

REPORT TO DONORS



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# THE IMPACT OF YOUR GIVING





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Medicine scholarship recipient Amy Fitzgerald puts health first. Her story is on pages 10 and 11.

Our cover: A scholarship set up by Mildura alumni is helping Toby Sheahan overcome the challenges facing rural students. See pages 12 and 13.



# THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Every day I am inspired by the generosity and enthusiasm of our supporters. Thank you.

Thanks to the continued growth in support from donors like you, there are more than 21,000 people who have supported the University by giving through *Believe – the Campaign for the University of Melbourne*.

In 2016 alone, you have given an extraordinary sum of more than \$120 million to support the mission of teaching, research and engagement.

Building on this success, the University has set itself two new goals: to raise \$1 billion and to have more than 100,000 alumni engaged in the life of our University by 2021.

An exciting moment in 2016 was one of the largest philanthropic contributions to an Australian university ever, a gift from Atlantic Philanthropies to establish the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity. This program will see a new generation of Indigenous leaders work together to redress social disadvantage.

At the year’s end we also said thank you to Mr Allan Myers AC QC who has stepped down as Chair of the Campaign, to take up his new role of Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. He has been an inspirational leader for the Campaign since its inception, and I thank Mr Myers for his passionate belief that the University can stand equal to the best in the world.

We welcome into the role of Chair of the Campaign alumnus Mr Leigh Clifford AO. Mr Clifford is the Chairman of Qantas and has served as Deputy Chair of the Campaign. In 2015, he established a chair in neural engineering to foster the intersection between new technologies and healthcare.

Inside these pages are a number of stories highlighting the impact of your support as a donor – from our world-changing research to the achievements of our exceptionally talented students.

On behalf of the University, I thank you for your belief in the University’s work.

**GLYN DAVIS AC**  
VICE-CHANCELLOR

“The Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity will see a new generation of Indigenous leaders work together to redress social disadvantage.”





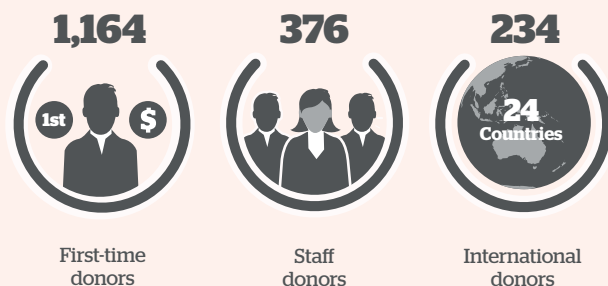
## YOU ARE CHANGING LIVES

As part of our global community of supporters, you have given more than \$620 million through *Believe – the Campaign for the University of Melbourne*.

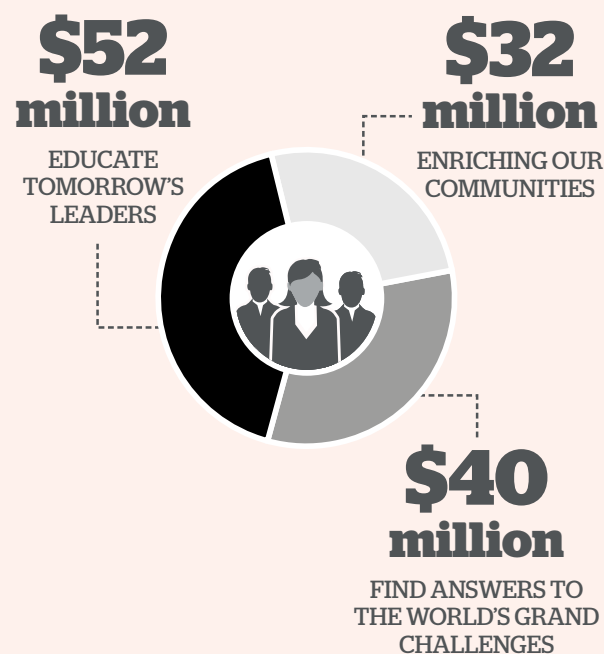
More than 21,000 donors – people like you – have supported a number of world-changing research programs tackling the important questions facing humanity. Hundreds of new Scholarships created so far during the Campaign are helping our talented students realise their potential. And we're taking our work outside the classroom and labs to bring it to the wider community.

Your generosity inspires us to go further and do more in our research, education and community endeavours. Thank you!

