



UWA ACADEMIC STAFF ASSOCIATION

W2 Winthrop Tower
University of Western Australia M005
Tel: (08) 6488 3836
Fax: (08) 6488 1079
Email: uwaasa@cyllene.uwa.edu.au

Issue 2 November 2007

THE UWAASA COMMITTEE MEMBERS—A PROFILE

INTRODUCING Associate Professor Sue Broomhall.

Sue has been working at UWA since 2001. In that year she was employed in UWA Extension. Between the beginning of 2002 and early 2005, Sue was an ARC post-doc fellow, a research position. Sue then became a Senior Lecturer in early modern European history in the Humanities School of the Arts faculty. In 2008 Sue is to become Associate Dean of Research in the Arts faculty.

Sue's research interests are focused on women and gender in the mediaeval and early modern period and she is involved in a team research grant working on welfare and poverty in 16th century France and in another grant with an industry partner researching a Philosophical Understanding of Place. Her teaching is based on the early modern period (the 16th to the 18th centuries). She enjoys teaching "Plague, Pox and Pandemics" to a mixture of arts and medical students. Sue is also involved in a teaching project analysing workshop teaching.

Sue is married with two children under four and hence is something of an expert on negotiating maternity leave from grants programmes. Sue has only recently joined the committee but has already contributed to the efforts of our committee to deal with problems arising from discipline groups in the University. She formerly headed a group A discipline for 18 months and is currently heading a discipline group B.

COURSES FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD

Your Academic Staff Association has been kept very busy with all the new and additional proposals emanating from the University management. In the case of "Courses for Tomorrow's World" which was released just after the publication of the last newsletter, our President Professor Ray da Silva Rosa has prepared a paper to invite discussion which is published on the UWAASA website. Associate Professor Daniel Brown, a member of the Committee, has made a response which is also available on the website.

The views of members are invited in order to make some response on the proposals from UWAASA. One of our members suggested a "Courses for Horses" forum. We intend to make some preliminary observations on this matter by having Emeritus Professor Norman Etherington speaking at our Christmas drinks and nibbles session on Wednesday 5th December at 4.00 p.m.

DISCIPLINE GROUPS

Our awareness of some of the problems created by discipline groups in multi-discipline schools, and in particular the lack of clarity concerning the role, responsibility and recognition accorded to the chairs of discipline groups, caused us to call a meeting of discipline heads of discipline groups both A and B in order to elucidate the problems and attempt to devise some solutions in advance of the review of discipline groups that is now being conducted by Professor David Plowman.

As a result of the discussion at the meeting Sue Broomhall and Sandra Penrose prepared a document for the UWAASA website which sets out some considerations for our members. The President and the Executive officer have also had meetings with Professor Plowman and Deputy Vice Chancellor Margaret Seares to indicate some of the more serious concerns of our members who are, or have been, chairs of discipline groups.

As a result, a further meeting of discipline chairs will be held with both David Plowman and Margaret Seares in attendance. We are also in the process of preparing a submission for the review. We urge that members take the time to respond to the University questionnaire on disciplines and contact members of the UWAASA committee with any concerns on this matter.

*Please review the UWAASA website
www.uwaasa.uwa.edu.au for current issues.*

*The committee members welcome your comments
and their contact details are on the website.*

*You are invited to a
**FORUM & END-OF-YEAR
CELEBRATION**
Wednesday 5th December
4pm-7pm
Seminar Room G29, Arts Faculty
Strong drink and light food will be served*

MORE ON THE UWA SENATE AND ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

It became evident at the AGM of UWAASA that members were interested in the developments concerning the conduct of the UWA Senate. Within a few days of writing the piece for the previous newsletter, the NTEU put out a small booklet entitled *State of the Sector* and I recommend that members read the section on Changes to University Governance on pp 21-2. This indicates that the changes to the composition and conduct of our own Senate have been replicated all over Australia.

In our own case however this has been even more deleterious since UWA was one of very few Australian universities which recognised the role of the Staff Association and later of the Union by giving these bodies observer status on Senate and also by welcoming their capacity to make a contribution to discussions at every meeting. The treatment of staff elected to Senate does appear to be similar across Australia and I quote from *State of the Sector* p.22.

