Message from the Dean

In our second ‘The Educator’ for 2011, we highlight our initial teacher education programs, with special emphasis on our new Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) degree. We are pleased to offer a suite of degrees at the Masters level, preparing early childhood, primary and secondary teachers. We organise these courses so that participants learn not only about teaching for their particular phase of schooling but also teaching and learning that precedes and follows that phase. Our focus is therefore on the development of children, just as we emphasise the continuing learning of teachers in schools by offering our Master of Education, Doctor of Education and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. I am proud of the innovative and energetic work of our staff and their achievements in these programs.

The Faculty of Education introduced its two-year Master of Teaching degrees knowing that professional confidence is a direct result of investment in preservice teacher education. Graduates who enrol in the Master of Teaching degrees (Early Childhood, Primary or Secondary) will now benefit from an extra year’s tuition prior to commencement in a professional role.

Until recently, the UWA pathway to becoming a secondary teacher has been to enrol in a three year undergraduate degree followed by a one year Diploma of Education course. The new two-year Master of Teaching (Secondary) program will eventually replace the Diploma of Education which will be phased out in accordance with Federal requirements.

The advantages of the Master of Teaching degrees are that they offer all pre-service teachers:

- Specific instruction in the teaching of language and literacy
- Specific instruction in the new digital literacies
- Increased supervised classroom teaching experience
- An opportunity to develop and sustain research interests

Findings from research into middle school literacy and numeracy indicate that secondary teachers without knowledge of language acquisition are challenged in their efforts to accurately diagnose learning difficulties if they are not familiar with the various pathways to language and number competence. The Master of Teaching program has been designed to address current challenges in education.

If you would like more information about UWA’s Master of Teaching degrees go to education.uwa.edu.au/courses
Teaching Teachers for the Future

The Teaching Teachers for the Future (TTF) project, coordinated by Associate Professor Mark Pegrum and Associate Professor Grace Oakley, is now in its fifth month at UWA’s Faculty of Education where accelerated progress in Information Technology integration and skill acquisition has been acknowledged.

As part of the TTF program, Mr Adam Marchant was seconded to the Faculty of Education to monitor progress and support staff and students.

Currently, the TTF project focuses on:
- Producing digital resources for use within classrooms
- Developing a range of Wikis and Blogs
- Developing skill in the use of interactive whiteboards
- Building a collaborative community with ICT Pedagogy Officers in West Australian universities
- Exploring the functionality of the iPads introduced to Master of Teaching students in 2011
- Working with pre-service teachers to embed technology in their pedagogical approaches

The Teaching Teachers for the Future project supports the Faculty’s aim of meeting the educational challenges of the 21st century.

Adam Marchant leaves the Faculty in mid October to take up the deputy principalship at Ellenbrook Primary School. We thank Adam for his commitment to this innovative national teacher education program.

iPad iNnovation

The new Australian curriculum places increased emphasis on IT integration across all learning areas. To help ensure our graduates are at the forefront of their profession, we provided students enrolled in the 2011 intake of the Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) their own iPad to use.

There has been a body of research in support of mobile or ubiquitous learning. In allowing students permanent access to a device such as the iPad, we facilitate increased opportunities for engagement. UWA is raising student awareness of desirable pedagogical approaches by modelling this best practice.

For example, the iPad has been used in lesson planning and delivery through the creation of a ‘digital story’. Students planned a short story and then converted it (with ease) into an interactive, multimedia performance.

Throughout this activity students demonstrated a heightened sense of engagement while achieving desired learning outcomes. There are numerous ‘apps’ that allow for creative, collaborative work of this nature. We are only beginning to witness their emergence.

A key benefit of using the iPad has been that it allows us to identify future developments and potential uses including:
- UWA ‘app’ creation
- increasing the number of e-books included on course materials lists
- the opportunity to use a number of web 2.0 functionalities

UWA is one of the first universities to give a group of pre-service teachers access to this type of device as part of their course.
Palmyra Primary School Partnership

The Faculty of Education through the Master of Teaching courses is developing a number of sustainable, authentic and quality partnerships with schools across Western Australia. Our students undertake professional placements in schools and as part of their course are encouraged to participate in the school events that are integral to the school and teaching experience. Special events, mentoring programs and artistic programs are particularly valued by our teacher education students and the schools.