### 2016 IN NUMBERS

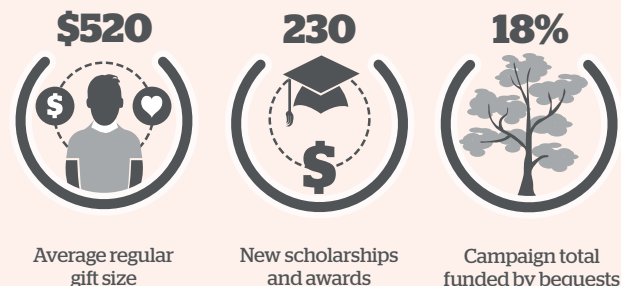


### WHAT YOU SUPPORTED IN 2016\*

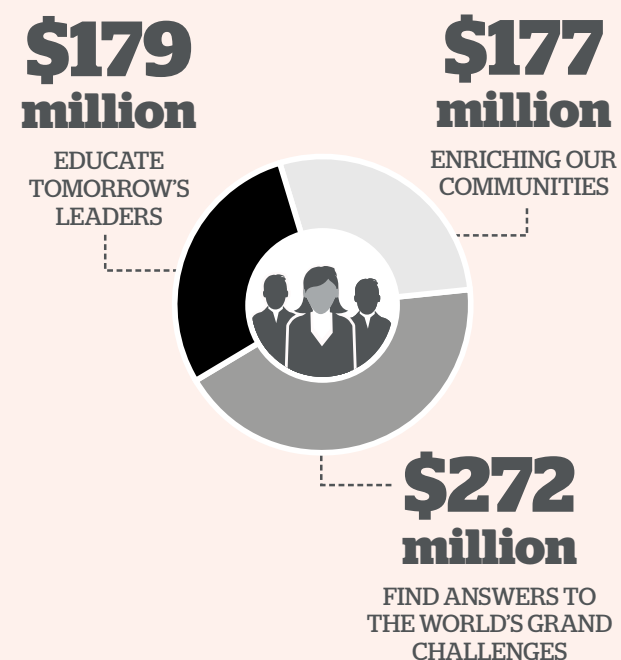


\* These figures show donations to main University funds and do not include gifts to affiliated colleges or institutions.

### CAMPAIGN IN NUMBERS 2008–2016\*



### WHAT YOU SUPPORTED DURING THE CAMPAIGN\*\*



\*\* Total campaign funds include more than \$75 million given to affiliated colleges and institutions.

## MENTORING

Student Daniel Simpson admits he was struggling at university, until he met Dr Sandra Neoh.

### KATE STANTON

Sandra Neoh had little experience in mentoring when the University paired her with third-year undergraduate Daniel Simpson, a sciences student struggling to find his career path.

She just knew she wanted to give back.

"I thought that would be a nice way to stay involved in the University community, because I had really enjoyed my time there," says the endocrinologist, who now works in Melbourne's Alfred and Northern hospitals.

She made a big difference. Daniel says Dr Neoh had a profound impact on his education.

He signed up for the mentorship program in a last-ditch effort to avoid dropping out of university. "I really struggled in first and second year," he says. As one of only four people from his high school to attend the University of Melbourne, Daniel felt isolated on campus. He was also overwhelmed by the workload of his studies and a part-time job.

Dr Neoh became Daniel's mentor as part of the University's Access Connections program, which matches alumni with underrepresented students. Together, they set up meetings to address his specific concerns, from rewriting his CV to



choosing a career path. She admits to not knowing what to expect from mentoring, but immediately connected with her "sincere" and "open-minded" mentee.

"We got along from the beginning," she says. "Daniel is a very friendly, genuine guy. He just didn't really have peers who could help him with big career decisions."

Daniel says he was nervous about working with Dr Neoh, who recently returned from postgraduate work at Cambridge University. "But when I met her, she was so funny and easy to talk to," he says.

Dr Neoh helped Daniel reorganise his CV and pushed him to apply for internships that related to his interests. She inspired him to apply for a research internship, and he spent six months working at the renowned Walter and Eliza Hall Institute.

"I think it's very important to have these sorts of programs because they do help bridge the gap between disadvantaged students and professionals in the field," he says.

Daniel was later accepted into an Honours program at the University, and Dr Neoh says he has come a long way since their first meeting last year.

"He is so positive about his future and the lab he is working in," she says. "It is really very different to what he was like at the start."

### ALUMNI VOLUNTEERING

Each year a large number of alumni volunteers share their time and talent for the benefit of students and the broader University community.





## ENGINEERING

Sam Skinner likes plunging his hands into sludge – and generous scholarships are giving him all the opportunities he needs.

### ANDREW STEPHENS

**S**am Skinner has a post-doctoral plan to improve global water recycling in the wastewater industry. He credits the success of his journey towards this goal to scholarships he has received throughout his studies at the University of Melbourne.

