Report 2020

Celebrating the impact
of philanthropy



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



A message of thanks

Monique Harper-Richardson



Despite living through one of the most challenging and darkest years yet, our communities, from within and beyond our campuses, did not waver in their strategic support for UOW and all it stands for. Their commitment exemplifies the strength and determination our institution is built on. Our donors ensured that light, hope and commitment continued to shine brightly at the University of Wollongong in 2020.

It was incredibly humbling and inspiring to witness our UOW communities remain steadfast in their support for our students' education and institutional research in a world of change and chaos. They acted quickly and collectively as Australians witnessed the most devastating bushfires in living memory, swiftly following by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

When the bushfires besieged UOW's home communities, our staff threw open the doors of our campuses in Bega and Batemans Bay, on the NSW South Coast, to provide shelter and supplies to community members affected by the fires. UOW staff rallied and generously raised \$82,975 towards bushfire relief, which the University matched to raise a total of \$165,950 for the NSW Rural Fire Service. Our Centre for Environmental Risk Management for Bushfires provided expert research throughout and advice to the recent royal commission. The support of our alumni, donor, staff, student and broader community was extraordinary.

As the full force of the global pandemic struck UOW, many students were faced with severe hardship. Once again, our donors, staff and community organisations reached out to respond to both immediate and long-term needs. The University created a hardship fund and our philanthropic donors supported students in most distress through grants and scholarships. At the same time, our donors did not lose their focus on solving systemic issues in a range of areas. In just one example, UOW was delighted to celebrate a magnanimous initiative, funded by our partners at Tibra Foundation. The establishment of the Tibra Foundation Chair in Mathematical Sciences is an investment in raising the profile of mathematics and its importance for our future.

We enjoyed the opportunity to speak to you throughout the year and especially appreciated your emails and letters offering support and encouragement. Thank you for helping foster higher education's capacity to promote individual opportunity, create economic prosperity and discover answers to complex societal issues.

Finally, my deepest appreciation for your passion and commitment to the University of Wollongong and its vital role in creating meaningful and positive social impact.

MONIQUE HARPER-RICHARDSON
Director of Advancement

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New leadership at UOW

Continuing our philanthropic vision

As we experienced significant changes in our global environment in 2020, the University of Wollongong also made some new leadership announcements, including the **appointment of a new Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor to help drive the University into the future, and ensure it remains true to its philanthropic values.**



Chancellor, Ms Christine McLoughlin



Vice-Chancellor designate, Professor Patricia M. Davidson

Chancellor, Ms Christine McLoughlin

Ms Christine McLoughlin joined UOW in October 2020 as the fourth Chancellor, succeeding Ms Jillian Broadbent AC, who provided outstanding leadership and governance to the University for the past 11 years between 2009 and 2020.

Recognised as one of Australia's most respected business leaders, Ms McLoughlin is passionate about bringing people together through education, sport, health and technology.

An experienced company Director, she has served on a number of ASX-listed company boards in diverse sectors including financial services, resources, health insurance and infrastructure over the past 12 years.

She currently serves as Chair of Suncorp Group Limited, a leading Australian financial services business, is a Director of Cochlear Limited and Chair of Destination NSW. Previous board roles have included Venues NSW, nib Holdings Limited, Spark Infrastructure and the Victorian Transport Accident Commission. Ms McLoughlin is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (FAICD).

Continuing the philanthropic legacy of her predecessor, Ms McLoughlin is also highly-engaged with the not-for-profit sector where she is an advocate for community inclusion. She is Chairman and Co-Founder of the Minerva Network which is a not-for-profit organisation focused on supporting the

professional careers of elite female athletes and connecting communities through sports participation. This work is carried out on a pro bono basis, alongside her directorship of the McGrath Foundation. Ms McLoughlin is also the Australian private sector representative to the G20 EMPOWER Council, focused on the empowerment and progression of women's economic representation across the globe.

Ms McLoughlin brings to the office of Chancellor demonstrated success in strategy development, market disruption, business integration, complex stakeholder engagement, organisational succession planning and talent development. She is committed to the highest standards of governance and performance. Her focus on stakeholder engagement has seen her build strong relationships throughout her career.

"It is an honour and a privilege to be elected as Chancellor of the University of Wollongong. From its headquarters in the Illawarra, the University has developed its reputation as one of the leading universities in Australia through its world class teaching and research programs, its extended regional engagement and its significant international presence particularly in the Middle East and South East Asia," Ms McLoughlin says.

"I look forward to continuing the outstanding work undertaken by Jillian Broadbent which has seen UOW develop and perform so strongly under her leadership and guidance."

Vice-Chancellor designate, Professor Patricia M. Davidson

Meanwhile, UOW will welcome its fifth Vice-Chancellor, Professor Patricia M. Davidson, who will succeed current Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Wellings CBE when he retires in May this year (2021).

A global leader in the field of nursing, cardiovascular science, and global health, Professor Davidson brings to the role an impressive background that has seen her work across - and in partnership with - international institutions and universities. Currently, she is Co-Secretary General of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery and Counsel General of the International Council on Women's Health Issues.

Professor Davidson has been at the epicentre of the COVID-19 crisis as the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in the USA. As the vaccination program was rolled out in the United States, Professor Davidson called on her many years of nursing experience to assist with the administration of the vaccines.

Having authored more than 500 peer-reviewed journal articles and 30 book chapters, she is passionate about nurturing early and mid-career researchers, and about the importance of interdisciplinary research. Much of her career has been devoted to the needs of women and disadvantaged communities. In 2016, she received the Australian Museum Eureka Prize for Outstanding Mentor of Young Researchers.

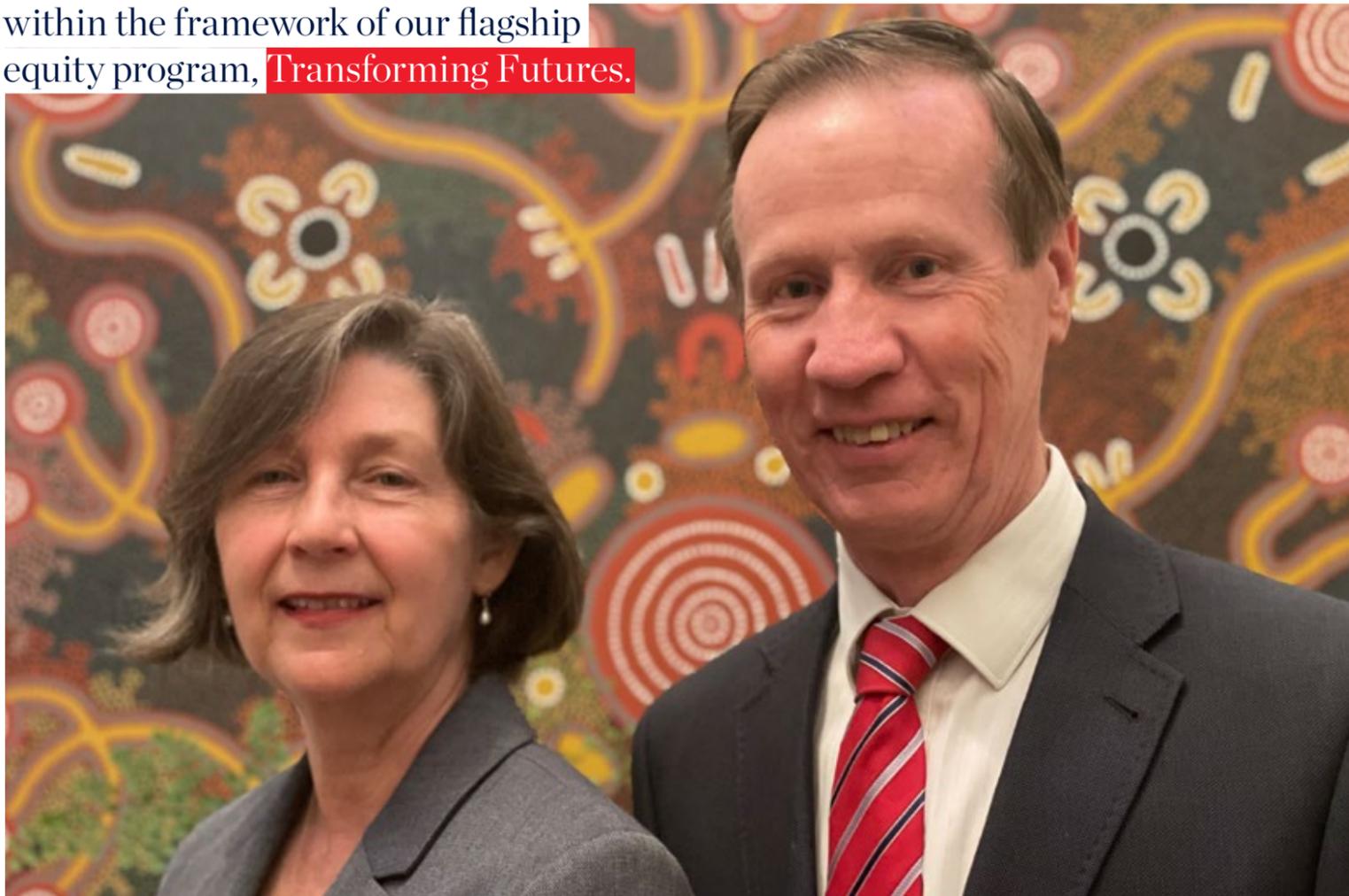
As a UOW alumna, and with strong philanthropic values of her own, Professor Davidson will return to the place where she began her career in academia. She completed her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Education at UOW and in 2013, received the University's Distinguished Alumni Award. Prior to her studies at UOW, Professor Davidson was a clinician and nurse consultant undertaking her clinical training at Wollongong Hospital and St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

