CREATIVE (DIS)ABILITY
Fostering a culture of engagement and social inclusion

SERIOUS GAMES
Fun learning with assistive technology

THE POSSIBILITIES OF EDUCATION
Thinking creatively about the future
What is your biggest challenge for 2014?
Where do I start? 2014 is a watershed year for UTS with the completion of five major projects, including three new buildings, the relocation of four faculties and the first classes commencing in our new Faculty of Engineering and IT (FEIT) Building at the start of semester two. While getting the buildings finished would have to be the most immediate challenge, the relocation of staff and students and the day-to-day running of the buildings will be equally challenging. On 6 June, the first staff from FEIT will move into their new home on Broadway. A total of 850 staff and higher degree research students will relocate over seven weeks. While exciting, this is a huge task and staff have been doing an amazing job so far clearing out their offices and getting ready for the move. Following the physical relocation, the real challenge will be ensuring staff are well acquainted with the new building before teaching commences and that the building itself is operating the way it should. This is a huge one. Believe it or not, buildings – even the one we’re calling our ‘living lab’ – do not run themselves, and it will, naturally, take time for everything to function as intended. It’s going to be a learning curve.

After the three new buildings open, what’s next for UTS?
UTS’s campus redevelopment is about so much more than buildings. It’s what’s on the inside that counts, with the physical infrastructure paving the way for new and enhanced student learning and study experiences, groundbreaking research and stronger connections with industry and alumni. Once the new buildings open their doors, a new chapter in our history begins. In 2015, we’ll take a much-needed break from construction before commencing a range of other exciting projects in 2016 to meet the future operational needs of the university.

What aspect of your role is most rewarding?
I love working with a broad spectrum of people who are all committed to making it easier, more enjoyable and more effective to work, learn and do research at UTS. I particularly enjoy walking around campus and seeing firsthand how students are enjoying many of the facilities – new and old – we have here at UTS. Knowing we are creating spaces, such as our informal study areas, collaborative classrooms and the new Alumni Green ‘Garden’ that have a real impact on students’ learning and university experience is what drives me, and those around me, to deliver more and even better spaces in the future.

What is your favourite facility on campus?
All the new areas we have created to facilitate group learning and encourage students to stay on campus and socialise. We’re looking forward to expanding those facilities with the completion of Alumni Green later this year and the host of spaces that will be available once the new buildings open.

When you’re not at work, you’re...
Off on an adventure, exploring another part of the world with my sons or friends.

Photographer: Jesse Taylor
NEXT ISSUE
Our special Research issue will be released on 2 June 2014.

All U: articles are available to read online via newsroom.uts.edu.au
Send your story ideas, opinions, events to u@uts.edu.au

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ART & U: UTS ART COLLECTION

The Man who Dreamt the Stars, February 2014, Merrigong Theatre Company in association with the Disability Trust, Illawarra Performing arts Centre.
Photographer: Paul Jones
In the highly competitive business world, qualifications and experience play a big part in determining who climbs to the top. While a Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a popular choice for those hoping to get ahead, for the ambitious few with a body of industry experience behind them, a more competitive model is required. This was the need UTS met when it introduced the Executive MBA 12 years ago. Since then it has continually evolved through no less than seven iterations, taking advantage of new technologies, new thinking and new opportunities for each cohort of students who complete the demanding two-year part-time program.

For the next cohort, commencing Spring 2014, the course has again been revamped and infused with an experiential education model to meet industry demands.

“I would think of it not so much as a dramatic change, but more as an important evolution,” says Associate Professor and Director of the UTS Executive MBA program James Hutchin. “UTS was one of the very first in the Sydney market to roll out an Executive MBA, and what we’re trying to achieve with the program and subjects is very different from a conventional MBA. We are continuing to place the focus on practical, experientially based learning. We’re rolling out an integrated experience that transitions a mid-stage career executive from tactical to strategic roles,” explains Hutchin.

The EMBA course brings together a network of high-achieving participants with extensive industry experience and provides them with a carefully integrated curriculum that places an emphasis on experiential learning models.

“From our perspective, case studies are to business schools what cadavers are to medical schools: they provide for wonderful learning. However, the learning is incomplete because you know the outcome before you start and you don’t have the live feedback of somebody saying ‘ouch’ or ‘well done’.”

“Our clients – what we call students in our EMBA – work on intensive, live consulting engagements. This will often involve working with very large companies such as Insurance Australia Group, or a large social venture such as the Westmead Medical Research Foundation, under the tutorage of a very senior project manager.”

Project managers, mentors and advisors in the program come from mostly a ‘C-suite’ background, and a range of multinational, early stage and social venture enterprises. The program also partners with a number of global consulting firms to provide an external review of the work and EMBA participant progress.

Hutchin says the EMBA is aimed at individuals with extensive managerial experience and a drive to progress to the next step in their careers.

“What really distinguishes this iteration of the streamlined EMBA program is what I like to call ‘reality-driven rigour’. Our clients are provided with the skills, thinking capabilities and experiences that will enable them to move from tactical to strategic roles.

“We don’t have large amphitheaters; we have people sitting at tables. We have teamwork. I personally interview everybody that goes under the program. That’s part of the process because one of the things we recognise is that, in an EMBA learning experience, you’re gaining as much from the other people collected with you in the room as you are from the professor that leads the class. This is very much a program for those seeking a bespoke learning experience.”