Sam has almost completed a PhD that deals with increasing the efficiency of sludge treatment and filtration, and the important flow-on for water recycling – crucial concerns for any growing metropolis. Sludge is a by-product of Melbourne's wastewater, everything from toilet-flushings and kitchen-sink rinsings to industrial effluent and kerbside run-off. His work involves mathematical modelling of wastewater sludge filtration to improve the treatment process, with an emphasis on water recycling. "One outcome is a reasonably simple message for wastewater treatment operators – that they can measure the organic content of the sludge as an indicator of how well it will filter. That has consequences for more water recycling."

It's hard giving sludge a pretty face, yet this rich resource is central to Sam's research – and to Victoria's sustainability. This extraordinary 27-year-old now engages more people in the vital benefits of sludge. Publishing his first paper on this work (2015) was a huge thrill – but even more so when the paper (with 10 authors) started to appear in citations. Experts are paying attention.

Sam says he would not be where he is without the financial support he has received, beginning with a scholarship when he moved to Melbourne from Mildura in 2008 to do a Bachelor of Science at the University.

Looking back, he can see how growing up on the Murray River began his interest in water – not only in terms of the resource-pressures Victoria experiences with an extreme climate, but also on the international stage of creating technologies for developing countries and increasing living standards in an environmentally sustainable manner.

**"It takes a lot of money and resources, and the support here has been amazing."**

# FLUID THINKING MAKES A SPLASH



Field study: Sam Skinner says he can see how growing up on the Murray River piqued his interest in water.

Sam continued his studies at the University with a Master of Engineering (Chemical Engineering) in 2012 but initially found it a struggle trying to juggle study and employment.

"It was just unsustainable," he says. "Travelling to and from Melbourne and trying to focus on both things was too much, but I had little choice."

In the middle of that year, he won a Master of Engineering Merit Scholarship, and other financial support. "I could then concentrate on the study and not work for an income," he says.

"At masters level, I was finding it very difficult to put in the work and keep up with the workload. Being able to just focus on the study was huge – otherwise, I don't think I would have been able to keep going. Once I had that financial difficulty taken away, it made it much easier to treat my study like a full-time job, which it is."

Now part of the University's Particulate Fluids Processing Centre since beginning his PhD in 2014, Sam has been awarded further scholarships as well as winning the Global Environmental

Sustainability Award from Balwyn Rotary Club last year.

"I wouldn't be doing a PhD now without these, or even without the initial support," he says. "It takes a lot of money and resources, and the support here has been amazing. I'm very lucky in that from a personal level I enjoy turning up every morning – and with the funds to do what I really enjoy doing, it is great."

"But it also allows me to work in an area that has benefits for the community in terms of environmental sustainability and wastewater recycling."



VCA students perform  
*A Midsummer Night's  
Dream* as part of the  
Shakespeare 400  
festival.

PHOTO: LACHLAN WOODS

# A TIME TO EMBRACE THE BARD



## ARTS

A bequest has enabled Dr David McInnis to unlock an unexpected hoard of Shakespearean treasures.

### ANDREW STEPHENS

**W**hen David McInnis, Gerry Higgins Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies, set about curating a Shakespeare exhibition for the Baillieu Library last year, he imagined the material mainly would be comprised of books. To his surprise, that was not the case.

He was astonished at the riches he uncovered for the show, *After Shakespeare*. While there were certainly a few very old tomes around, he also unearthed from a variety of sources such treasures as sketchbooks, photographs, props and even Shakespeare playbills from early Melbourne.

"I was not aware at all of what was available," Dr McInnis says. "I was blown away. We are lucky, for example, to have access to the Melbourne Theatre Company's backlog of costumes, props and posters – and the State Library was also very generous. One of the nice things was bringing together these things that hadn't been together before."

The State Library, he discovered, had an 1890 sketchbook in which a costume for a Melbourne production had been drawn – and the Baillieu Library had a program from the same performance featuring a photo of an actor sporting that very outfit.

Dr McInnis was just the person to explore all this – he is the Senior Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies in the Faculty of Arts, a four-year position funded by the Higgins Trust from 2015 to 2018.

"I was extraordinarily grateful that the Higgins Trustees chose to invest in this position when they did, and it was very good timing," Dr McInnis says. Last year marked the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and the University's Shakespeare 400 festival benefited enormously from having Dr McInnis steer a cross-University committee organising the year-long program, which included *After Shakespeare* at the Baillieu.

"It was such a significant anniversary," Dr McInnis says, "And it was a great opportunity for the English and Theatre Studies Program at Melbourne to highlight our role as a leader in this field, bringing community education and public outreach to the forefront, and embellishing the teaching of Shakespeare."