"I am honoured and humbled to take on this role at this critical point in history. I have watched UOW expand and flourish since I started here as a student in the 70s and am excited to be part of the next phase of the University's history and to build on the exceptional achievements of Vice-Chancellor Wellings and Chancellor Broadbent," Professor Davidson says.

Transforming Futures Scholarships

A new opportunity exists for donors who wish to make a greater impact by establishing a named scholarship within the framework of our flagship equity program, **Transforming Futures.**

Peter and Elizabeth Moore



Each scholarship will provide one student \$5,000 per year for three years, totalling \$15,000, and will be offered to commencing students who demonstrate the greatest need and commitment to community. Evidence suggests that this level of giving provides better outcomes for equity scholars and keeps them enrolled in their studies through to completion.

The Peter and Elizabeth Moore Transforming Futures Scholarship and the Frederick Groves Transforming Futures Scholarship were both established in 2020 as part of the inaugural offering within this bespoke program.

Leanne Newsham spoke with two of our donor families about their reasons for contributing to this important educational cause.

Generosity runs in the family: an interview with Peter and Elizabeth Moore

What does 'philanthropy' mean to you?

When we established our family foundation several years ago, we wrote the following mission statement: "to improve the lives of disadvantaged people living in Australia through education, the arts and mental health support, with a focus on supporting women and girls".

The statement reflects our view that people who experience disadvantage deserve support and respect and that education can provide a pathway to a different life, one that is more satisfying and gives back to the community.

We also recognised at the start of this journey that we needed to focus our efforts. As a family of three women and one man with strong links to education, mental health, and the arts in Australia, we wanted to choose a mission that was relevant to all of us.

Our focus then moved to identifying areas where we could make a difference – mostly smaller organisations which were doing excellent work, but where our additional funding would make a material difference. We also sought to have a personal engagement with the organisations that we supported. In some cases, our engagement and advice have been appreciated as much as the funding and we receive a great deal of personal satisfaction from the relationship in return.

Why have you chosen to support student scholarships through the Peter and Elizabeth Moore Foundation?

Peter is an alumnus of the University of Wollongong and grew up in a new, immigrant-dominated suburb. He witnessed many talented students miss out on the opportunity to go to university due to their personal circumstances. Ten years ago, he decided to support a scholarship to help underprivileged students get to UOW. Over the years, the contribution has grown to the level it is today. It's still a relatively modest contribution, but every bit helps.

Why is this cause important to you both?

Our parents had a strong belief in the value of a good education and we have benefited from their support and wisdom. We have passed that on to our daughters and believe they have the same values. While there are many pathways to a successful, fulfilling and happy life, it's sad when someone has the talent and desire to pursue a career through education and is unable to do so.

What is your hope for the students who been the recipients of these scholarships?

We hope that they will be able to complete their university studies without undue personal and financial stress, so that they can perform to their full ability. At the end of their course, we hope that they can go on and be successful in whatever career that they choose.

How do you feel that you're making an impact?

Peter has met several of these students and spoken to others on the phone. In all cases, the students would not have attended university without this help and the recipients were extremely grateful for it. For the students and recent graduates spoken to, the support was having a significant impact on their current lives and future prospects.

Do you feel a special connection with UOW, given your history with the institution and having had studied yourself here?

UOW is only one of four universities with which Peter has connections, but it was where he obtained his first degree and so the one with the greatest emotional connection. In addition, UOW has been the best at maintaining personal contact over the years and that has been very much appreciated.

What would you say to anyone else considering making a gift to support our students here at UOW?

While our family commitment continues to assist students in financial need, it is important to recognise that, at present, only 2.5 per cent of eligible students receive a scholarship. There are still many young people out there who have the talent to achieve great things for society, or even just a better life for themselves and their family over time, if given a helping hand.

Frederick Groves Transforming Futures Scholarship

A belief in the power of education:
an interview with David Groves
and Jon Preedy - son and
grandson of Frederick Groves.



(L-R) Frederick Groves, Ann Groves and David Groves at his UNSW graduation in 1980.



David Groves (L) and Jon Preedy (R)

The Frederick Groves Transforming Futures Scholarship was formed by six donors from one family, all united around a vision to create opportunities for future students. The family's connection to UOW is multigenerational - Frederick is a former staff member at the Faculty of Engineering, while four other family members are UOW alumni, including David Groves, Jacqueline Preedy, Jon Preedy and Adam Preedy. Together with Edwina Groves and Christopher Groves, they are an inspiring example of the power of family giving.

We were delighted to talk to Jon and David about creating a legacy to honour Frederick Groves and reflect his values and his commitment to education and to the University of Wollongong.

Could you share some of Frederick Groves' life story and explain why, as a family, you decided to name this important scholarship after him?

Frederick Groves was born in 1928 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. He was the youngest of three children and had an interest from a very early age in all things mechanical, his father being a motor mechanic and managing a garage in the city of Newcastle, opposite St James' Park football ground.

Despite wanting to continue studying in order to become a marine engineer, at his father's insistence he left school at a very early age and trained as a fitter and turner. He did his National Service in the British Army's Royal Engineers and served in Berlin, Germany. He married Ann Skipsey in 1953 and David and Jacqueline Groves were born in 1955 and 1956 respectively. He had a lifelong interest in education and, in the very late 1950s, he started part-time study to qualify as a mechanical engineer. In the very early 1960s, the family moved to Hereford where he continued studying part-time and working for Bulmers Cider.

In 1964 the family migrated to Australia, arriving in Port Kembla on September 10.

Frederick worked as a fitter and turner while at the same time completing his studies to become a mechanical engineer. After various jobs including time at Rennex Transport, BHP and Thirlwell & McKenzie, he was successful in obtaining a job as a Technical Officer in the Metallurgy Department at what was then the Wollongong University College of the University of New South Wales. This was the most rewarding and enjoyable time of his professional life and he went on to forge many long-term friendships with both staff and postgraduate students before retiring in the mid-1980s.

He thoroughly enjoyed an active retirement, travelling extensively in Australia and in the UK and spending much precious time with his five grandchildren. He died in Wollongong Hospital from complications relating to cancer in 1997.

We chose to name the scholarship after him because of his very strong personal belief in the importance of education, the pleasure he got from working at the University, and because he would have been so happy to help someone who could not afford to study at UOW. (David)

The fact that Frederick worked at UOW is incredibly important to us. What do you think he enjoyed most about working in the Engineering Faculty at UOW?