Mia Harrison
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production) / International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad
The harmful effects of second-hand smoke are well known, and there are numerous laws across Australia that prohibit smoking in public spaces. While some universities have adopted a zero-tolerance approach, a completely smoke-free campus also raises issues around the welfare of staff and students who choose to light up.

“As well as considering the rights of non-smokers to not be exposed to health risks, senior management recognised that staff, students and contractors on site choose to smoke during their breaks,” says Senior Health and Safety Specialist in the Human Resources Unit (HRU) Tracey Todd. “At this point, the decision was made to provide safe designated smoking areas on campus grounds.”

The implementation of designated smoking areas on campus required much planning and consultation with faculties and units whose staff and students smoke. “Staff go out for smoke breaks, so the challenge was how do we facilitate that for them – as well as safe spaces for students – while considering the non-smokers?”

“We worked with an advisory group of smokers to get their opinion on the accessibility of the zones and whether or not they’re appropriate. Security played a big role too – at the end of the day they’re the people who have to monitor the campus and ask people to smoke only in the assigned spaces.”

While the areas had to be accessible, they also needed to be well enough out of the way of non-smokers. The locations – marked out by green lines – adhere to existing laws and legal requirements for smoking areas, such as being well ventilated, away from air vents and pedestrian zones.

The safety and personal security needs of students and staff after hours were also taken into account. “Are the areas well-lit and in a security patrolled area? We don’t want students or staff smoking in areas where they’re potentially at risk, especially in the evening. And is there cover if it’s raining? All these factors had to be considered.”

While the new designated smoking areas provide a space for smokers, the university also supports and promotes free services for staff and students, such as counselling and the UTS health service, about quitting smoking.

So far, the biggest challenge has been communicating the existence of these smoking areas. Many students are still unaware that smoking is not allowed on most parts of the campus. Safety and Wellbeing welcome feedback from students and staff around the designated smoking areas, how they can be improved, and whether staff and students have found themselves exposed to any hazards.

“It’s about achieving an appropriate balance for individuals who choose to do something that’s not illegal and those who don’t wish to be exposed to that health risk,” says Todd.

To find out where the designated smoking areas are on campus go to safetyandwellbeing.uts.edu.au

Mia Harrison
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production) / International Studies
Photographer: Hoc Ngo

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/only-in-the-zone
WE WANTED COPYME TO BE A NORMAL GAME THAT ANYBODY CAN PLAY SO ASD-AFFECTED CHILDREN DON’T FEEL LIKE IT’S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY.
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects, among other things, the way an individual relates to their environment and their interactions with other people. An expression recognition game developed by UTS researchers is helping the emotional development of ASD children – and making it fun.

It's a statistic that's been bandied around for decades – 93 per cent of communication is non-verbal, meaning we rely heavily on our innate ability to read facial and body language cues from others to make sense of the world and build relationships.

For the one in 100 children with ASD, however, these cues are often missed, making it difficult for them to make friends and engage in social play.

Researchers in the UTS Games Studio have used facial expression recognition technology to develop CopyMe, a game that helps autistic children pick up the cues. Similar ‘serious games’ usually have an educational or medical objective but rely on the entertainment value to drive the player to achieve those benefits.

“We wanted CopyMe to be a normal game that anybody can play so ASD-affected children don’t feel like it’s assistive technology, and having it designed based on our research, offer some benefits whilst playing in terms of learning about facial expressions,” says Lecturer in the School of Software Chek Tien Tan.

Tan supervised Bachelor of Science in Games Development student Natalie Harrold, along with recent graduate and research assistant Daniel Rosser, while they conducted the initial research into human-computer interaction for ASD-affected children.

CopyMe uses the facial expression recognition technology to teach children about emotions by having them progress through the game by mimicking and repeating six main facial expressions: happy, sad, scared, surprised, angry and disgusted.

This repeated copying of facial expressions has been previously shown to help children on the autism spectrum recognise emotions in others, which may help them improve how they interact with other children.

“The game uses deformable model fitting, which basically means it applies a 3D model to track your face, using open-sourced computer vision technology,” says Rosser.

Using a set of faces and expressions as a template, the team enhanced this and ran it through nine months of testing and development.

Being one of the first projects to use real-time facial expression recognition on the iPad, Harrold says it was trial and error in the early stages.

“We spent a lot of time testing and doing trials in the Games Studio; testing the technology on our own faces, improving the sensitivity of the face tracker and the lag. My two-year-old niece understood the aim of the game and wanted to play it, but we uncovered new hurdles with her very small face and pale eyebrows – the facial tracker had issues ‘locking on’ for her.”

The team also tested the app in an after-school care centre in Sydney with a mixed group of children. They found the ASD children not only enjoyed playing the game, but also succeeded in mastering several of the levels.

“The idea is to make it feel like a fun game rather than just a task that has to be completed over and over,” explains Harrold.

Being iPad-based also removes the stigma attached to specialised ASD intervention tools, along with the need for adult supervision. Once the game is set up, the child can play in a self-directed way, with carers able to monitor improvement through high scores.

“We’d read so many papers suggesting the first big hurdle is just getting them to interact with an intervention, but the fact that it was on the iPad made it easier,” says Harrold.

Feedback from centre staff has been positive following the trial. Natalie Hamblin-Walker works one-on-one with the children and was amazed to see the impact playing the game had on the autism-affected children in her care.

“The non-ASD-affected kids thought the game was good, but needed more elements and harder levels,” says Hamblin-Walker. “However, the two ASD-affected kids were hooked. They didn’t want to give the iPad back and they even got all the faces right, which was incredible.”

