



# UWA ACADEMIC STAFF ASSOCIATION

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## 2008 A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

Welcome to another year. The Academic Staff Association has been concerned for some time that academic issues and practices are not sufficiently discussed by staff or by management and staff. At present all academic staff members are under the pressure of academic commitments, with inadequate time and resources to deal with them. We have been described by one of our members as not just "time poor" but "time bankrupt". Under these circumstances it is difficult to find the time to come together and discuss our mutual experiences, problems and potential solutions. We believe that it is very important to do so however and intend to facilitate such discussions by continuing with our forum series.

The first forum for the year was conducted in the last week of February on the subject of the use of Lectopia and webCT. The forum was well attended and participation was extensive and lively. We had anticipated that members were anxious to have their say on this matter and allowed for an extensive discussion which lasted overall for an hour and a quarter. Future subjects will be confined to the hour at lunchtime. In November we combined with the NTEU to present a forum on Academic Freedom and at our December function had a brief discussion of the change to courses proposal of the University. Our President has written a paper in response to the suggestions of the University on this matter and another of our committee members has made additional observations. These may be found on the association's website.

The next forum will be devoted to Promotion. We will be inviting the Chair of the Promotions Committee to address the meeting but again we wish members to come prepared to share their experiences and problems and proposed solutions.

Members are welcome to suggest topics for a future forum, though we are not short of ideas based on the concerns of members.

## DISCIPLINE GROUPS

The Academic Staff Association was responsible for the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the chair of the Academic Board meeting with heads of discipline recognised and unrecognised. We thought this limited face to face encounter a vast improvement on the computer based questionnaires that constituted the two reviews of disciplines to date and the numbers suggested that we were right. We have had responses from nearly forty heads of discipline compared to the twenty that answered the review questionnaire.

Our submission to the major review of disciplines was completed and submitted to Professor Plowman. This submission is available on the UWAASA website.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE LECTOPIA/webCT FORUM

A good number of people attended and participated in our forum on Lectopia and webCT. We had invited Jane Long and Steve Sheely to give us a few minutes each on the university's perspective on Lectopia and webCT respectively. Dennis Haskell and Natalie Skeed gave us a positive and a more negative view from the academic user's perspective.

From the university perspective the use of Lectopia is entirely voluntary to each individual lecturer but there are problems created by team teaching and teaching for Albany. Mike Neville indicated that all staff using Lectopia were given the opportunity at the end of each semester to store or delete their Lectopia material but a considerable number of staff claimed not to have received this information. The default position is that the material is preserved by the university.

There was some discussion over student demand for Lectopia and the possibility that university publicity enhanced this demand. Opinion was divided on this argument of student demand being trumps, with some urging academics to use their judgment and others that this practice was actually deleterious to the student experience of university and ought to be withstood.

Technical failure of recordings and of webCT has led to a deal of difficulty and the great potential for an increased workload. The technicians in areas of the university that have faulty equipment are not under the control of the Lectopia authority. The increased workload of using such technology was also raised in a general sense.

There was some discussion of the curbing of a spontaneous lecturing style given the technical restrictions imposed by the use of Lectopia and suggestions that other methods favoured by lecturers were no longer available or suitable because of the use of Lectopia.

A matter that was not raised at the forum, has been raised by a number of academics primarily from the business school but also from humanities and cultural studies of limits on content due to concerns that giving examples to students of poor business practices and poor political decision making for instance, create a problem if recorded, though not if spoken.

Thank you to the many who participated!

## COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Nominations are called from eligible candidates for the election of:

**President (1) Vice President (1) Secretary (1) Treasurer (1)  
Ordinary Member of the Committee of Management (6)**

The above positions are for a 1 year term commencing from 1 July 2008.

Nomination forms and lodgement instructions are available from the UWAASA office: [uwaasa@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:uwaasa@cyllene.uwa.edu.au): [www.uwaasa.uwa.edu.au](http://www.uwaasa.uwa.edu.au)

Nominations close 5pm Thursday 27 March 2008.

## THE UWAASA COMMITTEE MEMBERS—A PROFILE

*INTRODUCING Stuart Bunt, Professorial Fellow in Teaching and Learning in the School of Anatomy and Human Biology.*

In 1995 Stuart joined the University of WA from Dundee where he had been an active member of the Union. After giving himself a couple of years to settle into WA Stuart joined the committee of UWAASA and the NTEU and has taken on various roles as needed, acting as ordinary committee member to begin, but later taking on the roles of Secretary, President and Vice President. Stuart is currently the Acting President of UWAASA while Professor Raymond da Silva Rosa is in New York on study leave and is also Vice President of the NTEU committee.

Stuart's teaching interests are in the fields of anatomy, neuroanatomy and neuroscience. Until this year he was also coordinator of anatomy and physiology teaching for medical, dental and podiatry students. This role gave him an active interest and considerable experience in the workload associated with lectopia and web CT.

Stuart is also Scientific Director of SymbioticA. Under this scheme artists come to work with and critique biotechnology and the biosciences. The ethics, sociology, history of science and the social impact of science are considered. Artists also come to learn how to use biological materials in the practice of their various arts. You can see the documentation of some of this artistic work on the walls of the Anatomy and Human Biology building – it certainly repays a visit.

Stuart has had some bitter experience of spin-offs into the commercial world. This is a cautionary tale! Stuart has also been known to drive racing cars at Wanneroo but lately has switched attention to building a racing car.

Having been an elected member of the academic staff on the Senate of the university for eight years, Stuart has recently been re-elected for his third and final term.

The UWAASA newsletter is written and edited by Dr Sandra Penrose, and authorised by the acting UWAASA President, Professor Stuart Bunt.



**The current committee took office in July 2007. The executive and ordinary committee members are as follows:**

**President,** Prof Raymond da Silva Rosa ext. 2974  
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**Vice President,** Prof Stuart Blunt ext. 2983  
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**Secretary,** Prof Bill Ford ext. 2948  
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**Treasurer,** Dr Allan McKinley ext. 3165  
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*Please review the UWAASA website  
[www.uwaasa.uwa.edu.au](http://www.uwaasa.uwa.edu.au) for current issues.*

### Administrative Officer and Executive Officer

Joanna Manvell is the part time administrative officer—contact details as above.

Sandra Penrose is the executive officer, working one day a week (generally Thursday). She can be reached on 6488 3836 on Thursdays or at other times at home on 9447 3667.