Frederick derived the most pleasure during his career at UOW from providing practical solutions for an academic team that just didn't have the hands-on mechanical experience he had. He often told the story of starting work and being shown a room full of broken equipment, most of which he had working again very soon thereafter.

He took equal joy in helping postgraduate students with their research. We have clear memories of him driving over the coal dumps at Port Kembla Harbour in a university-supplied four wheel drive taking some sort of readings for one student's research and enrolling in a photography course for another student so they could take better pictures of steel fracturing as it was bent. This was after he had delighted in designing and constructing the hydraulic equipment needed to bend the various steel samples and incorporating the necessary cameras. (David)

Why is this cause important to you as a family?

It is a way of both preserving the family's connection with the University and of honouring the value Frederick Groves placed on education and hard work. (David)

What is your hope for the students who have been the recipients of these scholarships?

I hope that they succeed. Not just academically but in their personal lives, their families and social groups. I hope they will change their communities and challenge the status quo and I hope that, in time, they will look back and help lift up others in turn. (Jon)

Four of you are UOW alumni. Do you feel a special connection with UOW, given your history with the institution and having studied here yourselves?

I do feel a special connection with UOW. I laid the foundation for my career and met my future wife while studying for my degree, so the campus will always hold a place close to my heart. I grew up in the area and, when I finished high school, UOW felt like a natural progression. I've fond memories of the Duck Pond Lawn, the UniBar (both old and new), and the diverse cohort I studied with across the rambling campus. (Jon)

I also have a special connection with UOW. It was very small when I was there and you had a very close relationship with the students and staff at the time. It became a University in its own right while I was studying there. When we graduated in 1977, we had a choice of taking a UNSW degree or a UOW degree. I chose UOW as did most of my cohort. Separately from this scholarship, I have been donating to UOW for a number of years because of the connection I feel. In 2017, I became a member of the University of Wollongong Council and I'm a member of the Council's Finance Committee and the Remuneration Committee. (David)

What does 'philanthropy' mean to you?

Philanthropy represents an opportunity. Having been able to achieve success in my career, I believe it is incumbent on me to "send the elevator back down" and help empower others to make brave decisions and aspire to great things. (Jon)

What would you say to anyone else who might consider making a gift to support our students here at UOW?

This kind of giving has the real opportunity to change lives - just do it! (Jon)



Dr Krishna and Mrs Shashi Krishna

Closing a gap in Indigenous healthcare

BY MICHELE TYDD

A philanthropic initiative by a Wollongong doctor

is allowing the University of Wollongong to play a significant role in addressing a disparity in the healthcare system that has troubled him throughout his career.

Last year, 3116 domestic doctors graduated from Australian medical schools yet only 46 were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, according to Medical Deans Australia data.

Retired surgeon, Dr Venkata Krishna Bommareddy, known throughout the Illawarra as Dr Krishna, aims to help UOW bridge that gap by co-sponsoring a \$160,000 scholarship program over four years with the School of Medicine. The program is designed to attract and retain Indigenous students throughout their medical studies.

The inaugural scholarships have been awarded to Jinneecka Klenka (Doctor of Medicine) and Madeline Hughes (Pre-Medicine, Science and Health) who will receive \$25,000 and \$10,000 per year respectively.

In his 45 years as a practitioner, Dr Krishna said he had not come into contact with any Aboriginal doctors, an issue both State and Federal governments acknowledge contributes to inequitable health care and poorer health outcomes for the Indigenous population.

“

We are trying to get more senior Indigenous academics to come on board to help develop the curriculum.”

“Statistics show life expectancy is very low among the Aboriginal communities and they suffer high rates of diabetes as well as renal and eye problems and other health issues,” he says.

“My primary objective is to attract more Indigenous doctors (into UOW’s School of Medicine) with the hope in the longer term they will work as medical doctors in Aboriginal communities.”

Studies have shown that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see hospitals and health care facilities as places to fear for a complex web of reasons, which include a belief that the system does not reflect their culture.

This avoidance tends to exacerbate their health problems as serious disease often goes undiagnosed and untreated.

In the past decade, Australian universities have tried to boost numbers of Indigenous enrolments in medicine and, although there has been a gradual increase over that time, they still represent 2.7 per cent of domestic students.

It is estimated that to reach parity, the number of Indigenous doctors needs to jump from 483 to 3139.

Dr Krishna studied medicine in India before migrating to Australia in 1971. In 1981, after specialist training, he began practicing as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in Wollongong. He retired four years ago and began working as a casual tutor in UOW’s anatomy department.

Throughout his career, Dr Krishna became increasingly committed to the idea that action was urgently needed to improve Indigenous health, particularly in remote areas.

“People in those communities would feel far more comfortable with Indigenous doctors because they know the local issues and the language,” he says.

With this mission in mind, Krishna and his wife, Shashi, established the Dr Krish and S Reddy Indigenous Medical Scholarship four years ago.

However, attracting Indigenous students was a stumbling block until further discussion this year developed a new model that would draw from pre-medicine, science and health students to create a pipeline into medicine.

UOW’s Dean of Medicine, Professor Paul De Souza, is delighted with this new concept and is confident that, together with the University’s focus on strengthening Indigenous support systems, the scholarship program will achieve its aims.

“We are trying to get more senior Indigenous academics to come on board to help develop the curriculum,” Professor De Souza says.

“Our next step is to appoint a younger Indigenous academic to be nurtured and mentored by the Indigenous seniors. In that way we will create a core of support.”

Professor De Souza acknowledges the scholarship program’s potential to help realise the School of Medicine’s founding 2007 mission: to attract 50-60 per cent of the 80-student cohort from rural areas where the biggest gaps exist.

He described Dr Krishna’s benevolence, particularly at a time when universities are under financial pressure, as outstanding.

“Dr Krishna is like a beacon shining there on the hill. If I could arrange it, I’d have more scholarships along the lines of this model, but obviously it depends on extraordinary individuals to come up with similar support.”

Driving economic prosperity in partnership with the Tibra Foundation

BY SARAH VICKERY

Tibra Foundation Director and Trustee Tim Berry pictured with UOW Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Wellings CBE



The University of Wollongong (UOW) has commenced a global search for talent to fill the role of **Australia's first philanthropically-funded Chair in Mathematics** for more than 100 years.

A long standing relationship between the University and alumnus, Tim Berry, co-founder of a successful international finance company and Director of the Tibra Foundation*, culminated in a \$1.25 million philanthropic gift to establish this prestigious new position. Known as the Tibra Foundation Chair in Mathematical Sciences, it seeks to focus on and advance the mathematical sciences.

With maths and data at the core of the digital world we inhabit, this will further UOW's and the Tibra Foundation's joint strategic objective to invest in our region's economic prosperity. It will help create a talent pool of maths, science and data focused graduates, broadening individual opportunity and advancing our society.

UOW Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Wellings CBE says he is deeply grateful to the Tibra Foundation for their commitment and foresight in fostering this significant initiative.

"The establishment of the Professorial Chair will drive this shared vision forward by raising the profile of mathematics through research, outreach and by creating greater opportunities for participation and careers in this important field, particularly in regional areas.

"Founded by UOW alumni, with a commitment to the Illawarra, Tibra Capital's success and involvement with UOW is an exemplar of re-investing in higher education to address society's critical challenges," Professor Wellings says.

The historic investment in the Professorial Chair has the potential to raise UOW's profile as an international leader in the mathematical sciences and expand its capacity to undertake outreach activities and engagement with schools and future students.

The Tibra Foundation says they hope the position will make a long-term impact in Australia and the region.

"As a quantitative organisation we have a passion for the mathematical sciences and we are excited to help transform the region into a centre of excellence and stimulate the advancement of world-class mathematics.

"As members of the finance industry, and particularly the quant trading space, our success has been made possible by our ability to utilise mathematics as a tool to achieve a better understanding of the world around us. We live and breathe mathematics in our work, yet we operate in a country where mathematics continues to be under-recognised, despite its rapidly growing importance. We want that to change.