Events included a series of master-classes on Shakespeare's various genres, a film festival with the Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI) and the British Film Institute, performances, talks from visiting scholars, and a concert from singer/songwriter Paul Kelly who reflected on the impact the Bard had had on him.

Another highlight for Dr McInnis was the cross-cultural program in which Luo Xuanmin, the Faculty of Arts Asia Institute's new professor of translation and intercultural studies, talked about translating *Antony and Cleopatra* into Mandarin, Shakespeare's legacy in China, and how to tackle the problem of translating such complex literary works into another language and culture so it can appeal to a contemporary audience.

One of the most inspirational elements that has flowed

from the Higgins Trust, however, has been Dr McInnis's redesign of the University's Shakespeare curricula. "It has been a massive change from something that was traditionally done through a 90-minute lecture and a 60-minute tutorial," he says. With the blended teaching approach, he has instigated a far more



interactive style in which, for example, the Melbourne University Shakespeare Company (MUSC) performed and filmed various scenes and uploaded them. Dr McInnis then embedded a range of activities for students to respond to in preparation for two-hour seminars.

"It was genuinely transformative," Dr McInnis says. "It was more productive and enjoyable. And it gives students ownership over what they learn and what interests them. As an educator, it is hard to quantify, but, informally, essays were stronger and responses better."

As part of the expanded assessment mode, students could write pitches to the MUSC for a Shakespeare play and how they envisaged it should be done, or write a review of a performance for a magazine. "This was to translate classroom skills into the real world through a different mode of analysis," he says.

"There is that rather awkward silence you can have in a tutorial – we did not have that last year. My problem was the opposite – to wrap things up in a timely manner and get through all the things I wanted to cover. Uniformly, week after week, the conversation kept going and people were so enthusiastic."

Little wonder, then, that as part of the end of the festival, the Faculty of Arts established the Shakespeare 400 Trust to support future Shakespeare studies at the University.



MEDICINE

Generous bequests enable a medical student to nurture her dream career.

CAROLINE MILBURN

Scholarship recipients often cite the easing of financial stress as a major benefit of their award. Amy Fitzgerald, a final-year medical student, has other benefits in mind. She was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome in her final years of high school, a condition she's learnt to manage. She believes her health has improved markedly because she's a scholarship beneficiary. The extra income from several scholarships enabled her to invest the time and finances towards getting fitter and mentally stronger.

"You can't do much in your studies if your physical and mental wellbeing is not looked after," she says. "Being tired and worrying about your finances significantly increases your anxiety levels."

"But since I started studying medicine I've been able to manage that a lot better because I've been able to do Pilates, yoga and meditation. I wouldn't have been able to afford those things without the financial help from the scholarships."

The 27-year-old is a recipient of The Hugh and Eugenie Johnston Scholarship, established through the Will of Mrs Eugenie Johnston to assist needy and deserving medical students. Amy also received the Hilda Gibbons Bursary and financial aid while studying at university.

She worked hard to undertake a medical degree, doing two years of a biomedical science degree before completing a four-year nutrition and dietetics. Then she successfully applied to do medicine at the University of Melbourne as a postgraduate student.

During her undergraduate years Amy balanced her study commitments with a part-time job at a pharmacy. But the intensive course demands of the Doctor of Medicine meant she had to cease working.

"The scholarships took away the pressure I'd been under to work set hours at the pharmacy," she says. "It's removed a layer of financial stress and enabled me to shift my focus on to more proactive things and to prioritise my studies."

The financial support allowed her to meet her basic needs as a student. It also helped her arrange a training placement at a hospital in Colombo, Sri Lanka, treating women from culturally diverse backgrounds – an area of women's health that interests her.

"The generosity and selflessness of bequestors leaving money in their Will for scholarships is incredible," says Amy.

"It's nice to know that you're being supported by the academic community and by the broader university community through its alumni and generous donors."

Amy Fitzgerald says support from scholarships allowed her to give priority to her studies.

PHOTO: CHRIS HOPKINS



ON THE LONG ROAD TO SUCCESS

Dr Rosalind Terry, 76, (inset) is one of those alumni bequestors. She donates to a fund at the University's medical school that provides scholarships for female students from rural and regional backgrounds – and she has made provisions in her Will for a percentage of her estate to support student scholarships.

Dr Terry's personal experiences motivated her to give back and provide opportunities for others. As a young woman in the 1950s she faced enormous family and professional obstacles to enter the male-dominated profession of medicine.