Although it was a small trial, the anecdotal results are encouraging enough to confirm for the team that CopyMe meets the parameters required for a specialised ASD program. “It was really nice to hear feedback that the kids with autism could complete the levels,” says Tan. “We actually weren’t sure what to expect.”

With the app having already been downloaded over 700 times in its first week, the team hope to gather feedback from an in-app survey for suggested further improvements to the game. “We’d like to be able to integrate gameplay that demonstrates when those emotions are shown and add mini-challenges and more levels,” says Rosser.

Along with undertaking a broader trial involving more children, the team intend to open source the project so other researchers and game developers can expand the technology. A set of guidelines have already been published by the team for game developers of specialised ASD programs, covering advice on colours, sounds, even the size of screen buttons required for the on-screen elements.

“Since this is one of the first projects to use real-time facial recognition on the iPad, people would be trying to figure out how we did it,” Tan says. “As a researcher, it’s important to share this and allow others to take it further.”

Elizabeth Leslie
Research & Innovation Office
Photographer (inset): Joanne Saad
Image (iPad): Natalie Harrold, Daniel Rosser, Chek Tien Tan, Natalie Hamblin-Walker, Natalie Harrold, Daniel Rosser

Comment on this article at
UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/serious-games

| 17 |
In an increasingly complex modern world, communities, companies and nations require a different, newer mindset to tackle the challenges and opportunities presented to us. Associate Professor and Course Director for the new Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation (BCII), Bem Le Hunte, explains how universities can respond to this need.

Creative thinking – the beating heart of innovation and discovery – draws us into new realms where our industries and the professions can evolve and thrive. In these new realms, the usual disciplinary boundaries dissolve. Creativity, it seems, doesn’t need a passport and neither does it respect boundaries.

Creative thinking pushes the boundaries of knowledge, and it doesn’t sit comfortably within a single discipline. For those ensconced in silo thinking, it doesn’t sit comfortably within the academy either, and yet it must exist there if we’re going to progress knowledge for the next generation. And it must exist there if we’re going to respond to the diverse, growing needs of industry and the professions for a more versatile, creative workforce – if we’re going to prepare students for jobs that are yet to be invented and careers in industries that are constantly transforming.

I began my intellectual life as an anthropologist, and having used my anthropology throughout my life, I’ve long realised that the minute you start with the human, proliferation of culture and knowledge is guaranteed.

As a starting point, just examine the diverse ways humans have set up their kinship structures, homes, religions, economic and political systems. Add time to the equation and nothing is permanent. Similarly, our disciplines pursue their divergent notions of knowledge, yet the creative impulse at the core of knowledge-seeking activities is an area of profound common ground that is rarely examined or nurtured.

So my question is this: what if we could refine and teach a series of methods and creative practices students across all disciplines would find useful?

Needless to say, this type of creative thinking is hard to categorise and challenging to teach. Psychologist and expert on creativity Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi claims that with its dark and mysterious phase of incubation, creativity “defies ordinary analysis”.

So how do we teach creative thinking within the academy, which privileges analysis? How do we teach students to ‘play’, not just ‘work’, at university? And how do we teach students that it’s okay to fail in the academy – which primordially promotes success?

It’s also impossible to take students into every base of disciplinary knowledge at great depth. Yet do we really need to go into the depth of knowledge if we can understand its structure and processes – how to think across disciplines – as so many of us do in the workforce?

Moreover, knowledge itself is oceanic, and even within disciplines, after three years most students will only touch the sides of their fields. So we begin to see a need to offer students thinking skills that allow them to be more creative in their own fields, as well as tools from a variety of other disciplines so they can take their disciplinary knowledge and use it to tackle challenges beyond the confines of their specialties.

Wicked problems – or impossibly challenging humanitarian issues such as poverty, sustainability, education or health – are complex precisely because they require interdisciplinary approaches. Australian charity Healthhabitat, for example, recognises that to improve the health of the disadvantaged, you need to work not just with medical experts, but also with agile architectural solutions, because so many health issues are related to being able to wash and manage wastewater.

Similarly, businesses are recognising that with the ever-growing complexity of global systems, we’re now subject to systems-level failures. So navigating complexity is becoming one of the biggest challenges for businesses today, and the need for creative thinkers is growing exponentially.

Indeed, according to IBM’s Global CEO Study 2010, creativity is identified as the “single most important leadership competency for enterprises seeking a path through this complexity”.

To meet these needs and cultivate trans-disciplinary skills, we need to develop learners who can understand the “alert and lively use of knowledge”, as described by David Perkins of the Harvard Graduate School of Education – students who can develop “generative connections that help to make sense of a complicated world”.

Note Perkins refers to the “use of knowledge” rather than knowledge itself. Our first BCII winter school – Problems to Possibilities – is about the possibilities of knowledge, and our second summer school is about some of the patterns and practices the various disciplines and professions use to arrive at new knowledge and insights, or new ways of seeing.

And so we begin to imagine an education that goes beyond knowledge towards being, because creative thinking is essentially a quality of being: an approach to the world that allows us to join the dots, overlay multiple meaning systems, compare a variety of solutions and intelligently suggest original ways to move forward. A challenge, indeed.

However, I believe if we can prototype a kind of education that meets the goals I’ve articulated above, then we’ll have created a trans-disciplinary education that institutions around the world will aspire to in the future.