"By investing in education, we hope to promote the growth of a world-leading mathematical sciences ecosystem and help Australia attract and retain talent. We want to inspire future generations to seek a career in mathematics and the economic benefits it brings," the Tibra Foundation says.

The establishment of this role will have significant flow-on effects; not only will it attract exceptional academic and scholarly talent to UOW but, as opportunities grow in the field, it is predicted to increase participation rates in maths in the Illawarra's secondary schools.

Having worked with Tibra for more than 10 years throughout their philanthropic engagement with UOW, Director of Advancement Monique Harper-Richardson, says this contribution is truly inspirational, particularly in an unpredictable world.

"This level of passion and generosity is extraordinary. Tibra, from their earliest beginnings, immediately understood the power of philanthropy, they understood the importance of giving back and creating support for the next generation, so the new announcement of the Chair is an extension of that relationship and that vision around the important role that maths plays in society," Harper-Richardson says.

"We're delighted some of the committee members of the Foundation have actually been previous recipients of Tibra's scholarships, so it's that virtuous circle of giving – of alumni giving back and strengthening their institution.

"We're enormously grateful to the Tibra Foundation. Philanthropy has the power to create transformative change. It is due to Director and Trustee Tim Berry's commitment and vision and the passion and dedication of Arman Schwarz and the Tibra Foundation Committee, that this Professorial Chair has been made possible," Harper-Richardson says.

With a focus on big data, data science and statistics, the gift also complements the University's strategic plan and its bespoke research capabilities with The National Institute for Applied Statistics Research Australia (NIASRA) and UOW's other centres of excellence.

The Tibra Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Tibra Capital, a finance company specialising in quantitative trading. It has played an active role supporting UOW students for more than 10 years, contributing more than \$1 million in scholarships across the disciplines of maths and finance, offering Work Integrated Learning placements and supporting corporate scholarships. With an additional pledge of almost \$77,000 over five years, the Foundation will continue to fund several UOW scholarships and prizes.

The gift of enduring impact

BY JEN WATERS

Longevity of philanthropic giving can make a sustained impact on the lives and futures of many. 2020 marked a key milestone for several dedicated UOW donors. Their contributions stretch back decades and blaze a trail towards a better tomorrow.



Bomaderry Bowling Club Secretary Manager, Garry Wilbraham

Bowling the long game

What began with a serendipitous conversation at the original UOW Shoalhaven campus has turned into 25 years of valuable support from Bomaderry Bowling Club for financially struggling students.

The Club's Board was undertaking an eight-week management course with the late former Shoalhaven Campus Manager, Dr Ray Cleary, when talk turned to the difficulty faced by many of the region's students in accessing and completing tertiary studies. Club Secretary Manager, Garry Wilbraham, was stunned to learn that the illusion of university as the sole domain of the gifted and fortunate was, for many, far from reality.

"Ray told us of many stories of professional people struggling through their studies, having a casual job, working in clubs trying to support themselves through university," Garry recalls.

"He suggested that the Board could start a scholarship program and guaranteed that the investment would be a great return to the community."

Thus, with agreement from the Board, the Bomaderry Bowling Club Community Scholarship was established in 1995 to help students from Bomaderry – and in subsequent years, right across the Shoalhaven – realise their educational dreams.



Bomaderry Bowling Club: Standing (L-R) Vice Chairman - Derek Raymond, Treasurer - Craig Jeffery, Director - Allan Kimpton. Seated (L-R) Director - Judith Croft, Chairman - Peter Ingram, Director - Carolyn Mitchell.

Since then, more than 50 UOW scholars from the Shoalhaven region have benefited from the annual scholarship which awards one student \$1,000 each year for the duration of their degree. At any given time, the Club supports three students in different years of their degree. For these grateful students, the gift has relieved the financial pressure of accommodation, travel, living and study expenses, thus enabling them to focus more fully on their education.

The experience has been overwhelmingly positive for the Club, with the Board seeing first-hand how recipients have thrived.

"We have attended many graduation ceremonies, witnessed the students become professionals, and received letters and emails of thanks for their support," Garry says.

"The relationship with the University of Wollongong has made us think differently and appreciate what it takes to get a degree."



The Alumni Bookshop volunteers

The astonishing power of books

From humble beginnings akin to a car boot sale around 25 years ago, the much-loved Alumni Bookshop has become one of UOW's most treasured resources, offering a vital support for students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The Innovation and Main Campus Alumni Bookshops, open to the broader community to donate and purchase pre-loved books, are run entirely by dedicated volunteers from the UOW Alumni Campus Chapter. Proceeds of all sales fund scholarships and awards for students, aiming to assist students in need and recognise academic excellence.

To date, the Alumni Bookshop has raised almost \$300,000. Every year, it funds two undergraduate equity scholarships valued at \$2,000 yearly over three years, along with 22 excellence prizes of \$200 each. Thus far, more than 30 students facing hardship have benefited from scholarships and more than 160 prizes have been awarded across all faculties.

UOW Alumni Campus Chapter Chair, Chris Thompson (a Fellow of the University since 2017, for extraordinary volunteer contribution), has assisted the bookshop for more than 10 years. During this time, bookshop sales have grown considerably through outreach programs, stalls at campus market days and events at several UOW campuses as well as at community events, conferences and exhibitions.

"Many volunteers work for the love of being among books while doing good for students and the University, selling affordable texts and books for all, and supporting scholarships and awards," Thompson explains.

"It's been so rewarding to hear from past students and their families who have benefited from scholarships simply by being able to follow their career aspirations. Some of them have gone on to become academics and UOW staff."

Hampered by COVID in 2020, Thompson says that the Alumni Bookshop is looking to future expansion in giving.

"We've been investigating how best to establish a research award to assist postgraduate and early career researchers in their inspiring work."



Bronwyn Vickers

Foundation for the future

When the Movement Disorder Foundation (MDF) reluctantly began to wind up its charity operation in 2017, its Board was keen to ensure its work would live on. Having partnered with UOW since 2014 on scholarships supporting students in engineering and medicine, the relationship offered a compelling opportunity to continue its mission.

“Our values and goals are aligned, and it seemed a logical home for our legacy to continue,” explains Associate Professor Roland Bigg, chairperson of MDF.

“We’ve always been focused on assisting medical research that helps people with disability, particularly by devising engineering and bioengineering solutions. UOW has a strong global reputation in those areas, and we were also impressed by the support provided to students with disability.”

In 2017, MDF donated a landmark \$1.35 million to UOW to establish the Movement Disorder Foundation Scholarship in perpetuity, aiming to significantly improve the daily lives of people living with disability. The Scholarship, valued at \$7,000 per year for up to four years, is awarded biennially to five students with physical disability.

The second round of 10 MDF scholars commenced under the program in 2020. They are an impressive cohort of aspirational, community-minded students overcoming significant barriers to achieve. Though engineering and medical studies are a primary focus, the scholarship is open to all disciplines as part of a broader vision to create a transdisciplinary network of innovators.

MDF has also helped establish a medical research scholarship and fund which supports international collaboration, including the ground-breaking BrainGate project.

“To know that MDF’s mission will continue in the long term via the good work of the University and the scholars is very reassuring,” Associate Professor Bigg says.

“While it may be 10 to 20 years before we start seeing the impact being made by today’s scholars, for now it’s wonderful to be able to help these students to achieve in their courses.”



Associate Professor Roland Bigg

Education and opportunity for all

During her almost 40 years as a teacher focused on special education, Bronwyn Vickers witnessed first-hand the transformational power of learning.

“Education is just so empowering; it unlocks so much, even things we didn’t realise needed unlocking,” says Vickers.

“Every student’s journey is unique, but we all have a shared purpose. I entered the profession later than most. There was no roadmap. But I truly felt that putting my heart and soul into my work and the wider community would make a real difference to the lives of students and teachers I had the privilege of working with.”

Throughout her long career in the sector, Bronwyn balanced her passion for teaching with a vast array of volunteer and advocacy roles, all with a common thread: lifting others up and supporting them to achieve. For the last 10 years, Vickers has donated to UOW’s Transforming Futures Scholarship program, which awards \$3,000 per year over three years to students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to help them realise their potential.

