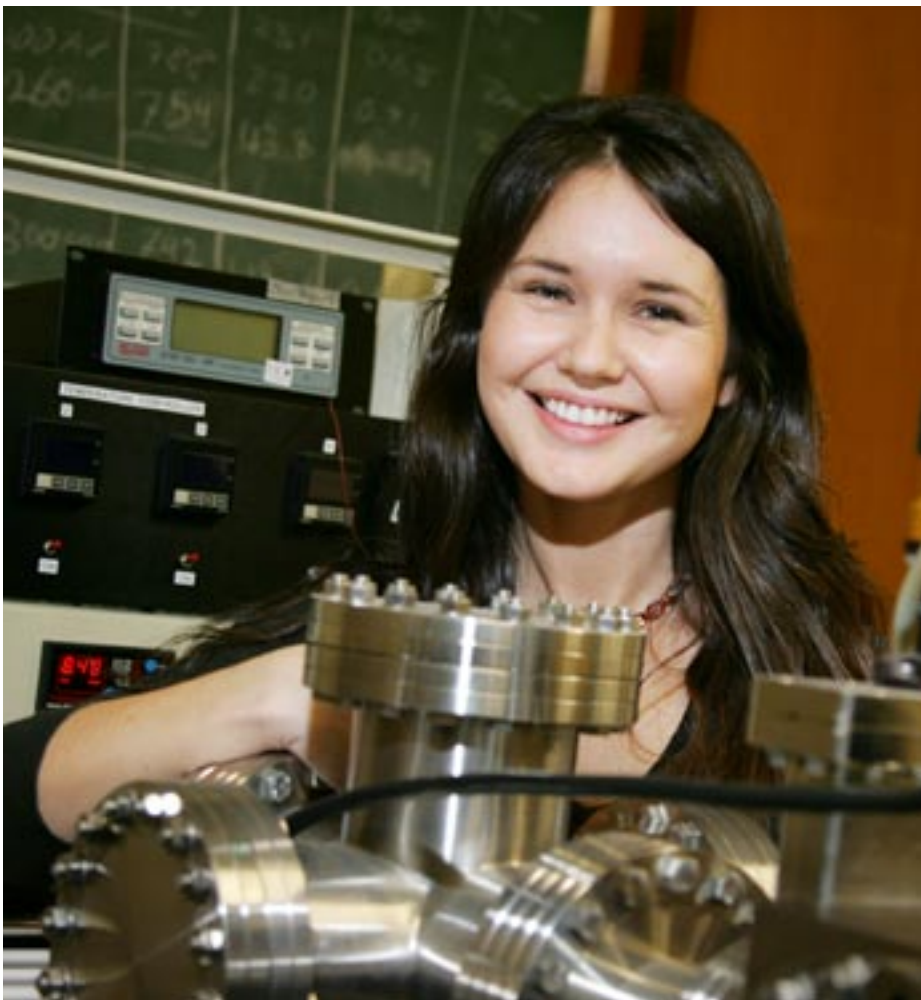


Canterbury University students dominate science awards



PhD student Shelley Scott was named runner-up in the MacDiarmid Young Scientists Awards.

For the second year in a row, the prestigious MacDiarmid Young Scientists of the Year Awards have been dominated by University of Canterbury students.

Of the seven category prizes awarded this year, three have gone to Canterbury University postgraduate students — Shelley Scott, who was also named overall runner-up, Roger Dungan, who was also given a special

commendation by the judges, and Matthew Keir (see page 2 for full details). It follows the scooping of last year's awards by Canterbury University students who won the majority of category prizes and the overall prize.

Shelley, winner of the Manufacturing and Materials prize, has been recognised for her nanotechnology research in which she has

drawn on ancient environmental phenomena for inspiration.

"I've taken some ideas from nature — like the way a snowflake grows — and thought about how we can mimic this sort of process to self assemble nanoscale structures," she says.