“Student and staff members of governing bodies are now routinely excluded from serving on financial and commer-

cial committees due to so-called ‘conflicts of interest’.....These changes have created an hierarchical, rather than collegial system, with clear divisions between senior management and the university community..... University staff have both the right and the professional responsibility to engage with the governance of their institution. Staff participation in governance is critical to the ability of the universities to work in the public interest and defend principles of academic freedom, in so much as staff must be able to actively engage in debates concerning the effective operation of their institution....”

The Chancellor’s Committee sets the agenda for Senate and will have an overwhelming say in the selection of a new Vice-Chancellor when that time arrives. The Committee is chaired by Michael Chaney as Chancellor. The other members are Alan Robson, David Griffiths, Tony Howarth, John Langoulant, and Lyndon Rowe. These men, apart from Alan, also chair the key committees of Senate.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT 2007 (presented at the AGM)

UWAASA faces a potentially exciting and fruitful period in its history. I say “potentially” because the relevance of the Association depends on how actively it engages in shaping the major changes at UWA that will affect academic life. Salient examples of change, prospective and in train, include the options canvassed in “Courses for Tomorrow’s World”, the implementation of the Research Quality Framework exercise, the operation of Disciplinary Groups, and revisions to Academic Career Structure. If now is not the hour for the Association, it is unclear when, if ever, might be.

Academics comprise just one of several groups of people with an interest in UWA and so I think it is helpful to be clear about why promotion of academic voice is important. The work done by academics determines the quality of teaching and research, the university’s principal activities. It is not feasible to ensure high quality teaching and research by superintending academics, however closely.

Academic work is largely self-directed, often co-operative and typically risky in that outcomes are uncertain. Changes that upset the set of implicit understandings that academics rely on when deciding how to direct their efforts can be highly demoralising and inimical to investment of effort that pays off in the long-term. This is not an argument against change per se. It is an argument for ensuring that academics are widely and closely consulted. It is also to say that coming to the right decision at a university is likely to be a longer, more involved process than in most commercial organisations. Managing academics may be like herding cats but if that’s the level of effort required there is no point making do with less.

In making the above points, I think it is important to acknowledge there are many people at UWA not directly involved in teaching or research who are passionate and committed to the institution. My view is that UWAASA should aim not to make academic voice heard above all others but to ensure that it receives its proper due. There may be times when the Association presses the cause of other voices on campus that are in danger of being overlooked.

I will not go into the specific initiatives that UWAASA has undertaken to facilitate the hearing of academic voice. These are dis-

cussed in the newsletter sent out last week. A similar newsletter will be distributed each month. I’ll close now by drawing your attention to changes in personnel within UWAASA.

Until the recent past, most of UWAASA’s initiatives were undertaken in conjunction with the NTEU, a state of affairs facilitated by the two entities sharing in common their offices, most of their committee members, an executive officer, and, of course, many members. UWAASA now has a separate executive officer, Sandra Penrose, and a separate administrative officer, Joanna Manvell. These changes ensure the Association is better placed to attend to issues and concerns that are particular to UWA and to academics.

I take this opportunity to formally welcome both Sandra and Joanna. I am particularly appreciative of the continuity and perspective that Sandra brings to UWAASA as she held the presidency for many years. Joanna joined UWAASA in August and I am happy to advise that in her we have found someone of the calibre of Lee Stupart, who was previously the administrative officer and who continues to provide invaluable support. The Association’s committee members include, inter alia, the president and vice-president of the NTEU so, naturally, relations between the organisations remain cordial, even warm!

If the Association is well placed to influence the course of events at UWA it is because of work undertaken earlier. I wish to thank, in particular, Stuart Bunt, the immediate past president, and members of the committee of management: Andrea Gaynor, (Vice President), Bill Ford (Secretary, on-going), Allan McKinley (Treasurer, on-going), Jamie O’Shea, Catherine Lees, Stephen Dobbs, Michael Pinches, and Abu Siddique. Andrea and Catherine did not stand for re-election in May and Michael’s commitments whilst on study leave have led to him stepping down from the committee of management. The new members of the committee are Mark Tibbett, Daniel Brown and Sue Broomhall. I am hopeful that all committee members agree to have their photographs on the UWAASA website so they get the recognition they deserve!

The UWAASA newsletter is written and edited by Dr Sandra Penrose, and authorised by the UWAASA President, Professor Raymond da Silva Rosa.