“I could see how beneficiaries had been able to break out of cycles of disadvantage and create intergenerational change. The program championed those who needed a boost, someone to believe in them and ease the financial barriers they faced,” she recalls.

More than 150 students in need have benefited from the equity scholarship since 2008, with 10 new students awarded annually. UOW hopes to expand the program to support 20 students per year.

“I truly believe this program isn’t just very worthwhile, it’s bringing real change and I feel a genuine part of that. Though now retired, I’m determined to continue my support of this program for the rest of my life,” Vickers pledges.

Spirit of giving burns bright

BY JEN WATERS

L - R: Nicky Bath, Jaimey Facchin and Samantha Avitaia.



The response to the monster bushfires that tore through the NSW South Coast and Southern Highlands last summer displayed the exceptional generosity of UOW staff and the vital importance of our research.

As 2019 drew to a close and the world prepared to usher in the new year, communities across NSW faced raging bushfires on multiple fronts. And, as the people of Batemans Bay sought shelter, Learning Development Lecturer and Administrative Assistant Nicky Bath turned UOW's Batemans Bay Campus into a safe haven for hundreds of people across the region.

"It was black outside... like the middle of the night. The grounds of the campus were filling with people," Bath recalls.

"People were just sitting out the front on fold-up chairs. I kept inviting people in; I couldn't leave them outside. It was too full at the evacuation centre across the road."

“

People felt safe and cared for and respected, and that was the most important thing to me.”

With no power or internet, Bath coordinated logistics and solved problems on the fly, helped only by her teenage son, Samuel, and a handful of UOW students. By evening they had welcomed more than 300 staff, students and community members and countless animals, raiding the kitchens for tea, coffee and biscuits and scouring nursing labs for masks. All of this while her husband and eldest son were left battling the flames encircling their Catalina home.

A few short days later, the South Coast was again in the fire's path. Nicky Bath took up the baton again, this time with the help of some University-procured groceries and support from the NSW Disaster Welfare team.

"It was exhausting but I was running on adrenaline," Bath says. "People felt safe and cared for and respected, and that was the most important thing to me."

Meanwhile, her big-hearted community spirit was being echoed 150km to the south at UOW's Bega Campus. As fire again threatened a community reeling from the loss of lives and homes just days earlier, campus manager, Sam Avitaia, opened the doors to terrified locals, their families and friends over several days. The campus also became a communications hub and respite centre for emergency services and council staff.

"There was so little news and power was down all around the region, so many couldn't find out what was happening with the fires and with the emergency services. We were able to help them with things like charging phones and getting in contact with loved ones," says Avitaia.

"They really appreciated having people from the University reach out and offer support."

With a long connection to the local communities fostered through UOW campuses along the South Coast, compassionate staff from across the University clamoured to help. In a single month, 466 staff donated \$82,975 to aid the NSW Rural Fires Service through UOW Cares Bushfire Appeal staff giving program.



Nicky Bath



Professor Ross Bradstock



Samantha Avitaia

"The Vice-Chancellor invited staff to contribute, agreeing that the University would dollar-match all funds raised," explains Monique Harper-Richardson, Director of Advancement at UOW.

"It was the most successful workplace giving appeal we've ever seen, and brought the total amount donated by the University to \$165,950. Later, in a second appeal, our staff also supported the bushfire recovery efforts of St Vincent de Paul's South Coast Operations and the NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service."

Our UOW staff have made a difference in so many other ways, including free workplaces for displaced local businesses, food and water stations for fauna and strategic bushfire recovery planning advice. They also supported mental health and wellbeing through UOW's Shoalhaven Campus-based MIND the GaP (Mental Illness in Nowra District: Goals and Prevention) program.

Counting the cost, preparing for the future

In the weeks following the devastation of the Currowan fire, with the charred land still smouldering, a team of UOW students and researchers carefully began to assess the impact on its wildlife.

Led by PhD student Bridget Roberts and Dr Owen Price, Director of the UOW Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires, more than 30 students – from a range of disciplines, driven to help in any way they could – combed bushland, mapping the extent of the loss, particularly on the reptiles that play a crucial role in the ecosystem.

Dr Price says that we still have a much to learn about how Australia's wildlife detects and responds to bushfires.

"Being able to get out into the fire ground and systematically comb through the bushland is important to understanding this," he explains. "Filling in the knowledge gaps might lead to new ways of helping wildlife adapt to our rapidly warming and changing world."

UOW has long been a forerunner in bushfire research, counting many of the world's thought-leaders in the field among its ranks. In the overture to our Black Summer, researchers at the NSW Bushfire Research Hub – a UOW-led research partnership between foremost universities and the NSW Government – had already been working to understand how we can better manage fire to reduce its devastating impacts.

Research in the Hub focuses on six separate but interconnected themes: mapping fire regimes and fuel, flammability and carbon dynamics, emissions

and air quality, threatened species, Indigenous cultural burning and wellbeing, and cost-effective risk mitigation strategies.

The inaugural Hub Director and leading fire ecologist, Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock, says research across all these areas will feed into an integrated framework, enabling land managers to choose cost-effective strategies that mitigate risks across the board.

"Everything is underpinned by the perspective of continual shifts through climate change. Much of the Hub's work connects with other UOW research projects, including understanding house loss and community resilience to bushfire," Professor Bradstock explains.

The Hub's experts played a substantial role in understanding the risk factors that fuelled last summer's bushfires and influenced many of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommendations later adopted wholesale by the NSW Government. Working in collaboration with academic, government and industry partners across Australia, the Hub is advancing an astounding array of research, including the ability to better predict dryness.

"We can monitor dryness in the past and present, but we can't yet forecast with any level of certainty those critical levels of dryness linked with major fires," Professor Bradstock says.

"This research will deliver fundamental capacity to predict future dryness through better understanding how plants use water, enabling more effective assessment of long-range risk. It also represents a complete overhaul of how we use satellite technology for remote sensing and mapping of moisture."

The potential to transform our understanding and more effective mitigation of fire risks into the future will have enduring benefit for humankind, infrastructure and the environment.

While the support of government and industry is fundamental to UOW achieving its bushfire research objectives, Ms Harper-Richardson says that the generosity of the University's alumni, friends and staff has long played a vital role. As the threat of climate change looms ever larger, this will only grow.

"The support of our donor community has a remarkable effect on what our researchers and students can achieve as they strive together to solve the toughest challenges our society faces," Ms Harper-Richardson says.

"By amplifying the capacity and pace of this important research, the impact on communities here and around the world could be truly extraordinary."

We are continuing to seek support for this vital work, to learn more, search Giving at UOW.

Reflections from UOW's inaugural Ramsay Scholars

The University of Wollongong's mission to create a new generation of critical thinkers achieved a prime milestone in 2020. At the close of that eventful year, the **inaugural cohort of scholars studying the Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation completed their first year of study.**

A \$50 million, eight-year gift from the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation, established by late Australian businessman Paul Ramsay AO, endowed scholarships worth \$30,000 for up to five years to support that first cohort of 30 students from various backgrounds, which included giving them access to approved domestic and international study experiences.

Led by its primary architect, Senior Professor Daniel D. Hutto from the School of Liberal Arts, the course aims to reinvigorate the study of liberal arts and foster interest in exploring the masterworks of Western civilisation. Encouraged to think and speak freely and critically, students have closely examined classic works of art, literature, religion, science and philosophy. They have become participants in abiding conversations, discussions and debates that hone their analytic and dialectical abilities and thus equip them to think critically and creatively when addressing future challenges and complexities.

Three Ramsay Scholars shared personal reflections of their first year studying a double degree in Western Civilisation and Laws.