Her father didn't want her to go to university, but she won a Commonwealth scholarship to study science at the University of Melbourne. She graduated with first class honours in 1961.

She then worked overseas before returning to the University to enrol in medicine in 1969. She became the first female surgical registrar at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and went on to enjoy an illustrious medical career in hospitals in Australia and New Guinea.

"I had been so lucky to get to university, especially because of my father's attitude towards it," Dr Terry says. "My father had said to me that no one in our family had been to university and a girl wasn't going to be the first one."

"I'm sure there are people today who have similar sorts of attitudes in their families. It's nice to help those people and other students who deserve a chance to go to university, especially females."

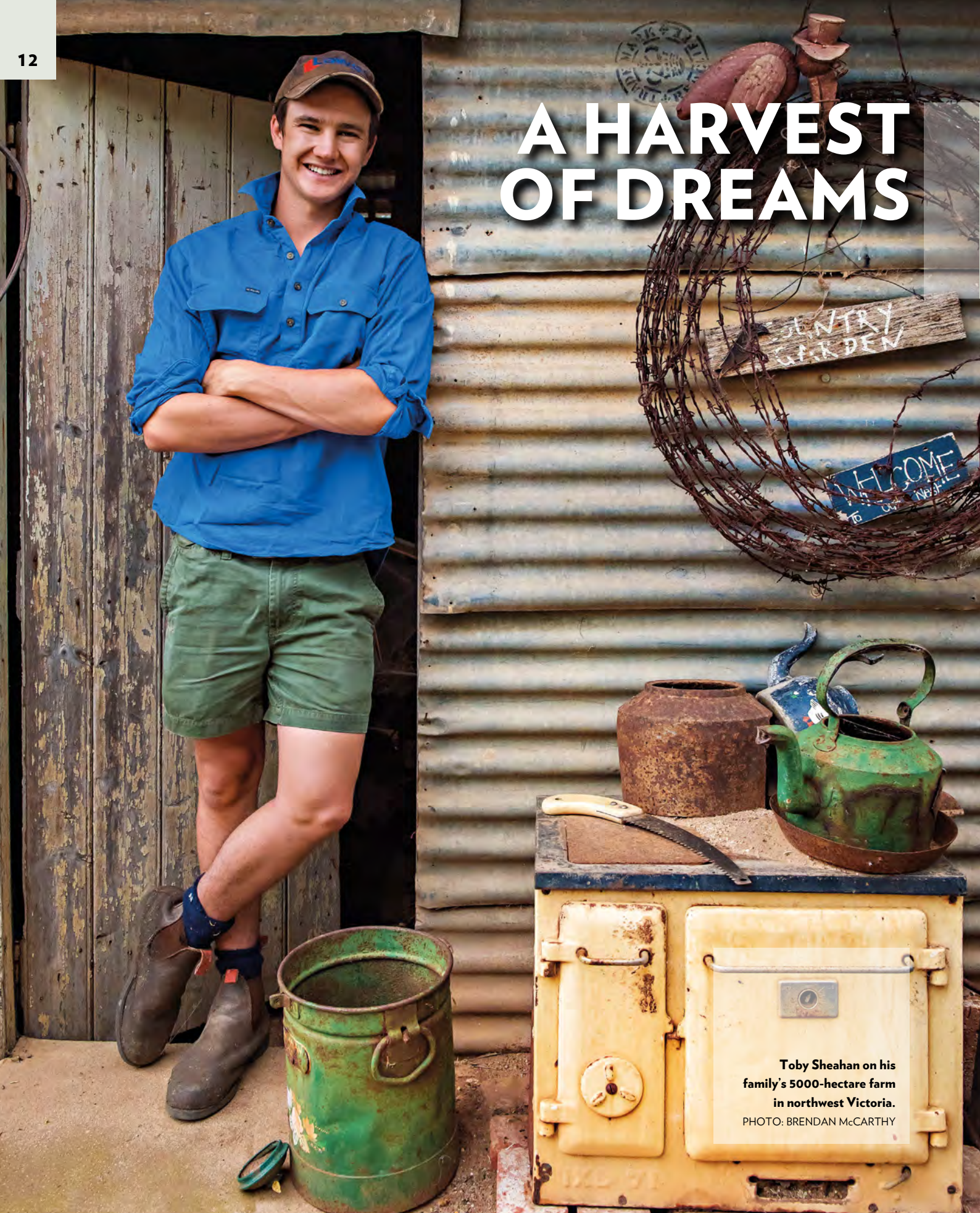
Dr Terry's experiences treating patients in New Guinea also influenced the way she felt about equity of opportunity in education. "I saw how difficult it was for people living in country areas to get an education."