"Basically, a snowflake forms by absorbing moisture from the atmosphere and how big it gets depends on how quickly the moisture is absorbed into it and how cold the atmosphere and cloud is.

"What we want to do is fire atoms into a space and let them do their own thing. They have certain things they like to do by themselves but by changing their environment a little bit we can coax them into forming structures that are useful."

She says nanotechnology developments are key to improving computer technologies, but believes it is just the tip of the iceberg.

"Nanotechnology can also be used in the likes of drug deliveries so there is going to be a lot of medical advances with it as well. At the moment we're right at the beginning, so we really don't know just how far it's going to go. But certainly it's going to have a major impact on the way we live our lives."

The prestigious awards, organised by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, are named after New Zealand-born Nobel Prize-winning scientist Professor Alan MacDiarmid.

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Canterbury University students dominate science awards Continued from page 1.

A panel of judges selected this year's winners from a record 127 entries from around the country. Each category winner receives a cash prize of \$2000.

Shelley's win has come while she is in Germany for the annual meeting of Nobel Prize winners in Lindau, the first to host young scientists from New Zealand. Shelley, Auckland University's Kaa-Sandra Chee and Otago University's Peter Mace were selected to attend by the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The annual event began in 1951 as a means of getting Nobel laureates and young scientists together to network and exchange ideas.

This year's meeting has attracted more than 50 Nobel Prize winners including Professor MacDiarmid.

Shelley's PhD supervisor, Associate Professor Simon Brown (Physics and Astronomy), says her selection is thoroughly deserved.

"Her PhD project is very important in providing a fundamental understanding of nanoscale self-assembly."

Research, Science and Technology Minister Steve Maharey says the meeting is a unique opportunity.

"The meeting brings together the living heroes of international science and the next generation of leading researchers.

"It's great that young New Zealanders will get a chance to rub shoulders with Nobel Prize winners and their peers from all over the world."

They are among 600 students from around the world selected to attend the four-day meeting.

Roger Dungan: Environmental Sciences



Miniature Farmers on a Massive Scale is the title of Roger Dungan's research into tiny scale insects living in beech trees which are helping forests absorb more carbon.

Roger's work has seen

him named first equal winner of the Environmental Sciences category prize at this year's MacDiarmid Young Scientists of the Year Awards. He has also received a special commendation from the judging panel for the quality of his research.

A Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Biological Sciences, his research investigates the sap-feeding, sooty-beech scale insect's ability to stimulate photosynthesis and compensate for carbon loss.

Infested trees lose around 520 kilograms of carbon per hectare to honeydew, which forms from excess sugar excreted by the insects.

Honeydew is a vital food source for native birds and insects which feed on the sugary sap in the beech tree's trunk and branches.

It is well established that photosynthesis in trees can be limited by the build-up of sugars in the leaves.

Roger is investigating whether these insects are effectively harvesting sugar to produce honeydew for other wildlife while, at the same time, reducing the tree's sugar levels and stimulating photosynthesis.

Trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and increasing their absorption is critical in helping to offset greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

Roger says the research is providing exciting new knowledge about ecosystems and the productivity of native forests.

"Most terrestrial ecosystems are controlled from the bottom up and regulated by photosynthesising plants. We have now uncovered a unique and widespread example of top-down regulation of forestry ecosystem productivity by insects.

"We have an amazing situation where scale insects are effectively farming sugar from 1 million hectares of beech forest."

His work also delivers valuable insights into beech forest interactions that are important for the conservation of threatened native birds and insects that depend on honeydew for food.

Roger is currently involved in a number of research collaborations with global partners including the University of Montpellier, in France, and Columbia University in the United States.

Matthew Keir: ICT and Creative Industries

Surgeons having ultrasound images superimposed over their eyes to effectively give them x-ray vision during medical procedures is, for now, something we can only imagine.

But thanks to the likes of University of Canterbury student Matthew Keir, winner of the ICT and Creative Industries category prize at this year's MacDiarmid Young Scientists of the Year Awards, it will one day be reality. Or, to be technically correct, augmented reality. Matthew's work focuses on the development of low-cost technologies capable of overlaying virtual images over what a person sees through their eyes.