JOSHUA LANE
Bangor, NSW - Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation/Bachelor of Laws

"One thing I wanted to share was the importance of the aspects of the degree, which goes beyond [getting to grips] with the ideas of, say, Kant or Aristotle. The skills and abilities that the degree imparts - problem solving, critical thinking - allow you to grow within yourself. The ability to deeply analyse things is of value not only in the study of philosophy, history and literature; it can be applied to all of the challenges we face in the modern world. I know already, through the study of this degree, I've been able to look at things I thought I knew in life and to have new ideas about those topics and to question what I used to think. I know with more study my mind will only expand and grow. It's important not just develop and use these abilities for study at university, but to apply them to one's life as a whole.

The Ramsay Scholarship has allowed me to not only live on campus, but live comfortably and to give me time, where I would otherwise be working, to devote to my studies, to my assessments and to properly dive into the great texts. I'm able to study unencumbered, where a lot of my friends who study here have to balance their studies with two or three jobs off campus."



MADISON BALLARD
Shellharbour, NSW - Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation/Bachelor of Laws

"I would explain the core of this degree as conversing with the greatest and most influential ideas and masterpieces in human history, trying to understand them and how they shape us.

I think the best part is when I'm listening to a lecturer or reading a book and have those 'ah-ha' moments. You go "Wow" this is something I've really been thinking about and it just speaks to you on a deeper level. Applying those insights in my own life has been awesome.

Having this scholarship means that I can put my full energy and attention into engaging with these classic books because I think, whether you're studying this course or not, to engage with the great books of the world has immense value and means a lot to me. It also means that, once I graduate, I'll be not only equipped with the skills of arguments and expressing those arguments, but financially more stable, which will also help my parents to pay for my brother's last year of uni. This scholarship also means a lot because of the connections that come with it. It's great that I have world-leading academics in reach, supporting this degree and me in my endeavours."

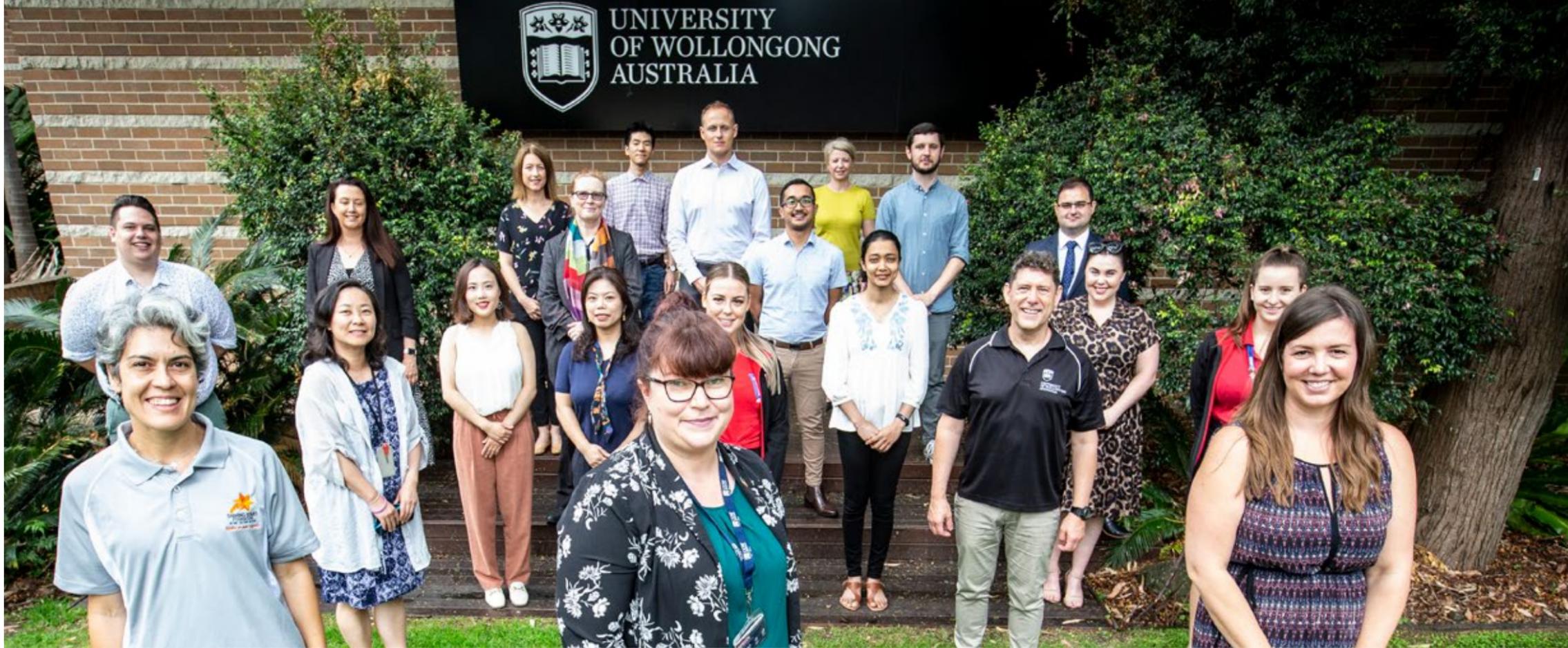


ALEXANDRA MACKAY
Deakin, ACT - Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation/Bachelor of Laws

"I like to be in front of things. I like to challenge things because I think, if you leave them how they are, nothing ever changes. Being part of a degree that challenges the way we think and how we see arts and humanities - how we see history and philosophy - is really important to me. I didn't want a stock standard degree, I wanted to be a part of something.

Being able to discuss sophisticated ideas and have deep conversations at such a young age with people who have so much knowledge is an opportunity that makes you, not re-evaluate everything, but rather re-evaluate how you see yourself in the world. I think that helps you grow as a person and find your place in the world.

This scholarship is a huge responsibility. You're one of 30 people, and you're an ambassador in a way because you're one of the first students to have it [the scholarship]. For me, it's an opportunity to live my university life to the best that I can."



Food + With Care project team

The power of community

BY SARAH VICKERY

The saying **“it takes a village”** has never been more relevant.

When COVID-19 brought the world to a stand-still in early 2020, the knock-on effect of the global shutdown hit the tertiary sector and its students hard.

As all non-essential businesses were forced to close, the impacts were felt almost immediately. Many international students' casual jobs vanished, leaving them with little or no source of income. Fortunately, thanks to the generosity of UOW staff and the kindness of charities and the community, it wasn't long before the students received a much-needed lifeline.

The Faculty of Business and Law (BAL) reacted quickly to provide support to international students based in Sydney. The team worked with the Student Accommodation and Support Division (SASD) and the University's Sydney Business School (UOWSBS) to call the students and conduct welfare checks.

Erin Snape, Senior Manager, International Engagement at BAL, recalled how tough it was for many of the students who had only recently arrived in Australia and were new to UOW. It quickly became apparent that they needed extra support.

“They didn't have a sense of community, they hadn't had the chance to build that, some of them were feeling isolated and didn't know where to access help. They were worried about things at home and

they were worried about their job losses, after hospitality all closed down,” she says.

Erin and her colleagues responded quickly by initiating a food drive. They asked staff to donate what they could, not only to provide practical support but also to assure students they would not be left alone and destitute. To reach the students spread across greater Sydney, they established food collection points, initially at Redfern train station, Parramatta and Liverpool, and later in Strathfield and Blacktown.

Days later, Erin heard about further student support initiatives in other faculties and divisions at the University, as well as outreach from local charitable organisations. All of these independent initiatives then merged to form the Food+ With Care Program based at UOW's Wollongong campus.

“We were working almost immediately with some of our community partners who had already started providing food to the students, but they were doing it outside the campus on the side of the road. So we decided, if we could all get together, we could make a bigger difference to the students,” Erin says.

In May 2020, the University, its staff and community partners established a market where students could fill their shopping bags with food and other

essential items. These much-needed supplies were donated by local churches and charities, including Turbans 4 Australia, the International Christian Church, Shining Star Foundation, Rotary Clubs of Corrimal and West Wollongong, Indian Australian Cultural Association, Shellharbour Community Church, Need a Feed, Keiraview Uniting Church and the St Vincent de Paul Society.

In addition to the Wollongong market, UOW staff based in Wollongong, Sydney and Liverpool campuses still continue to work tirelessly to deliver food packs to students across Sydney, regardless of which campus they attend.