Bem Le Hunte
Associate Professor and Course Director,
Creative Intelligence and Innovation
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/the-possibilities-of-education
THE POSSIBILITIES OF EDUCATION
Creativity is central to our identity, self-expression and sense of connection to others. Yet people with disability often face considerable barriers to participation in creative activities, restricting cultural engagement and social inclusion. A research team within the Cosmopolitan Civil Society (CCS) is now measuring the social impact professional arts programs are having on the lives of people with disability.

“Australia should be a country where it’s not unusual to see people with disability as participants, organisers and leaders in all parts of civic life, including cultural, religious, recreational, political, professional and sporting spheres.” So says the National Disability Strategy (NDS), a 10-year government initiative to improve the lives of Australians with disability.

As part of the NSW Government’s commitment to the NDS, $1.5 million in funding has been granted over two years to a NSW Arts and Disability Partnership between Ageing, Disability and Home Care in the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and Arts NSW in NSW Trade and Investment. The partnership aims to increase access to the arts and promote a culture of inclusion in the creative sector for people with disability.

Along with supporting 55 new programs that encourage participation by people with disability in professional arts and cultural activities, the partnership is also funding research into their social impact, designed to identify and examine cultural participation.

CCS researchers Professor Simon Darcy, Professor Jenny Onyx, Senior Lecturer Jenny Green and Senior Lecturer Melissa Edwards, supported by research assistants Hazel Maxwell and Simone Faulkner, have been creating case studies based on some of the funded projects in order to identify and analyse their outcomes and impact on individuals, organisations and the wider community.

Previous work mapping social capital and the cultural impact of Surf Life Saving Australia clubs across the country led Onyx, Edwards and Darcy to establish a system based on specific outcomes and factors to measure something they say is quite hard to quantify.

“We’re looking at people with disability performing and creating art, and asking what kind of impact that can have on themselves, on the organisations and on the community? As soon as you start trying to put that into dollars, you can lose the whole thing,” explains Onyx.

For Executive Director of Arts NSW Mary Darwell, the research being carried out at UTS is an essential part of the partnership. “It provides a good framework to look at the impact of the projects. We think the study will help make the creative aspirations and achievements of people with disability more visible and valued in the community.”

The methods involved in qualifying and quantifying social impact appear to be straightforward but it’s the overarching factors identified from the research that are causing a stir.

Factors such as a sense of belonging, the development of professional artistic skills, business development and the expansion of social networks help these projects ripple out to the wider community.

“We’ve been looking at social impact for quite some time and we’re not alone,” says Green. “Measuring social impact is on the agenda in social services and this program gives us an opportunity to look at whether the model developed with the surf clubs has a broader application.”

While a number of professional arts organisations run programs each year involving people with disability, this is the first time in NSW that targeted research is being conducted on whether such programs have an impact on social inclusion.

Darcy believes the partnership’s funding and support is now encouraging a new model of inclusion for artists with disability who are valued for their artistic abilities and their contribution to the arts sector.
There is quite a mix of organisations, from traditional disability services, to community and commercial arts, coming together in new ways. What we’ve seen with these projects are exciting combinations of organisations engaging in creative process development with troupes of people of mixed ability, with powerful outcomes,” says Darcy.

Maxwell adds, “It’s not about what people can’t do; it’s about focusing on what people can do and acknowledging the creativity that’s within every individual and using that to challenge the perceptions that exist in society about people with disability.”

“We’re moving towards being able to apply this model to all sorts of other organisations,” says Onyx. “One of the things that makes UTS really different is that we’re interested in social impact, not just bringing in the big bucks. It’s really important we have a way of proving that.”

The research team have spent the past 18 months interviewing stakeholders, examining creative processes, observing audiences, collecting images, video and other documentation from the funded projects to contribute to the development of the case studies.

“It’s going to give us a very rich and detailed picture of arts at the end of it,” says Green. “It’s important to get a feel for how much participants enjoy the program and a lot of that is about reading body language, looking at photos of the projects and getting them to identify the things they’ve really liked.”

Standout events are those where the participants with disability are recognised as artists with their own creative goals, where ambitions can be nurtured and realised thanks to the partnership’s funding. A stage production by Merrigong Theatre Company in the Illawarra, featuring a combination of actors with and without disability, exemplifies the reach the partnership hopes to achieve.

“It wasn’t about the disability community talking to the disability community; it was a full-scale production. The production was theatrical in its own right and had a lasting impact on those people involved in the performances, including professional production crews and audiences. It just happened that the actors were also actors with disability,” says Darcy.

Other projects have produced short films, theatrical and dance workshops, visual art exhibitions and ‘zine’ collections through the participation of artists with disability. Green says projects focusing on school-aged children were particularly inspiring. “Kids would be seeing kids with disability in a light that showed talent and competence, rather than all the deficits that are generally attached to kids with disabilities. This is change at a really early age.”

The research phase is due to finish at the end of this year but it’s hoped the implications of the work will be far-reaching in many aspects of Australian society.

“It’s no longer about forgetting people exist or losing hope in them leading full lives because they have a disability,” says Onyx. “Let’s focus on our ability and allow people to take an active role in the community.”

Hannah Jenkins
Marketing and Communication Unit
The pumping music, the steady beat of the treadmills, the slamming of heavy weights as they hit the floor. For part-time personal trainer Braden Woods, the UTS Fitness Centre is a home away from home.

With a degree in marine science, certificate III and IV in personal training and fitness, and a love of coastal studies and diving, 24-year-old Woods lives a high-energy, dynamic lifestyle where good health is more than just a passion, it’s a way of life.