She hopes that more medical graduates will think about leaving a gift in their Will to provide opportunities for future students.

"People like me have had a great opportunity to get a university education so I think it behoves us as doctors to think about giving opportunities to future generations."







# A HARVEST OF DREAMS

Toby Sheahan on his family's 5000-hectare farm in northwest Victoria.

PHOTO: BRENDAN MCCARTHY

## AGRICULTURE

A scholarship set up by Mildura alumni is helping rural students overcome the tyranny of distance.

### CAROLINE MILBURN

When Toby Sheahan finished his final semester exam last year at the University of Melbourne there was no time for celebration. He jumped in his car and drove three hours to reach his family's farm in northwest Victoria.

It was harvest season. Toby, the second eldest of six children, was needed on the farm at Dumosa, 20 kilometres north of Wycheproof in the flat, dry grasslands of the Mallee.

Everyone in the Sheahan family is expected to help out on the 5000-hectare property, especially during the annual wheat harvest. Toby and the harvesting crew worked seven days a week for two months over the summer break cropping wheat.

They started at 8am and finished well after midnight. Lunch and dinner were eaten in the paddocks to save time. Toby drove the trucks that collected the grain. On most days the temperature climbed above 30 degrees, with the hottest hovering at 42.

"It's pretty hot work because the trucks aren't air conditioned," says Toby, who is in his third year of a Bachelor of Agriculture degree at the University's Parkville campus. "You just take lots of water with you and drink plenty of it."

"The days were long but we had Christmas Day off. And we had about a day and a half off when we had a few showers of rain come through."

The 20-year-old student is a recipient of the Mildura Alumni Scholarship Fund, established in 2005 by a group of alumni from the University of Melbourne's former Mildura campus.

The Mildura residential campus operated from 1942 to 1949 at a former RAAF base. It offered courses in the faculties of medicine, architecture, engineering, science and dental science.

The campus' alumni set up the scholarship fund to help support rural students who live within a 250 kilometre-radius of Mildura and attend the University of Melbourne.

Toby first heard about the scholarship in Year 12 at Wycheproof P-12 College. His high school teachers had encouraged him to apply for scholarships because of the extra financial burden that rural students face when they move to the city to start tertiary courses.

Thanks to the collective generosity of the Mildura alumni



donors, the scholarship has made it easier for Toby to make that transition and commit to his degree.

"I'm really grateful to have been chosen for the scholarship because it's allowed me to focus on my studies a lot more," he says.

"It's meant I haven't had to do as much part-time work while I'm studying in Melbourne. In my first year of uni I had a part-time job working late nights from 8 to midnight testing computer leads in NAB banks. But the hours were really tiring."

When Toby moved to Melbourne he was shocked by how expensive it was to live in the city. He pays \$800 a month for a share house with other students, and then there are expenses such as car parking fees.

During each semester he often drives the 288-kilometre trip home to help his family on their sheep, grain and pig farm. The piggery in particular is labour intensive, with the pigs requiring daily feeding and care.

To help cover his travelling costs to and from Melbourne, as well as some living expenses, Toby cuts firewood in summer after harvest time and sells it during the year. The scholarship helps pay for most of his accommodation costs and other basic necessities. "It's been a tremendous help," he says.

He intends to pursue a career in agriculture after he completes his degree, returning to the farm to help his parents grow the family business. "My old man is getting on a bit and he's not as quick as he used to be," says Toby.

"Over the past 10 years our farm has survived through changing environments, including severe droughts, flooding, mouse plagues and locusts. Despite all these hardships my passion for agriculture has remained unchanged."

Toby says the Mildura Alumni Scholarship has enabled him to pursue his dreams. "One day down the track I'd like to help people in the same way that the scholarship has helped me."

"Without the generosity of the Mildura alumni donors I wouldn't have been able to pursue my aspirations to graduate from the University and enter the field of agriculture."



# MATHS FIGURES IN A BRIGHT FUTURE

Thanks to her scholarship, Georgia Tsambos was able to move to Melbourne from New South Wales and support herself while studying.

## SCIENCE

Women in science and mathematics get a boost thanks to an inspired gift.

### LISA MAMONE

**W**hen Georgia Tsambos was in high school, her favourite subject was maths, a love she has carried through to her university studies. Now, with a Master of Science (Mathematics and Statistics) behind her, Georgia has developed a unique statistical methodology to detect which parts of the human genome might be causally related to rare diseases – an area she is pursuing to PhD.

