



# UWA ACADEMIC STAFF ASSOCIATION

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

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## FORUM ON UWA AND THE TOP 50

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the documents from the University administration come so thick and fast that most academics have no time to respond to them, or even to read them much of the time. Another of these papers "The Educational Attributes of Some of the World's 'Top 50' Universities: A Discussion Paper" by Dr Carolyn Daniel appeared in May. The UWAASA President, Professor Ray da Silva Rosa, has written a response to this paper which will appear on the Association's website. In discussion of these papers, the UWAASA Committee members expressed disquiet at the apparent conflict of the signals which the University administration is giving academic staff over this matter and the consequent impossibility of responding appropriately.

### UWAASA HOSTS A FORUM THIS THURSDAY 14TH AUGUST at 1pm in the Psychology "TOP 50: Is It Realistic? Conflicting Directions from the University?"

The following is the executive summary of Professor da Silva Rosa's paper:-

#### Executive Summary

*Top 50* identifies the educational attributes of the top fifty research universities, the implicit premise being that these are the attributes UWA should seek to emulate whilst improving its research to rank in the top fifty.

There are two issues:

Difficulty of the challenge: Numerous studies and the dismal teaching performance of research-intensive universities indicate that teaching and research are not complementary activities. Developing a culture that accommodates both teaching and research at world-class level has proved challenging even to Harvard, the world's best endowed university.

Lack of plan/Conflicting signals: UWA does not have a roadmap on how we go about reaching the levels of the top 50 in both teaching and research. There is a tendency to endorse multiple goals without adequate consideration of their compatibility, e.g. current operational priorities include increasing both (a) the number of higher degree by research (HDR) students and their completion rates, and (b) the quality of HDR programmes and theses. Is it feasible to pursue both goals simultaneously? If so, how?

In summary, UWA's problem is not that its targets are ambitious but that we do not have a process to identify which targets are desirable and how they might be achieved. Developing this process ought to be a priority for the university. At a minimum, it will involve closer attention to concerns voiced by academic staff about operational issues.

There is no shortage of goodwill. Over 90% (sic) of academic staff care about the fate of UWA and are willing to put in an effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the University be successful. However, just 32% of academic staff agree that decisions are made with sufficient consultation (source: 2006 Working Life Survey).

## SALARIES AND TITLES

The Administration of the University has expressed its determination to proceed with its New Academic Career Structure. Staff Association members are reminded that a brief outline of staff concerns has been directed to the University. This submission is available through the Association's website. To date, we have received no response to our submission. We believe that some change is necessary to the original document and it seems likely that the management has made some changes so it would be timely if the revised version were to be released for staff comment and feedback. The University document focuses on changes in nomenclature but the Staff Association has grave reservations about the accompanying suggestions for lower salaries. These issues need to be clarified and resolved.

## PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

Both UWAASA and the UWA branch of the NTEU have worked over a very long period for the recognition of a variety of appropriate measures of teaching, while recognising the difficulties of evaluating teaching. They have also emphasized that participation in any such scheme ought to be voluntary. We had considerable success in maintaining the voluntary nature of participation until the Howard government insisted on a compulsory scheme of some sort which became SURF at UWA. Student perception of teaching is only one avenue but in the general absence of others, it has achieved an undue importance at this university. Documents on preparing a teaching portfolio have been issued by the National Union and the local university. Due to representations by the Staff Association and the local union branch UWA has long accepted the idea of peer review of teaching but until recently has done little to devise suitable schemes and programmes.

A report in the May edition of the UWA NEWS indicated that various schemes of peer review are being tried and implemented at UWA. So far only a small number of academic staff has been involved, approximately twenty in the Arts faculty, ten in the Law faculty while the Business School, Natural and Agricultural Sciences and Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences have adopted or are adopting some elements of peer review. Dr Lee Partridge of CATL developed some forms for peer evaluation with the assistance of those taking part in the Arts Faculty experiment for their use. The CATL website has more generic forms for peer assessment available. Dr Partridge also gives presentations on structuring peer assessment exercises for those who wish to participate. The voluntary nature of any such exercise encourages flexibility in the schemes which can be used for a variety of purposes.

**WATCH THIS SPACE!**

### THE UWAASA COMMITTEE MEMBERS—A PROFILE

#### INTRODUCING Professor Raymond da Silva Rosa of the UWA Business School

Raymond is a graduate of UWA. He completed a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Finance in 1986. He commenced tutoring at UWA in 1988 and gradually rose through the ranks to Senior Lecturer. Ray completed his doctorate in 1994. A few years later he went to Sydney University for three years. He returned to UWA in 2001 as an Associate Professor and was made Professor in 2007. His research interests are in mergers and acquisitions and superannuation fund choices. Ray and his wife Catherine have two children Anouck and Luca. Ray enjoys running to keep fit and tries to do 5 kilometres around King's Park at least three times a week. He also enjoys reading in the economics field and perusing the New York Times on the web.

In 1995 Ray joined the committee of the Academic Staff Association and the UWA branch of the NTEU where he served as committee member initially, then as Treasurer and now he is President of UWAASA and looking forward to getting back into harness after six months study leave in New York.

#### **Administrative Officer and Executive Officer**

Joanna Manvell is the part time administrative officer— contact details on the UWAASA website.

Sandra Penrose is the executive officer, working one day a week (generally Thursday). Phone 6488 2487 on Thursdays, 9447 3667 (Home) or skpenrose@bigpond.com

### NEW COMMITTEE 2008-09 Positions and Contacts

**The new committee took office in July 2008. The executive and ordinary committee members are as follows:**

**President**, Prof Raymond da Silva Rosa ext. 2974  
ray.dalsilvarosa@uwa.edu.au

**Vice President**, Prof Stuart Bunt ext. 2983  
smbunt@anhb.uwa.edu.au

**Secretary**, Prof Bill Ford ext. 2948  
william.ford@uwa.edu.au

**Treasurer**, Dr Allan McKinley ext. 3165  
ajm@chem.uwa.edu.au

#### **Members**

A/Prof Susan Broomhall ext.2139  
broomhal@arts.uwa.edu.au

Dr Stephen Dobbs ext. 2002  
sdobbs@arts.uwa.edu.au

A/Prof Marnie O'Neill ext.2392  
marnie.o'neill@uwa.edu.au

Dr Jamie O'Shea ext. 2242  
jeoshea@cyllene.uwa.edu.au

Dr Abu Siddique ext. 2941  
Abu.Siddique@uwa.edu.au

Dr Mark Tibbett ext.2635  
Mark.tibbett@uwa.edu.au

**Please contact any of these members with your news or concerns.**

**The committee normally meets on the third Wednesday of the month.**