Since March 2020, when the pandemic first hit, Turbans 4 Australia supplied cooked meals and more than 100 food hampers per day to international students at a number of Australian universities across Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and here at Wollongong.

“Seeing people with a smile on their face and for them just to know people care about them brought the biggest tick of approval for us,” says Amar Singh, President of Turbans 4 Australia.

“A lot of people have come back to us and they've said if it wasn't for you guys, we wouldn't have been able to afford this food...everyone deserves to be able to put food on their table,” he affirms.

Back on campus, University staff complemented the outstanding efforts of such generous community partners. Staff not only devoted countless volunteer hours but also purchased more than 1500 pantry packs from the Wollongong campus IGA and donated money to the COVID-19 student hardship fund, raising more than \$150,000. All funds raised helped purchase food and other essential items, supporting more than 4000 students over 28 weeks.

In December, the Food+ With Care team's humanitarian efforts were recognised in the International Community Engagement Award – Business and Community category of the '2020 Study NSW International Student Awards'.

Sarah Lisle, Lead Student Programs (International) at UOW, expressed the team's gratitude at being acknowledged for the award but stressed it was a collaborative effort.

“Food+ With Care is such a great example of people power in action. No one organisation has the resources to do this, but by pulling together and collaborating with community partners, we have been able to support our students through this incredibly tough time.”



Previous GAF scholars (L-R): Aish Cowgill from Bathurst, Hannah Jenkins from Picton, Mikayla McGuirk-Scolaro from Temora, Laila Bradshaw from Binjura, India Johnson from Cowra.

Planting the seeds of education

BY KEELI CAMBOURNE

Moving away from home and beginning university is tough enough; throw in a global pandemic and finding your feet in a new environment and it becomes an even bigger challenge.

One of five scholarships awarded to UOW students by the George Alexander Foundation (GAF), made the transition to tertiary education so far from home that little bit easier for Stephanie Everson.

The scholarship, worth \$24,000 over three years for each student, meant Stephanie could concentrate on settling into university life without the added worry of immediate financial pressures.

"I'm from Forbes, which is five hours inland and I really didn't know where I was going to go for university after I finished school. But when I came up to visit the campus I fell in love with it and knew the University of Wollongong was exactly where I wanted to go," she says.

For Stephanie, the GAF scholarship was instrumental in helping her to relocate to Wollongong, find accommodation and household supplies, and purchase the textbooks and computer essential for her law studies.

"I didn't feel the pressure of having to find a job immediately and the scholarship took the financial burden off me when I was doing such a full-on course load," she says.

And when life was severely interrupted by COVID-19, the GAF scholarship became crucial for enabling her to continue with her undergraduate studies.

"I honestly think I would have considered dropping out [without the scholarship]," she says.

"I'd had a full-time job in Forbes and saw the money I was earning start to drop. The scholarship meant there was one less thing to worry about, and being a first-year university student, there is already so much to get used to."

The George Alexander Foundation was established in 1972 with the aim of supporting access to education for young people, especially from rural and remote areas, to overcome barriers to continued education.

A self-made man, who emigrated to Australia from Britain in 1926, George Alexander believed in the notion of "planting seeds and hoping they grow into pretty big trees". He created the Foundation in order to use his wealth in a constructive way. Keenly aware of the obstacles he had faced as a child and his own lack of education, he was inspired to help talented, young people make the most of their potential.

The Foundation's partnership with UOW, currently one of 15 it has throughout Australia, began in 2018.

Craig Connelly, Chief Executive Officer for the GAF, says the University met all the criteria the Foundation looked for in its partnerships and the success of the first round of scholarships, with a 100 per cent retention rate of students, was testament to UOW's commitment to helping students from diverse backgrounds.

"There are two important aspects we look for in a partnership agreement, which runs for three years, to enable us to provide the most benefit to scholarship students," Connelly says.

"One of those is the quality of the students and the selection process for the scholarships and the second is the relationship we have with the staff that manage the program.

"We put our potential partners through a stringent due diligence process and the University of Wollongong met all the criteria.

"The 100 per cent student retention rate of our scholars is proof of that, especially in 2020 when circumstances could easily have meant students could have decided not to continue with their courses.

"But the ability of the University to support its regional and rural students, who may not have otherwise been able to continue their studies, shows the University has a well-structured offering."

Recognising that success, the Foundation has renewed its partnership with UOW for another term.

"The scholarship runs for three years, but our partnership with the University runs for another five years so we can continue the ongoing relationship with our scholarship students," Connelly says.

Since the partnership began, the GAF has pledged \$576,000 to UOW, supporting a total of 24 students to successfully complete their tertiary studies.

The Westpac Asian Exchange Scholarship program opens to UOW students

University of Wollongong

Westpac Scholars on exchange in China



BY KEELI CAMBOURNE

Studying overseas broadens any graduate's horizon. **Being immersed in a different culture offers students the chance to develop a different perspective on their area of expertise.** Add to that an in-country leadership program coupled with a unique opportunity to build vital industry networks and it's the chance of a lifetime.

University of Wollongong students will soon be able to take part in such an enriching experience. One of the founding partners of the Westpac Young Technologists Scholarship program, UOW will add the Westpac Scholars Trust's Asian Exchange Scholarship program to its growing list of scholarships from 2022. Recipients will be able to spend up to two semesters studying in Asia, experiencing not just a new way of learning but gaining access to leaders, work experiences and volunteering in their field.

In 2014, Westpac made a commitment to provide 100 scholarships each year, through a \$100 million gift, to help Australia prosper and grow. One of the program's key aims is to enhance Australia's ties with its Asian neighbours. The scholars not only have the opportunity to study in Asia but also to create important networks that will help further their careers post-graduation.

Scholarship recipients can choose to study in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Developing Asia-capable leaders

What makes the Asian Exchange Scholarships unique is the tailored leadership development program. A one-week residential experience in Asia provides an invaluable introduction to the region, preparing participants for their exchange and giving them insights into the social and political context of Asia. It also encourages scholars to "plug-in" experiences like language courses, internships and volunteering.

Westpac Scholars Trust CEO Susan Bannigan says this scholarship expands on Westpac's commitment to supporting scholars in their academic and future business endeavours.

"We have been partnering with the University of Wollongong to deliver the Westpac Young Technologist Scholarship since the very start of the Westpac Scholars program in 2014. Six years on we are thrilled to expand this partnership to offer our Asian Exchange Scholarship to undergraduate students at UOW, who are keen to explore a future connected to Asia.

"The Westpac Asian Exchange Scholarship provides a culturally immersive opportunity and access to some of the best Australia-Asia thought leaders, helping Westpac Scholars become Asia capable leaders of the future," Bannigan says.

The scholarship is valued at \$12,250, which includes the cost of the leadership residential in Asia led by the University of Tasmania. It is open to full-time undergraduates with a minimum of a credit average and a keen curiosity about Asia's role in Australia's future prosperity. Scholars must have a desire to learn about a specific Asian culture, language, tradition or business through a combination of academic study and cultural immersion and have the potential and ambition to contribute to strengthening Australia-Asia ties in their future endeavours.



A scholarship for life

Westpac Asian Exchange Scholars become part of the Westpac 100 Scholars Network which gives them access to a diverse group of inspiring scholars as well as ongoing leadership development. Drawing on the Scholars' strong sense of purpose and desire to collaborate, the network is designed to be inspiring, influential and a life-long learning experience.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Professor Theo Farrell says the growing partnership with Westpac Scholars Trust is recognition of the University of Wollongong's commitment to equity and opportunity for all learners.

"Our University is one of 14 partner universities with Westpac Scholars Trust and our inclusion in 2022 for the Asian Exchange Scholarship shows UOW is well-recognised for its support of all students," Professor Farrell says.

Monique Harper-Richardson, UOW's Director of Advancement, says the Westpac Asian Exchange Scholarship further enhances the University's scholarship opportunities for all students.

"Our range of scholarships helps all our student cohorts and supports them in contributing to the bigger picture in our community and in the world. We are delighted to facilitate this expanded opportunity for our students," Ms Harper-Richardson says.