“I live and breathe all things fitness. I wake up, and if I don’t do some sort of work out or physical activity throughout the day, I feel drained and demotivated,” he says.

Such ‘healthy’ enthusiasm is enough to leave the rest of us mere mortals feeling a little deflated and reaching for the cookie tin but Woods maintains a healthy lifestyle is satisfying and achievable.

“Everyone is different. You just have to find those little clicks that are going to get them switched on and help snap them into shape.

“When I’m not at work, I spend a lot of my spare time doing research and getting up to date with studies being done to make sure what I’m telling my clients is correct.”

Having worked at the UTS Fitness Centre for two years, Woods first realised his love of getting physical when his interest in science provided a framework for understanding the biology behind fitness.

“My science studies taught me not only the basics behind human biology but also the skills to more efficiently conduct research,” says Woods. “It’s enabled me to further educate myself in more specific areas of the industry I may be interested in, such as human movement or nutrition.”

As the fourth set of large-scale refurbishments takes place at the fitness centre, Woods outlines what members can expect once doors open to the new additions.

“We’ve got new change rooms, locker facilities and more showers. We have a wet and dry facility downstairs that’s a brand new state-of-the-art system. We’ll have a whole new gym floor with squat racks, platforms and other new equipment. There’ll also be more rooms, meaning we’ll soon have 50 classes as opposed to the 20 currently running.”

Woods believes the new facilities will help him better cater for staff and students’ needs.

“We’re going to have a lot more equipment available, which means more options for people. So when I take my own personal clients, I’ll be able to use the equipment that I want to use, as opposed to having to jump around to different exercises. Everything is going to be better quality.”

His approach to healthy living ensures he is the perfect fitness advocate. His fitness golden rule?

“Nutrition is the bottom line,” he says. “Eighty per cent of your fitness is nutrition, so if you don’t target your eating habits with your exercise, you’re not going to reach your goals.”

The biggest problem Woods encounters – both inside the gym and in his daily life – is demotivation. He says he lives to be that agent of change in people so they can experience greater happiness and self-confidence.

“Some people find it hard to get motivated, while others are driven from the start. It can be challenging sometimes but once you get them going, it’s really rewarding.”

Siobhan Kenna
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad

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UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/getting-pumped
When your Twitter feed lights up with our Olympic athletes achieving their best, or they’re hoisting their medals high in a picture on Instagram, chances are Taya Conomos is behind the story.

As Digital Media Coordinator for the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), Conomos has had a front row seat at some of our finest sporting achievements over the past four years.

"Wearing the Olympic uniform, scoring tickets to the opening ceremony and having an access-all-areas pass never gets old," she says. "The games are the toughest few weeks. They're long hours, crazy days and filled with emotional highs and lows, but there's no better feeling than running on that adrenalin. You don't stop pinching yourself."

The exhilarating path opened up to the Bachelor of Communication (Public Communication)/Bachelor of Laws graduate while on exchange to the University of Copenhagen in 2009. The International Olympic Committee was hosting a conference and sport-loving Conomos volunteered for a role in the media centre.

It was here AOC President John Coates offered Conomos an internship on her return to Australia, and the day after her final law exam at UTS in 2010, she was offered a full-time role. She now oversees the @AUSOlympicTeam social media strategy as well as produces online digital content including news articles and videos.

Conomos recalls the experience of working at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London with a team of 410 athletes and 38 sports on the program. "Words can’t do justice to that experience," she says. "It was inspiring, overwhelming and thrilling all at once."

She says her role has grown significantly alongside the huge shift in the way we receive and interact with news. Just 18 months after her multi-faceted focus in London (which also had her writing stories for print and managing the AOC's education program), the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi saw Conomos dedicated solely to social media. Her 24-hour campaign saw the IOC rank Australia as fourth on social media – placing just behind the big guns: USA, Canada and Great Britain.

"Sport and social media make such a good partnership – they go together like a meat pie and sauce," she says. "The AOC has really embraced social media and it’s part of every communication discussion."

Sochi Games there were almost 15 million impressions of @AUSOlympicTeam content on Facebook alone.

This year’s launch of the new Digital and Social Media major as part of the UTS Bachelor of Communication degree reflects the changing landscape, says Conomos. "It’s certainly the future of media and I see that as a really exciting thing. Social media was hardly on the agenda when I was at university; it’s incredible to see how far things have come."

In a career that has already had so many highlights, it must be difficult for Conomos to choose the most memorable moments. "I’ve been blown away watching Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps and many Australians win medals," she says. "The night aerial skier David Morris won his silver medal in Sochi was pretty special."

Do you know a UTS graduate who deserves to be recognised for a UTS Alumni Award this year? Nominations open 5 May and close 6 June. Visit alumni.uts.edu.au/alumni-awards for more information.

Jenifer Waters
Alumni & Development
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/tweeting-gold
Besides the way we look, Lachlan and I are polar opposites. It just so happened that we both ended up getting offers into UTS first and that we both decided it would be a good place to get into computers. Lachlan was actually thinking of studying law somewhere else but he always enjoyed the computing subjects at school more than legal studies. UTS offer great facilities for computing as well as a large focus on industry placements, so that's how we've both ended up here.

Our days are usually separate until we get to campus. Our rooms are at opposite ends of a very long house and on different floors but there are those days we wake up and we can't quite get away from each other. We meet in the afternoon at the Baulkham Hills TAFE bus stop and ride in together. We sit with each other in two classes and then in the other two, we kind of spread around. People either confuse us as each other or they refer to us as the same person, which can get really annoying so we try to separate ourselves a bit. Although, it's been very handy to have someone else in class who knows how I think and where I tend to make mistakes.