“I wanted to broaden my mathematical horizons,” she says. “There are lots of people doing fantastic work in statistical genetics here at Melbourne. But it’s a relatively new discipline. We’re rarely able to prove that a gene definitely is – or isn’t – associated with a disease, instead we focus on how much evidence there is in favour of particular sets of genetic variants. I want to figure out whether people with certain genetic variants are more likely to develop certain diseases.”

Georgia received the Helen R Freeman Scholarship, established to encourage women studying in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The scholarship meant she could move to Melbourne from New South Wales and support herself while studying. And it means Melbourne is benefiting from a talented young researcher in its ranks.

Alumna and donor Helen Freeman (inset), while not having any scientific background herself, has an enthusiasm for science and interdisciplinary research that motivated her to make a gift through the USA Foundation.

“It is encouraging to see so many women science researchers at the University of Melbourne and its affiliated institutions,” says Helen. Distinguished science graduates include Nobel Laureate Dr Elizabeth Blackburn, molecular biologist Professor Suzanne Cory and geneticist Dr Elena Tucker.

“In reading about the careers of these women, the important influence of parents and classroom teachers who encouraged daughters and girls to think of careers in mathematics and science has often been a factor.

“I chose to support women students studying postgraduate level science and mathematics because their research work may help to improve the lives of others.”

Scholarships and programs that support and encourage women in science from school and university all the way to successful careers is a trend that Helen is very pleased to be

involved with. The gift means there are more opportunities available to talented women keen on pursuing careers in a male-dominated field.

The Helen R Freeman Scholarship is awarded to two students every year. Two recent recipients, Georgia and Dana Piovesan, found a great deal to appreciate in each other’s disciplines.

“Thinking of science as ‘statistics’ or ‘genetics’ is not just boring, but extremely limiting,” says Georgia, who caught up with fellow recipient, biomedical student Dana, during 2016.



“It’s made me appreciate maths a whole lot more than I ever did,” admits Dana, who completed her Master of Sciences (Biomedical and Health Sciences) specialising in immunology. Her research looked at what molecular mechanisms drive a certain white blood cell to become dysfunctional during chronic infections. Dana enlisted the

help of a bioinformatician to analyse the genome sequencing data-sets. “I then had to interpret the results in its biological context. I never really considered how important maths is, and how increasingly important it is becoming, particularly in the field of biology.”

Says Georgia: “It was interesting that both Dana and I were employing mathematical methods to study a genetic problem.

“Especially since our formal training was focused on quite different things. I think it highlights how interdisciplinary scientific work is becoming.”

And what about the emphasis on increasing the participation of women in science? Is it still a problem?

“Many women are studying in fields of biology,” says Dana. “But I think the top levels are still dominated by males. Helen’s support through the scholarship is very inspiring. It gives women like me the encouragement and motivation to take up opportunities that present themselves and achieve great things.”

The Freeman Scholarship remains vitally important in other areas of STEM, particularly the male-dominated world of mathematics. “There’s still a noticeable gender imbalance in the maths and stats communities,” says Georgia. “But I’m hopeful that with the help and support of programs like Helen’s, that imbalance will also fade.”



## INNOVATION

A doctor with a bright idea has seen his company flourish with help from the Melbourne Accelerator Program.

### ANDREW STEPHENS

A year ago, Dr Ajeet Singh was a man with an excellent idea. He just didn't have sufficient business skill to translate that great idea into reality. Little did he know that within months he would have acquired that skill – as well as four full-time staff helping him with a procedure that is likely to ease the way for many depression sufferers.

Dr Singh, a practising psychiatrist, is still astonished at how quickly things are moving with his company, CNSDose, and credits the Melbourne Accelerator Program (MAP) for enabling him to succeed thus far.

MAP – a leading entrepreneurship program that puts people with a business idea or a start-up on a fast track – was seeded by the University in 2012. It began with four start-ups each being given \$20,000, office space and access to mentors.

It has since expanded, putting 34 companies through that same program – start-ups that have together garnered over \$30 million in funding, created more than 220 jobs and generated more than \$20 million in revenue.

CNSDose is one of the big success stories, with its product nearing release. Dr Singh's idea is simple: patients give a saliva sample to their doctor, a lab analyses the genes involved and then assesses how easy or hard it is for certain anti-depressant medications to reach that person's brain.

"Based on that, we get guidance on 20 different anti-depressants and whether they need to be a high, medium or low dose for that patient," Dr Singh says.

While he says nothing replaces the doctor-patient relationship, the procedure gives doctors a targeted shortlist of drugs appropriate for a particular patient, as opposed to the "one size fits all" approach.

"For me, it started with a real-world problem," he says. "A great deal of prescribing in psychiatry is trial and error, and I wanted to tackle that with a technology that is affordable."