"Ultimately we aim to have several integrated circuit chips embedded in a little black box, the size of a match box, which will be fastened to a head-mounted display and send signals to a computer which generates the image," Matthew says.

"It will give us an affordable, highly accurate and believable way of viewing information held in Geographic Information Systems or other databases."

Matthew believes this kind of technology could become common in a number of workplaces within the next five to ten years.

"In factories, for example, it could be used to place things in the right spot in circuit boards without anyone needing to check a paper diagram."

But he says the technology will have to be developed to ensure accuracy.

"Where ultrasound imagery, for example, is overlaid on a patient, effectively providing surgeons with x-ray vision for biopsy procedures, sub-millimetre accuracy will be required.

"The improvements will be incremental – the technology will continuously evolve, becoming better and more affordable every few years."



Matthew has completed two years of his PhD in Mechanical Engineering, working at the Human Interface Technology Laboratory New Zealand (HITLab NZ) at Canterbury University.

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Growing pains help solve moa puzzles



Dr Richard Holdaway with a selection of moa bones from a site in North Canterbury. The long bones are of an (immature) South Island giant moa and the smaller one is of an Eastern moa.

Moa are regarded as New Zealand's giant birds but it seems that they took their time to grow.

New research on growth rings found in leg bones of extinct moa show that the giant birds that roamed New Zealand in historical times took far longer than modern birds to reach reproductive maturity.

The research was initiated by University of Canterbury senior lecturer and palaeobiologist Dr Richard Holdaway. Dr Samuel Turvey, now with the Zoological Society of London, began the research while working as a Royal Society of London Banks Alecto postdoctoral researcher with Dr Holdaway in the School of Biological Sciences. The research results have

just been published in the highly regarded journal, *Nature*.

Growth rings are seen in the bones of many animal species and are caused by differing growth rates through the changing seasons. Bird species today do not have these rings as, for most of them, their growth phase is confined to a single year, and many birds actively remodel their bones throughout their lives.

The growth rings found on the moa bones indicate that the giant birds took several years to reach full size. Paradoxically, the findings reveal that the largest species reached maturity years earlier than the group of smaller species.

"However, the long growth period probably made all of them more vulnerable to extinction at the hands of the human colonisers who wiped them out shortly after arriving here about 700 years ago," said Dr Holdaway.

He said the long growing phase would have suited the ancient birds' lifestyle.

"Apart from their huge size – the largest being the two species of giant moa, *Dinornis*, which could reach 240 kilograms and stood 2 metres tall – their environment here had few natural enemies, meaning that they could enjoy a long growth period before producing high-quality offspring later in life.

"But this life-history strategy left them vulnerable to attack by the newly arrived humans," Dr Holdaway said. "Hunters wiped out the birds by picking them off before they had a chance to become parents."

UC Economics Department ranks well in survey

The University of Canterbury has the highest ranked economics department in New Zealand on a per capita measure, according to an independent report.

The peer-reviewed paper, "Rankings Methodology for International Comparisons of Institutions and Individuals: An Application to Economics in Australia and New Zealand", is to be published in the prestigious Blackwell's *Journal of Economic Surveys*.

It is the first systematic comparison of the research performance of all economics departments in Australia and New Zealand and is based on citations and quality of entries in nearly 500 economic journals.

On a per capita quality-adjusted output, Canterbury is the leading department in New Zealand for the period 1988-2002 and is eighth equal in the ranking of 32 Australasian departments. On per capita measures, Auckland is ranked at 11, Otago 12, Waikato 16, Victoria 19, Massey 22 and Lincoln 28.

Individual star performers have been recognised in an Economists' Hall of Fame for 1988-2002. Heading the field is Adjunct Professor Michael McAleer. Professor McAleer is on the staff at the University of Western Australia and is an adjunct professor in two UC departments – Economics, and Mathematics and Statistics.