We've always had a fascination with the way computers work and the way they connect people. Computers have only been around, what, 30 or 40 years, and yet they have completely revolutionised employment and communication. It's really interesting, and it's always been an industry we've wanted to end up in, learn about and experience. I personally feel computers have many ways of benefitting human existence. If I can be on a team that invents some new way of communicating, or some new virtual reality that improves our lives, it will be worthwhile.

One of our friends suggested we go into business together after we graduate. Lachlan will build the computers and I'll write the software that goes on them. Lachlan is really good at maths and problem-solving, whereas I'm better at the more arty and analytical stuff. So if there's ever a problem one of us can't solve on our own, the other one will usually be able to help. When we were thinking of what to study at university, we couldn't decide if we wanted to do purely computing or if we wanted to branch out a bit. The degree we ended up choosing gives us the option to do business, so we might add that later on.
TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

LACHLAN MCCAHON
We both like IT but we’ve chosen totally opposite areas of it. I’m interested in hardware and Ewen’s interested in software. I think we’ve both liked computers since we were about three years old. We used to build computers from spare parts. Now that we’re both working, though, we tend to buy new.

We are best friends and worst enemies, depending on the day and time of the week. When it’s 10am in the morning and my brother’s been up for hours and he’s spouting on about how he’s just developed this app and how it’s really cool, I just really want to hit him. Or like when he came into my room at midnight with this web development assignment we had, wanting some advice, with his laptop on full bright – so annoying.

It’s hard to get people to acknowledge our differences. When one of us does something, it’s immediately assumed both of us can do it – or that both of us are interested in it. People impart each other’s traits onto us. For example, it’s often assumed because one of us is doing history, the other is also interested. I think IT is one of the only things we both like, besides energy drinks and our obsession with gaming.

We purposely used to wear different colours, but now I think it’s become more subconscious. I tend to wear greens or reds and Ewen is always wearing blue. Another funny thing is that I really like coffee and Ewen really likes tea. It’s interesting, though, because people at university have been confused, not realising that we were related. At school, everybody immediately knew we were brothers, but here, people are like, ‘Do you guys know each other?’

The best thing about being a twin is always having someone to rely on. When we’re studying for an exam, we sit together in a room as far away as possible from a computer or TV so we’re not distracted. We discuss what we’re doing, whether Ewen has solved this part, or if I can help with another. It’s good because we always get a different perspective on what we’re doing. Next year we’ll probably split up when we start different electives. I’m going to do networking and my brother will be more interested in web design. We’ll still try and have the same timetable though, because it’s more convenient. It’s quite handy taking the bus in together too.

Julia Stepowska
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
Photographer: Joanne Saad
The chance to observe how peer mediation plays out between correctional facility inmates was an opportunity Juris Doctor student Irene Nicolaou couldn’t pass up. “One of my goals when commencing my studies was to explore the area of mediation. I wanted to combine my social sciences background and life experience to help clients reach a shared consensus, rather than seeking judgment via lengthy court proceedings.”

A criminology graduate and former customs investigator trained by the Australian Federal Police, Nicolaou’s cases ranged from the importation of weapons and high volume tobacco, to date-rape drugs and child pornography. “Although confronting at times, it was extremely satisfying to know that at the end of the day, those responsible for their importation went before the courts.”

Serving warrants at 6am and working until all hours was not, however, conducive to family life. Now, after a short hiatus looking after her three young sons, Nicolaou is in her third year as a part-time postgraduate student at UTS and has discovered a new passion for the field of dispute resolution.

Throughout last year, Nicolaou was given the opportunity to be a research assistant in a unique trial looking at the effectiveness of a peer mediation program conducted in a therapeutic correctional facility in Sydney. “It’s about avoiding escalation and helping to maintain constructive ongoing relationships,” explains Nicolaou.

Everyone takes part, which facilitates a shared understanding of the process and behaviours required to constructively manage conflict in the correctional facility’s community. It sets out a very workable framework where peer mediation can help solve disputes easily and earlier.

Using surveys, individual interviews and researcher observation diaries for data collection, Nicolaou and her law peers took it in turns to observe and measure the delivery and success of the six-week, twice-daily program led by UTS Visiting Fellow Dr Nicky McWilliam.

The morning sessions with the participants – also attended by the correctional officers, therapeutic program staff, medical staff and administrative staff – involved four individuals chosen at random to participate in role-play.

“Role-plays were based on the type of disputes likely to occur in the facility, bringing a practical angle to the training. “For example, working on the garden is a source of great pride for some offenders. Other offenders used the same garden area to play football. This caused conflict where the issue of respect came up. By discussing how much the garden meant to some, and how the recreation of kicking a ball was important to others, a mutual consensus regarding the garden areas was reached.”

A debriefing followed the role-plays, with individuals communicating how they felt throughout the process.

With the results of the study due mid-year, Nicolaou describes the changes in participants’ attitudes over the course of the program as “enlightening”.

“Prior to the program, the participants couldn’t see the benefit of the program. Towards the end, that changed to many of them wishing the ‘new’ guys in the facility had a chance to be trained in the process. As one participant acknowledged, it was a lot easier knowing the other person knew where you were coming from when trying to mediate an issue.”

Nicolaou hopes to one day combine her passion for law enforcement and dispute resolution and conduct her own research program. “But I’m happy to let that goal evolve as it may.”