"It is unique in that it is a turbo-charged learning and support structure."

# READY FOR A DOSE OF SUCCESS



A passion to succeed: Dr Ajeet Singh found support at MAP. "In the past, if you tried to commercialise academic output you used to be seen as an outsider. Now it is championed," he says.

MAP offered a five-month experience to help him understand how to proceed. "I would describe myself as an accidental entrepreneur," he says. "Because I am a clinician, I didn't have much experience in what I still call the business world."

MAP allowed and encouraged accelerated learning about pitching and business thinking. "It is unique in that it is a turbo-charged learning and support structure," he says.

"The main thing we went in for was the networking and education opportunities. Also, the reality with start-ups is that 95 per cent fail, so it isn't for the faint-hearted, but this was a reality check to see what was even plausible."

Dr Singh was adamant he wanted to be commercially viable while maintaining his generosity of spirit, an approach MAP encourages.

"You need enormous stamina to contend with the high odds of failure and what is not overnight success but will take many years.

"You need to not only have a passion for it but also be able to build a collegiate environment, otherwise it can go quite toxic."

He wanted to keep focused on the front-end – to reduce suffering and the global burden of depression – while also working on the back-end of building a start-up.

So he was delighted to discover at MAP a culture of endorsing people having a go. "In the past, if you tried to commercialise academic output you used to be seen as an outsider. Now it is championed."

A big supporter has been MAP Director Rohan Workman, who brought Dr Singh in last year for the June-October program, which targets eligible University of Melbourne students and alumni.

Mr Workman cites many examples of a diverse range of enterprises that have been through MAP – from furniture designers and motorised-skateboard aficionados to 3D-scanning experts and electrical engineering whizzes.

While an obvious aim is commercial success, MAP also has a social entrepreneurship program designed to infuse those who identify as social entrepreneurs with business skills, and to broaden the horizons of those who identify as for-profit entrepreneurs about the social impact they will be having. In turn, that ethos reflects on and encourages the collegiate and altruistic work that underpins MAP.





Carolyn Whitzman believes affordable housing has the power to save lives, recalling the story of a once homeless woman whose new home freed her from a deep depression and thoughts of suicide.

“Just having a safe and secure place to live saved her,” says Whitzman, a professor at the University’s Melbourne School of Design.

Whitzman is passionate about developing housing policies that will help communities thrive. “Affordable housing is just an absolute human need,” she says. “The question is how can we collectively meet that need.”

It’s a big challenge. Due to Australia’s rapid population growth, the country’s major cities will soon start bursting at the seams, with skyrocketing house prices and rents making urban living increasingly unaffordable for disadvantaged families.

Melbourne, set to be Australia’s largest city by 2050, will need a boost in housing stock to accommodate everyone.

Whitzman says the answer lies in collaboration between the academic and private sectors and government. That’s why she formed the Transforming Housing project, an interdisciplinary group of researchers, developers, community organisers, planners and government figures, aimed at driving efforts to increase and improve affordable housing.

The project was born of Whitzman’s conversations with Property Council of Australia representatives, who said most housing research addressed the needs of government organisations rather than the private sector developers responsible for building the vast majority of Australian homes.

Led by Whitzman and an interdisciplinary team of University of Melbourne researchers, Transforming Housing seeks to influence and evaluate policy. It also acts as a network for politicians, investors, developers and advocates to discuss ways

to work together to make housing accessible for everyone.

The project’s major funding partners include the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation, the City of Melbourne, Launch Housing, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Melbourne Social Equity Institute at the University of Melbourne.

Their collaboration has resulted in numerous workshops, such as the 2015 Affordable Housing Summit, and research projects that inform policymakers and generate innovative housing solutions.

Whitzman says the group has also been working with the Victorian Government on developing its forthcoming affordable housing strategy. “We will then work with local governments, developers, community housing and investors to help support that strategy,” she says.

“Affordable housing is just an absolute human need.”

Kate Raynor, one of 12 University of Melbourne researchers involved in the Transforming Housing network, says the project addresses the gap between research and industry. “There is a really strong focus on connecting the research to people who need to use it.”

One researcher, for example, is looking at how the National Disability Insurance Scheme will affect housing options for people with disabilities. Others are studying links between unaffordable housing and family violence.

This year, the Transforming Housing project will release three major policy briefs intended to help non-profit organisations and city planners have productive conversations with property developers.

The project, she says, will also host a number of professional development events for industry stakeholders, helping them understand how they can make good housing policy work for them. “Our goal is to draw on the expertise that we have with the University, then put it in the hands of the people who are on the ground.”



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