Canterbury's Head of Economics, Professor John Gibson, who was previously at Waikato, is the highest ranked New Zealand economist at number 12. Former HOD Professor Les Oxley is ranked 21 out of more than 650 full-time economists.

Professor Nigel Healey, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Business and Economics), said the report was excellent news for the University and the Department of Economics. "Canterbury is likely to be ranked even higher when the rankings are updated within the next three years. The Department has invested significantly in promising young academics over recent years, as well as senior staff to

provide research leadership. We were delighted to welcome Professor John Gibson to Canterbury this year and we are presently seeking two further appointments at professorial level", Professor Healey said.

People

Tom Gregg, UC Chief Operating Officer, has been made a Fellow of the Association for Tertiary Education Management Inc (ATEM). The honour reflects a sustained commitment to the profession and a superior level of achievement in both professional practice and development.

Professor Karen Nero (Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies) has been awarded \$12,000 towards the 2006 annual Pacific Artists in Residence programme at the centre. The grant was made by the Pacific Arts Committee of Creative New Zealand.

University's new academy to foster musically talented youth

Young gifted musicians from around the country are to be nurtured at the University of Canterbury's new Junior Academy of Music.

The academy, run as part of the University's School of Music, offers tuition as well as performance opportunities to talented musicians over the age of 14.

Performance director of the programme and senior lecturer in cello, Edith Salzmann, said that the Junior Academy was modelled on successful European programmes and was the most comprehensive concept of its kind in New Zealand.

"It is a way to inspire gifted students to accelerate musical development," she said.

"Junior Academy students will be performing regularly throughout Christchurch and Canterbury, and each student will receive personal feedback on his or her performance from the teachers."

Although primarily designed to meet the needs of young musicians from age 14 who

have shown exceptional talent, younger students who demonstrate exceptional ability will also be taken into the programme. "The programme is not for beginners – students must be able to perform at very advanced levels. It will open a path for young talent which has blossomed at earlier levels of music training," said Ms Salzmann.

Students from the Christchurch area can attend weekly tuition lessons on voice or instrument and a two-hour performance class twice a term. Four special musical weekends will be held during the year allowing all students of the academy to come together for master-classes conducted by guest artists or UC staff. The weekends will also include orchestral repertoire practice, chamber music coaching, sight reading exercises and lectures on various musical topics.

For students living outside of the city, a masterclass programme will give one-on-one lessons once a month with the option of

attending the performance training classes and musical weekends.

Academy teachers are University performance tutors and professional musicians of wide experience internationally and include members of major ensembles such as the Christchurch Symphony, The Canterbury Trio and baroque ensemble *Il Raccolto*.

The programme will follow the University calendar and operate between March and October.

Admission to the Academy is through a successful audition before a panel of three Academy members, and places in the programme are limited. Applications are open to both New Zealand and international students, and scholarships are available. Auditions for the first intake will begin on Sunday 26 June, and application forms are available from the School of Music. Further information is available at www.music.canterbury.ac.nz.

Staff powhiri a celebration of coming together

Academic and general staff who have joined the University in the past 15 months were officially welcomed on to campus at a special powhiri last week.

More than 60 staff attended the hour-long welcome which was conducted in both Māori and English.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roy Sharp, said there was no "challenge" component to the powhiri as it was assumed the new staff had "come in peace". He said the powhiri was held to formally welcome new staff into the University community.

"You have joined a community which has high ideals – a lofty vision – to create new knowledge and share that knowledge with the students who study here as well as with the staff."

Professor Sharp said the Māori speakers spoke partly in English so everyone knew what was being said and everyone felt included.

Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Sir Tipene O'Regan said rituals of encounter were hugely important and it was only proper that new staff be formally welcomed to the University, however belatedly.

Alan Nicholls, newly appointed HR analyst and a recent arrival from the UK, said his initial scepticism about the event was unfounded.