"The partnership with Westpac Scholars Trust is particularly important for UOW students to gain invaluable experience and future business connections by studying in Asia. Our inclusion in the Asian Exchange Scholarship from 2022, alongside some of Australia's other leading universities, will help our students make their mark in the global community."

Donor Report 2020

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A father's commitment to a cause close to his heart

Bulli's Michael Crowley remembers clearly the night in 2013 when **his daughter, Sharn, told them she had been diagnosed with motor neurone disease (MND).**

WORDS: MICHELE TYDD

"Her specialist told her to make sure her family didn't Google the disease and, of course, that was the first thing I did when she left," Mr Crowley recalls.

"I got a hell of a shock to realise I'd be literally watching my daughter die slowly over a number of years."

It could have gone horribly downhill from there, but, with great courage and determination, Sharn McNeill, then 30 and a nurse with a UOW Bachelor of Nursing degree, chose to fight to help defeat a disease that affects about 2000 people in Australia.

Sharn had a particularly aggressive form of MND that slowly steals away the ability to move, speak, swallow and breathe.

In a 2014 speech she delivered to the St John Bosco Parish at Engadine – her old high school stamping ground - she said:

"I chose to accept it, to own it, and to take action on it – this way I'm back in control of my own life."

And take action she did. Through her busy speaking and fundraising engagements, she became the bright, beaming face of hope and determination right up until her death in July, 2019.

Determined to keep her spirit alive, Mr Crowley has bequeathed part of his estate to UOW to establish a scholarship in Sharn's name to help support PhD students investigating neurodegenerative disease within Professor Justin Yerbury's MND research team.

He decided this was the perfect fit because Professor Yerbury and Sharn shared a fierce sense of purpose.

Professor Yerbury also has MND and had met Sharn a number of times. Acknowledging Mr Crowley's legacy, he wrote that, without this sort of community generosity, "we would not be able to do the work we do."

"Sharn was a strong, selfless woman who had a real passion for living life to the fullest. I really admired that about her," he said.

Asked what he seeks in his PhD students, Professor Yerbury replied:

"I look for passionate and dedicated people...students are important to the team because I learn something different from each person who trains with us.

"We have a close-knit team who share the same values that Sharn exuded. Finding a cure for a complex disease like MND is a challenge and chipping away at it can be rewarding."

Looking back, Mr Crowley says he first noticed something was wrong when Sharn, a usually brisk walker, started dragging her right foot during one of their morning walks.

Although the diagnosis that followed was devastating, Mr Crowley says Sharn's remarkable attitude filled her family with pride.



Michael Crowley



Michael Crowley with his late daughter Sharn McNeill.

In 2014, Sharn became the first person outside the USA to receive the Beacon of Courage Award from the Brain Mapping Foundation in recognition of her efforts to raise awareness about neurological disorders.

"The moment I will always treasure occurred that same year watching her and members of her incredible support team walk that last 100 metres of the Cairns Ironman after she had endured about 16 hours of gruelling toil – it was something she had always wanted to do," Mr Crowley says.

"She was a person who thrived on goals, or as she put it 'chasing rabbits'."

Despite the toll the disease was taking, Sharn fought to remain visible even if it was only to cheer on fundraising challenges such as the annual Furies Climb for MND when firefighters climb all 1504 steps of the Sydney Tower.

And privately, says her father, she was just as caring, particularly when asked to counsel others struggling with MND diagnosis.

Mr Crowley retired early so he and his partner, Krys, could support Sharn and her husband, Russell, as her condition progressed and her muscles and joints weakened to the extent her shoulders often dislocated causing severe pain.

"Sharn never complained. She'd say to Russell, 'put them back in and give me two beers and two Endone'," Mr Crowley remembers with a smile.

One of Sharn's final wishes was to have a family gathering including siblings - Matthew, Lindsay and

Jarrad - and other close family members at her father and step-mother's house across the road from where she lived.

"She had a ball that night because they always had lots of laughs and it was great to see," Mr Crowley recalls.

Two nights later, Sharn died peacefully in her sleep. At her funeral, students from St John Bosco High at Engadine who had heard her speak a few years earlier, lined the street outside the church in her honour.

Mr Crowley says the primary purpose of his bequest is to establish a fitting legacy for his daughter, but he is pleased it will also financially help selected students throughout their PhDs and hopefully contribute to a MND breakthrough.

"I'd like more people to think along these lines because our children and grandchildren will be better off if a portion of our estate is gifted towards an institution that is helping the wider community."

A message from the Vice-Chancellor

In a year like no other, the University of Wollongong was shaped by bushfires, floods and the global COVID-19 pandemic in our home communities. 2020 profoundly challenged every aspect of our lives and operations and yet, during this time, **we saw the Wollongong spirit come alive.**

Our UOW staff community rallied on a number of fronts. Onsite staff opened our Bega and Batemans Bay campuses to provide much-needed places of refuge for those fleeing the summer bushfires. Others generously donated to our UOW Cares Staff Giving Appeal to support the Rural Fire Service, matched dollar for dollar by UOW.

When the pandemic struck, staff collaborated with a range of community organisations. Together they provided food, care packages and comfort for many of our students left stranded and vulnerable across NSW.

As donors, your support for scholarships, programs and research proved more important than ever before, and you stood shoulder to shoulder with the University in our mission to make a real difference in the lives of others. To witness this collective support was extraordinary.

In August, I was delighted to announce Australia's first philanthropically funded Chair in Mathematical Sciences, established through a gift from the Tibra Foundation. Founded by UOW alumni, the Foundation has long recognised the important role that mathematics plays in our shared future. It was a privilege to recognise their ongoing support for students and research.

Our long-term partnership with the Westpac Scholars Trust in the Young Technologists Scholarships Program took on a further dimension. UOW was selected as a partner for the Westpac Scholars Asian Exchange Scholarship Program commencing in 2022. Scholars will spend up to two semesters in Asia, where they will forge long-lasting professional networks, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries.

The Horizons Fellow of Molecular Pathology, launched in 2020, was also made possible through philanthropic support. It aims to enhance the University's ability to gain a clearer

understanding of diagnostics and pathology in the early detection of disease. Designed to attract the world's best talent, this Fellowship demonstrates the potential for philanthropy to align with the University's strategic goals.

Despite the very challenging conditions, UOW continues to be recognised as a world-class University, currently ranked in the top one per cent¹ internationally and recognised as the highest ranked university in NSW². I am particularly pleased with our world ranking in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings where UOW is ranked 31st. Your philanthropic support is well vested in an organisation dedicated to excellence and impact.

As I look towards the completion of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor in the second quarter of 2021, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the unwavering support of our donors. You are from diverse backgrounds and experiences, yet you all share the common values and commitment to the vital role of higher education as a positive force in society. I have valued the opportunity to meet many of you over the years. I hope you feel a great sense of pride in being part of the community of donors featured in this publication.

The University was founded on philanthropy and the donations of individuals and organisations. Your support in 2020 continues this proud tradition. You continue to make a vital contribution to UOW's ability to educate the next generation of leaders and to conduct research that will make a positive and lasting impact.

My sincere thanks to you all.

PROFESSOR PAUL WELLINGS CBE
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
University of Wollongong

1. QS World Rankings 2021 2. QILT 2020

Impact in numbers

2020

\$12,218,133.78 from 2,935 Donors

Total funds raised in 2020 towards creating meaningful impact through our world-class teaching, research and learning environments.



STAND FOR OPPORTUNITY

Total funds raised in philanthropic support for student support and access to higher education: **\$6,190,740.89** from **1826** donors



STAND FOR OUR FUTURE

Total funds raised in philanthropic support for research and innovation: **\$4,451,794.28** from **805** donors



STAND TOGETHER

Total funds raised in philanthropic support for our communities: **\$237,406** from **204** donors



INSTITUTIONAL

Total funds raised in philanthropic support of other institutional priorities: **\$1,338,192.59** from **100** donors

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Advancement Division

+61 2 4221 5757

giving@uow.edu.au

giving.uow.edu.au



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