



UOW and CSIRO join forces to ensure future viability of biometry

Sustainable agriculture, food security and the productivity of primary industries are vital issues for the future of Australia.

Biometry is a discipline of statistics that develops and applies statistical theory and methods in the biosciences, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries in the primary industries sector and biomedical science and public health.

The University of Wollongong (UOW) and CSIRO have teamed up to ensure that this vital field of statistics continues to be viable in Australia by appointing Brian Cullis to the position of Professor of Biometry.

The appointment of Professor Cullis is also supported by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), who have identified the lack of sufficient statisticians available for research and development as a significant hindrance to the success of their research program. In a recent National capacity audit of research disciplines related to the grains industry, the GRDC identified statistics as one of the top 10 areas of greatest need for capacity building.

Biometry departments, particularly those with interest in the primary industries sector have disappeared or have been significantly reduced affecting their ability to work effectively with scientists in a range of areas. There has been no real growth in the number of biometricians working in public sector organisations for the past decade. Several state departments have little, or no biometrics capacity, while biometrics capacity in other states is declining.

Succession planning for future employment prospects for new graduates is vital in all states. According to UOW and CSIRO there needs to be enough students coming through with the appropriate qualifications and education in mathematics and statistics.

The University of Wollongong is a logical choice for the establishment of an inaugural Professor in Biometry, within the Faculty of Informatics because of its very strong existing statistics group and its excellent and extensive track record of working effectively with industry and government organisations. The position will be charged with the responsibility to undertake the development and training of the next generation of biometricians.

Brian Cullis' research and collaborative work focus on the development and use of statistical methods for primary industries. In particular, he has (jointly) developed methods and algorithms for fitting linear mixed models to large crop improvement data-sets and continues to explore statistical solutions to emerging technologies in plant breeding such as identification of marker-trait associations in complex populations and enhanced modelling of Genotype by Environment interactions using extended factor analytic models.



MEDIA PLEASE NOTE

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