"The ritual of encounter became a real event in a modern context and not a lip service to arid tradition. There were many interesting themes in the speeches – respect for one another's cultures and the importance of celebrating their coming together; the use of both Māori and English in the ceremony; the increasing



Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Sir Tipene O'Regan addresses the powhiri.

exchange of vocabulary between the two languages. A great deal of genuine warmth came over from the speakers, and there was a palpable feeling of being made welcome," he said.

HR intern Melanie Seidel, from Germany, found the hongi an interesting cultural experience.

"Doing the hongi with totally unknown, but important UC people, even with the Vice-Chancellor, made me feel like everybody is being treated equally here," she said.

Also made to feel welcome was Dr Brian Kreisman (Communication Disorders) who moved to New Zealand earlier this year from the US.

"I felt very blessed to be able to participate in the powhiri and to be welcomed officially to the University in this way. I particularly enjoyed hearing *How Great Thou Art* sung in Māori," Dr Kreisman said.

"I think it would be great for all new staff in the coming years to have the opportunity to be welcomed via the powhiri," he said.

Former soldier details lighter side of involvement in the Vietnam War

Bill Barnes' new book contains April-foolery and endless bouts of army alcoholic athletics, but the author makes no apologies for what he calls "a look at the lighter side of the Vietnam War".

UC Disability Support Services administrator Mr Barnes has just published his first book, under the non de plume, Billy Barnz, called *The Goat Hunter – Ho Chi Minh: A Kiwi ruins his war*.

It covers his experiences during his army career in the 1970s from his officer training in Duntroon, Australia, to his 10-month tour of duty in Vietnam in 1970-71, as a gun position officer in 161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery.

Mr Barnes began writing *The Goat Hunter* eight years ago as a pastime and as a way of recording some of "the funny things" that had happened to him for his children and nephews.

"I also thought it would be quite a good thing to do for myself, as some sort of release, to document the way I viewed what was supposedly a very serious part of my life. I discovered that I didn't view it that seriously at all. Therefore the book has a deliberately strong humorous vein.

"I've written this to make people laugh. I think that even though it's a serious subject there's a bit of scope for making light of even life's most serious issues because it helps you cope."

When Mr Barnes launched his book at the University Book Shop last month someone remarked to him that there was "an awful lot of drinking, fun and laughter" throughout its pages.

"That is the way soldiers cope with boredom and stress and problems that they have when they are remote, overseas and away from their family. So I don't apologise for that, because that's the way it is and the way it was."

He describes his style as "the stuff of Spike Milligan" and says it is "a blokes' book".

Mr Barnes says the book was not a one-off as he has plenty of tales from his military life left in him to write. He served 11 years in the New Zealand Army, followed by 22 years in the Royal New Zealand Air Force before coming to work at the University in 2001.

During his time in the RNZAF Mr Barnes also studied part-time at UC and gained a masters degree in political science.



Macmillan Brown Library manager Max Broadbent (left) and Bill Barnes with a copy of *The Goat Hunter* which Bill has donated for the library's New Zealand collection.

College of Science looks back and plans ahead after its first year

The College of Science has marked its first anniversary with the formation of an advisory committee, which includes the likes of Nobel laureate Professor Alan MacDiarmid, to develop Pro-Vice-Chancellor Ian Shaw's vision of a more co-operative, open and inclusive scientific community.

Professor Shaw outlined the College's achievements in its first year at a celebration attended by Research, Science and Technology Minister, Steve Maharey.

He said scientists need to collaborate more, citing the College's establishment of a joint lectureship in environmental science with Landcare Research as an example.

"The future of New Zealand science depends on working together and removing the extreme competition for funding. A bit of competition makes science good, too much inhibits it," he said.

But while many good things had happened during the College's first year, it was not time for it to rest on its laurels.

Professor Shaw spoke of his desire for the College to act as a link between the laboratory and the general public.

"Scientific developments impact upon the public. They can make life safer and better, sometimes they are controversial.