Avalon Dennis
Bachelor of Arts in Communication | Writing and Cultural Studies/International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/05/sorting-it-out
All too often, technology is presented as something other than us, separate from the human condition. Cranny-Francis calls into question the biopolitics of this situation through an investigation of the body and its senses. Using cultural narratives such as Romanticism, intriguing emerging research in tactile interfaces and physical computing, she skillfully makes this "long cultural history" of technology accessible. The book is helpfully organised into three sections: technologies of touch, concerned with light and sound; technologies that we touch, including the now familiar accoutrements of work and leisure (mouse, screen, console); and technologies that touch us, which introduces research in wearable computation, smart textiles and prosthetics. It is this last section that prompted the overarching enquiry into touch technologies and the book as a whole. The projects covered are fascinating and wide-ranging, prompting the reader to reflect on their own experiences with technology. Cranny-Francis' thesis rests on its senses. Using cultural narratives such as Romanticism, intriguing emerging research in tactile interfaces and physical computing, she skillfully makes this "long cultural history" of technology accessible. The book is helpfully organised into three sections: technologies of touch, concerned with light and sound; technologies that we touch, including the now familiar accoutrements of work and leisure (mouse, screen, console); and technologies that touch us, which introduces research in wearable computation, smart textiles and prosthetics. It is this last section that prompted the overarching enquiry into touch technologies and the book as a whole. The projects covered are fascinating and wide-ranging, prompting the reader to reflect on their own experiences with technology. Cranny-Francis' thesis rests on.

Matty Swink is desperate to escape Fenella’s Food Fort, the miserable, dilapidated diner where he is the live-in dishwasher. He will do anything to get away from Fenella’s evil grasp and become a real chef. So when the king of Yurp announces a Grand Cook Off, Matty sees it as his only chance to break free and fulfill his dream. All he must do to win – and therefore become the royal chef – is create a dish so irresistible, so delicious, that even the picky princess Meg cannot refuse. Matty is convinced he has the perfect recipe, but little does he know, his biggest competition is a 500-year-old curse! This book is a magical, imaginative adventure, jam-packed with humorous moments. Fenella’s revolting recipes, combined with her self-absorbed personality, make her the perfect villain for Matty’s talented, yet humble nature. Little Chef, Big Curse is heartwarming, fun to read, and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys an adventure. This book is filled with constant suspense and I couldn’t put it down.

Tina Rota
Tina is 11 years old and in Year 6 at Kings Langley Public School.

Tilney Cotton, aka Andy Porter, is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts School of Film & TV and is also a graduand of MA in Creative Writing at UTS. His writing has appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and UTS writers’ anthologies. Cotton is his mother’s maiden name and for close to 200 years, first-born Cotton males were named ‘Tilney’. ‘Tilney Cotton’ has been Porter’s imaginary other self throughout his childhood, a perfect choice for a pseudonym.

An innovative approach to a historical account of Aboriginal political activism and social change, this book recounts the crucial story of Sydney and NSW Aboriginal activism in the 1970s and 80s. Whilst there is a narrative structure, it is told through the voices of the many and varied people who were part of the movements for change in critical reflection and dialogue in relation to a leading charismatic man who was never far from the action – Kevin ‘Cookie’ Cook. In this sense, the book is a history of several inter-locking social movements for change, a biography and a model of Aboriginal approaches to talking about and remembering past events and people. It is also a story about an incredibly gifted individual who possessed rare abilities to bring people together, to enable and empower those yearning for change and harness resources to make things happen. Goodall’s work to ensure this important part of NSW Aboriginal politics is accessible to a wider audience is to be applauded. The book, free to download through ANU E Press, provides an understanding of the many elements of Aboriginal movements for change and gives a sense of what constitutes the conditions for achieving change. Kevin Cook brought people together, and, with Tranby College, built networks and connections: “a place that allowed ideas to grow and develop”.

Heidi Norman
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Heather Goodall is a Professor in the UTS:School of Communications’ Social Inquiry Program. She has researched and published works about Australian Indigenous histories, environmental history and intercolonial networks. She has worked in collaborative research projects with Aboriginal communities in NSW and central Australia. Goodall assisted Cook, who had not wanted to tell the story of his own life, to gather together many of the activists with whom he worked to tell their stories of this important time.
What makes a piano quartet progressive in the 21st century? For the Australia Piano Quartet, UTS’s ensemble in residence since 2011, the key to remaining relevant is combining the traditional elements of a classical group with technology to create performances that open chamber music up to a whole new audience.

The Australia Piano Quartet, made up of Rebecca Chan (violin), Thomas Rann (cello), Evgeny Ukhanov (piano) and James Wannan (viola), aims to blur the line between traditional and modern performance in a series of projects and collaborations in 2014. Mozart Meets Electronics, a free event on 27 May, will feature an innovative new work commissioned by the quartet, performed using a traditionally esoteric instrument – the viola d’amore.

“The music director of Sydney Chamber Opera, Jack Symonds, has written this piece for us. There’s definitely that element of opera that comes through,” explains Wannan. “It’s very challenging music, and there are strong gestures and complicated rhythms that create a lot of tension.”

These operatic tendencies, however, won’t be the only thing to startle the audience. “The elements of the piece played with the viola d’amore will actually be pre-recorded,” says Rann. “These pre-recorded snippets will be electronically distorted and triggered by foot pedals, creating a progressive performance piece that showcases the dichotomy between new and old.