Associate Professor Robert Faulkner and students from the Faculty of Education worked for three weeks with students and staff at Palmyra Primary School in a creative partnership. The Our Country Art Exhibition was the celebration of the partnership and opened in the new arts complex on June 27, 2011 for the enjoyment of the entire Palmyra community. Palmyra Arts Director, Bernadette Knight, was very pleased with the workshops that the students undertook in the first year of this creative partnership. The workshops were part of the Artistic and Expressive Child unit in the Master of Teaching (Early Childhood).

Please contact lisa.bell@uwa.edu.au to discuss professional practice and school partnerships with the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Australia.

Bold Park School Partnership – August 2011

For three weeks in August, 14 students from the Graduate School of Education were part of the Bold Park community. Associate Professor Christine Howitt worked with the students to explore how space and materials are used within the early childhood classrooms to promote creativity and flexibility in teaching and learning. Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) students were learning how to develop effective indoor and outdoor learning environments and how such environments assist with children’s social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical development. The students worked in a learning environment that is a welcoming space reflecting the lives and identities of the children in the classroom and their families.

Bold Park hosted our students, providing an opportunity to observe and interact with a working Reggio Emilia school. Our students witnessed first-hand the important place of the environment in the teaching and learning process, and how the environment, too, can act as teacher.

Students made the following observations about the experience: “Bold Park offers each child flexibility, freedom, respectful direction, and respects the children by providing a beautiful, safe place to play and learn.”

“I have learned about empowering children with resources that are flexible and allow for imagination and creative extension and challenges. I have watched teachers valuing children’s input...being driven by them and their thoughts in an effective manner. This is not just free play, but intentional play and intentional learning.”

“Never underestimate children: they are capable of amazing things. Don’t be scared to use non-traditional materials.”
Prestigious ARC Linkage Grant won by Dr Christine Howitt

This ARC Linkage Grant, with partners Scitech and Rio Tinto, focuses on understanding and improving parents' and young children's interest and engagement in science through the implementation of Scitech's newly developed Early Childhood Outreach program delivered to playgroups.

Titled “Small steps in science: Developing young children’s science understanding through playgroup incursions”, this research is the first to bring together the informal learning sector, the playgroup sector, and early childhood science experts to develop knowledge that will support science learning. The specific research questions are:

1. How can science incursions into community playgroups be structured to best promote young children’s and parents’ opportunities for involvement, exploration and understanding of science?
2. How can science incursions into community playgroups be structured to best increase interactions between young children and their parents that build engagement and interest in science?
3. How can the interaction between young children and their parents be extended beyond the incursion to maintain engagement in science?

This research is highly applicable as results will feed directly back into Scitech’s Early Childhood Outreach program. This will be one of the first outreach programs to have a research base to inform the continuing development of the program. An additional application is exploring what science learning is transferred to the home as a consequence of participating in the program, and how engagement in science can be maintained at home. As the home is the first place of learning for all children, mechanisms to assist parents to engage children in science can promote this learning.

CTW Dr June Jones Masters Scholarship in Education

A new scholarship to support women who wish to undertake a Master of Teaching degree and are experiencing financial hardship has been established by the Beshar Family in honour of Dr June Jones, one of Western Australia’s most respected educators. The scholarship is called the Centenary Trust for Women Dr June Jones Masters Scholarship in Education.

Ms Sarah Beshar and the Beshar family have donated funds to provide an annual scholarship in honour of Sarah’s mother, Dr June Jones AM, who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education by The University of Western Australia in 2007 and an Order of Australia for Education Services. Dr Jones served on the Senate of UWA for 13 years. For five years she was the inaugural chair of the UWA Centenary Trust for Women, which was established in 2002 to assist disadvantaged women to receive resources to enable them to benefit from education at UWA. Dr Jones is a Patron of the Hackett Foundation, a member of the Senate Development Committee and the UWA Press Advisory Board.

The Scholarship is offered in 2012 for the equivalent of 2 year full-time duration of the recipient’s course. One new Scholarship will be awarded in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. The value of the scholarship is $5,000 per annum, indexed annually to CPI.

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