"We need to be certain that there is good dialogue between scientists and communities

to ensure that the public is able to make informed decisions. The College of Science is working towards creating an academic position in Science and Society to develop science dialogue."

Professor Shaw also spoke of his desire to see more Māori scientists.

"The College of Science is trying hard to work with Māori friends to create an environment that encourages Māori to think science. We have introduced a Māori advisor (Kai-Arahi

Māori) and we are offering the new Science, Māori and Indigenous Knowledge course."

Mr Maharey told the gathering that he was impressed by the College's desire to form strong research and business partnerships.

"It is an exciting time to be involved in science and technology. There are challenges but also exciting opportunities. I am delighted the College of Science has grabbed these during its first year and I look forward to hearing of further progress over the next year."



(Left to right) Vice-Chancellor Professor Roy Sharp, Minister Steve Maharey and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Science) Professor Ian Shaw celebrate the first anniversary of the College of Science.

Classical fun at Canterbury

The College of Arts Classics Day for Year 13 students is growing bigger every year.

Classics Day organiser, Lecturer Alison Holcroft (Classics and Linguistics), said 520 high school students, from as far afield as Blenheim, Greymouth and Timaru, attended the event held on campus last Thursday.

Growing interest may force the Classics department to run the event twice next year to cope with demand, she said.

Students from 22 different schools in the region took part in a series of lectures and workshops which focus on topics in this year's Year 13 Classical Studies syllabus.

This year the programme began with a lecture by Dr Victor Parker on Alexander the Great, drawing on last year's blockbuster movie *Alexander*. Other features of the day included a preview of Associate Professor Robin Bond's forthcoming production of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, plus sessions on Greek vases in the Logie Collection, divine etiquette in the Graeco-Roman World, and learning how to master the

Macedonian sarissa (lance) used by Alexander's soldiers.

For the first time this year the annual Classics Quiz was incorporated into Classics Day and proved a spectacular success. This year it was sponsored by the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Arts.

Students were asked such curly questions as "What would I do in a vomitorium?" and "What was the name of Odysseus' dog?"

Proving he was top dog for 2005 was quiz winner Josh Tait from Hillmorton High School, who was presented with his book prize by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Arts) Professor Ken Strongman.

Gaia Bythell of Avonside Girls High was second in the quiz, and Burnside High School's Alex Robinson was placed third.

Ms Holcroft said the day was held both to reinforce and supplement the Year 13 syllabus and was a way of supporting the teachers, many of whom were Canterbury graduates themselves.

Mind and body covered by youth forum

Who owns your body? That is the question 100 secondary school students will discuss at this year's UC Golden Key Youth Forum on 8 July.

Now in its fourth successful year, the Youth Forum brings together students from around the city and Golden Key members to listen, discuss and debate a controversial topic from a variety of perspectives.

This year's topic is an interdisciplinary exploration of intellectual property rights, social control, surveillance, policy and law. The day kicks off with the Golden Key Talk Shop with addresses from MP Tim Barnett and Senior Lecturer Dr David Small (Education). The Talk Shop is open to the public and will be held in A1 lecture theatre, from 9 to 9.50am. Students will then divide into workshops and hear presentations from various University staff. At the end of the day, the groups report back to their peers.

Golden Key Communications Team Leader Shaun McGirr said the forum aimed to promote academic excellence.

"This type of discussion is a 'taste' of tertiary education that directly benefits the students who attend and have their minds opened, the Golden Key members who help organise it and facilitate discussion from different viewpoint, and the idea of education as whole."

Following the success of previous forums which have tackled globalisation, genetic engineering and terrorism, the Canterbury chapter has presented the Youth Forum concept at several international Golden Key conferences.

"Other Asia-Pacific chapters have picked up this concept and have made it work in their communities – this year Monash University and the University of Sydney have run their own," said Shaun.

The Golden Key International Honour Society is an international, interdisciplinary academic honours organisation which recognises academic achievement and excellence and promotes a strong community service ethos. The University of Canterbury chapter was established in 1999 and is dedicated to student interaction within the University and wider community.