“We’re trying to be innovative with our choice of contemporary works. We want to create that balance between these new works and works that are more traditional,” says Rann about the quartet’s aim to bring the conservative world of chamber music into this century.

The quartet will also perform Schubert’s Adagio and Rondo Concertante and Mozart’s Piano Quartet in E flat to accentuate the extraordinary nature of Symonds’ postmodern piece. “Performing an old work in a new environment brings a fresh approach in listening. It’s not only the performance itself that changes, it’s the way it’s perceived by the audience that renders it utterly different,” says Wannan.

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The Australia Piano Quartet continues to experiment with combinations of well-known masterpieces and cutting-edge modern works, collaborating across the university to create multi-disciplinary performances and unique learning experiences. “The residency allows us to engage with a lot of people who wouldn’t necessarily go to these kinds of cultural events,” says Rann.

So far, the quartet has teamed up with the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building’s animation and architecture students to create performances and workshops that encourage a practical approach to the creative process. The acoustics of the Great Hall’s Balcony Room were explored with the architecture students, while collaboration with animation students used visual and aural elements to create a multidisciplinary performance. “Following on from last year’s success, we’ll be doing further work with animation,” says Rann with pride.

Later this year, the quartet will perform a newly commissioned piece reflecting stories about refugees and asylum seekers working in collaboration with the journalism department. They will also engage with the wider UTS community through a composer’s competition that aims to break down barriers.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to collaborate. That’s when the most incredible artistic outcomes take place,” says Wannan. “When there are all sorts of different influences coming together, that’s when you get out-of-the-box ideas.”

If you’d like to reserve a place at the free Mozart Meets Electronics concert on 27 May, visit australiapianoquartet.eventbrite.com.au

Learn more about the quartet at uts.edu.au/australia-piano-quartet

Hannah Jenkins
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Joanne Saad
**MAY**

**06**

Email your events for June to uts@uts.edu.au by 16 May.

**13**

**LECTURE**

Former president of the NSW Mental Health Review Tribunal and retired judge of the Supreme Court of NSW, Greg James, will be discussing his report on mental health and the law. He’ll discuss mental illness in the criminal justice system, the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission NSW, and current sentencing decisions concerning mental health issues.

**6PM TO 7PM**

Haymarket campus, Building 5B, Moot Court

Register to attend:
brennanprogram@uts.edu.au

**21**

**RELAX**

As part of Health and Happiness Week, UTS will play host to a full day of free activities such as yoga, feng shui and holistic medicine workshops designed to help staff and students relax. A great opportunity to calm the mind, reinvigorate the body and nourish the soul.

**ALL DAY**

Tower concourse

**22**

**LECTURE**

More than ever, wildlife is under threat from habitat loss, exploitation and human-wildlife conflicts. Yet we’re facing the reality that conservation is failing to stem the flow of extinctions and prevent harm to wildlife. This thought-provoking UTSpeaks public event, *Cull & Contain or Compassion*, focuses on compassionate conservation, a new movement that has emerged as a way to protect wild animals.

**6PM DRINKS FOR 6.30PM START**

Aerial Function Centre

Building 10, level 7

Register to attend:
Robert.Button@uts.edu.au

**CONVERSATION**

Join us for an evening with Bob Carr and hear insights into the making and shaping of foreign policy from a former Australian foreign minister. He will also discuss Australia’s place in Asia, in particular, the importance of our relations with China.

**6PM TO 8PM**

Aerial Function Centre

Building 10, level 7

Register to attend:
Robert.Button@uts.edu.au

Naata Nungurrayi. *Untitled (no 20)*, 2010

Two paintings not to be missed on any tour of the UTS Tower are by the Australian Indigenous artist Naata Nungurrayi. One (pictured above) is a recent gift from Craig Edwards through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program, located in the public space on level 6 in front of the Jumbunna offices, and the other, on loan from the Corrigan Collection, is just two floors below on level 4.

Nungurrayi is a Pintupi woman born around 1932 at Kumil rockhole, west of Pollock Hills, Western Australia. From 1962 she was settled at Papunya, one of the last government initiated settlements created to house Aboriginal people brought in from all over the central and western deserts. Papunya was also the site of the original ‘dot-painting’ rendering of traditional body and ground designs in acrylic paint on canvas.

In the early 1980s, the Pintupi people living at Papunya, including Nungurrayi, moved west and established their own settlement at Kintore then Kiwirrkura in the heart of Pintupi country. It was there that Nungurrayi first started painting as part of a women’s group called the Haast Bluff collective. Since then she has developed her own style and distinctive palette of orange, brown, yellow, purple and white. Nungurrayi paints sacred women’s sites and women’s ceremonies and, as an elder from her language group, she is one of the few women to have permission to paint aspects of these dreamings.

UTS ART Education runs workshops involving Nungurrayi’s work and other Indigenous art from the collection. Check out art.uts.edu.au for more news and highlights from the UTS Art Collection.

Alice McAuliffe

UTS ART Education and Outreach Coordinator

Art & U profiles a piece of work from the UTS Art Collection every issue.
Renowned for depicting snapshots of everyday life with warmth and humanity, Australian photographer and casual photography lecturer for UTS, Jon Lewis, turns the camera on himself in his photo On Track, 2013.

“This image was made at Wombeyan Caves in the Southern Highlands of NSW, where I work occasionally for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. I continue to photograph extensively in the bush, inspired by local Indigenous mythology. This self-portrait says much about my absorption of the bush and the search of the ‘ancestors’.”

Photographer: Jon Lewis [www.jonnylewis.org]