Tom Illott and Kyle Derry, Year 13 students from Shirley Boys' High School, examine a coin during the College of Arts Classics Day.

Scholarships

Rebecca Eivers has been awarded the Sir Neil Isaac Scholarship in Geography/Environmental Science. The scholarship is worth \$5500 per annum, plus \$500 (research expenses) and domestic tuition fees, for two years.

Sarah Berry has been awarded the Christchurch City David Close Award for 2005, valued at \$6000 per annum for up to four years.

Maldivians study climate change implications



(Left to right) Michelle Ahmed, Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine Resources; Ibrahim Shaheen, Maldives Transport and Construction Company; Mizna Mohamed, Ministry of Environment and Construction; and Ahmed Jameel, Ministry of Environment and Construction. They are holding the Maldives' State of the Environment Report and the First National Communication to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, which are very important documents, both nationally and internationally.

Four government officials from the Maldives spent last week at Canterbury University on a training programme focused on developing an integrated strategy for their country to address its vulnerability to climate change.

The group, all from the capital Malé, were hosted by UC Opportunity's International Training programme and their visit was funded by the United Nations Development Programme.

The Integrated Climate Change Strategy training programme was led by Professor John Hay, a UC graduate, former lecturer, and past co-ordinator of the Antarctic Studies programme. He now works as an international environmental consultant, based in New Zealand, but working all over the globe.

Professor Hay has been working with the Maldives for the last 10 years and, due to this history, was asked by its Government to provide a week's intensive training to some of its officials.

Professor Hay said the week's focus was on developing capacity and the ability to identify what actions were needed to address the climate-related risks faced by the country comprised of 1,192 small, low-lying coral islands in the Indian Ocean.

"The Maldives is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to high sea levels. The recent tsunami demonstrated what the devastating consequences of a high sea level on a country like the Maldives can be."

The group are taking an integrated approach to tackling three major projects on their agenda, working in partnership with other organisations and drawing on the experiences of other countries that have already been through the project implementation process. Sharing the knowledge and insight of other countries was imperative for a country with a small and widely dispersed population such as the Maldives, Professor Hay said.

A study tour component was built into the week, with visits to the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) and Landcare Research, a visit by a Ministry for the Environment representative and interaction with staff of the University's Geography Department.

"One of the really rewarding things for me has been seeing that while our countries are very different, there are an incredible number of commonalities on the fundamental issues we are facing. The other benefit is a new, good working relationship between New Zealand institutions, including the University, and Maldives' officials," Professor Hay said.

The Maldivian delegates said they are now armed with many new ideas and tools.

"We were also impressed with the research centres here and seeing all the possibilities of things we can do back home," Mr Ahmed Jameel said.

"It is good to know New Zealand is doing so much in this area, and that we have a friend in this process."

Success for student soprano

University of Canterbury performance music student, Sarah Walker, will compete in the Sydney McDonald's Aria Competition in August after winning this year's Becroft Grand Opera Aria in Auckland last week.

Sarah is a second year performance voice student who receives vocal coaching from School of Music professor, Dame Malvina Major. She won two of her classes plus the big aria prize in the week-long competitions run by the North Shore Performing Arts Competitions Society.

She was first in both the British art song and the oratorio aria classes during the week and on the Friday of competition she competed against 12 others in a heat for a one of six places in the Becroft Aria final. Her performance of 'Leise, Leise' from Weber's *Der Freischütz*, accompanied on piano by fellow School of Music student David Kelly, earned her a spot in Saturday night's final held in The Pumphouse in Takapuna.

Sarah's prize was \$5000 cash, plus \$2000 to put towards getting to the aria competition in Sydney in eight week's time.

The young soprano says she was surprised by her win in what is considered to be the second biggest competition in New Zealand for classical singers after the Lexus Song Quest.

"I had it as a goal to try and get into the finals for it in about three years time, so I was going up this year to get a feel for what it was like. To win it was a big surprise."

Sarah is one of only four singers from New Zealand who will compete in the Sydney competition, which attracts hundreds of singers from around the globe.

She says she is feeling slightly nervous but has some useful feedback from this latest competition which will help her focus through intense training in the weeks ahead.

Dame Malvina says Sarah's win was a great thrill for everyone in the School of Music and she was sure it would only be the beginning of major competition success from students coming through the programme.

"Sarah is one of several students we've got at this University who have great promise. She has a great future and this win is only the beginning, but there is still a lot of work to do between now and when she goes to Sydney."

People

Heintze Lee has been awarded the 2005 Land Transport Safety Authority Scholarship. The scholarship, worth \$15,000 per annum for up to 18 months, was established in 2002 to encourage the study of the role and application of road and traffic engineering in the prevention and reduction of accidents.

A different pitch altogether



A sporting family — Dr Alex Tan with his sons Julian (left) and Joshua.

The old adage those who can, do, and those who can't, teach, is one Dr Alex Tan believes applies to him — in the context of his after-hours teaching role, that is.

Dr Tan (Political Science and Communication) trades the lecture theatre for the baseball dug-out at weekends. The recently elected Vice-President of the Canterbury Baseball Club has taken up the role of coach and trainer of the club's Under 12 teams.

Dr Tan and his family moved to New Zealand from Texas, USA, in January last year, when he took a senior lecturer position at Canterbury University. In October the family joined the Canterbury Baseball Club.

Unlike his sons, Joshua (11) and Julian (9), who have grown up with baseball living in the USA, Dr Tan grew up playing softball in the Philippines.

It was not until he moved to the United States that he got stuck on baseball. When his boys started learning how to play, he began taking more of an interest in the game.

"It is a nice family sport for us. It is a 'low impact' sport. You don't have to crush somebody or need a certain build of body. Baseball is a finesse sport where technique is important," Dr Tan says.

Dr Tan says initially he just wanted to be a "sideline parent".

"But I was essentially my kids' first coach. I wore out a patch of grass in our back yard in Texas where I would sit on a paint pail in the evenings and get the boys to pitch balls to me until they'd end up in the neighbour's yard."

This backyard coaching has naturally progressed into more involvement from helping take a small group at training, to taking on more of the role of team strategist and co-coach.

Dr Tan says he has watched countless hours of baseball and observed and worked alongside many inspiring coaches. He believes that careful observation can make a good teacher.

"We teach the kids to use their brain to play this game and know what to do even before the ball is hit. It is about understanding all the different permutations and combinations that can happen on the field. We mimic game situations as best as we can but in baseball you should expect the unexpected."

The Canterbury Baseball Club has about 70 members and its teams play against each other, but remain competitive with regular tournaments with Auckland teams and international teams from throughout Oceania.

Dr Tan said the young club is doing well for only its second full year and this year the junior "Sluggers" team have had closely contested games with their Auckland rivals.

Canterbury has also, for the first time, had players selected in the New Zealand Little League representative team, including Dr Tan's son Joshua, who plays short-stop and pitcher. Joshua and Canterbury team-mate Anthony Grant will join the national team heading to Fukuoka, Japan, next month for the Asia-Pacific regional qualifying tournament, where teams will contest places for this August's world championships in the US.

Part of Dr Tan's new executive role will be to encourage more youth into the sport.

He believes baseball is a great team sport that teaches children co-operation. "You can be carried by your star player in some sports, but no player can carry the team in baseball. Everybody has to connect."

He says he gets a lot of fun from his pastime and in many ways there are parallels between coaching and his day job at the University.

"It's all about those 'aha' moments you live for as a teacher and a coach, when you see you have imparted some knowledge — you live for those moments."

- *The Chronicle is running a series of stories on the unique and unusual pastimes of current UC staff. We are looking for staff — academic and general — who have interesting hobbies or passions out-of-the-ordinary, or poles apart from their day job. Please email details to comms@canterbury.ac.nz*