

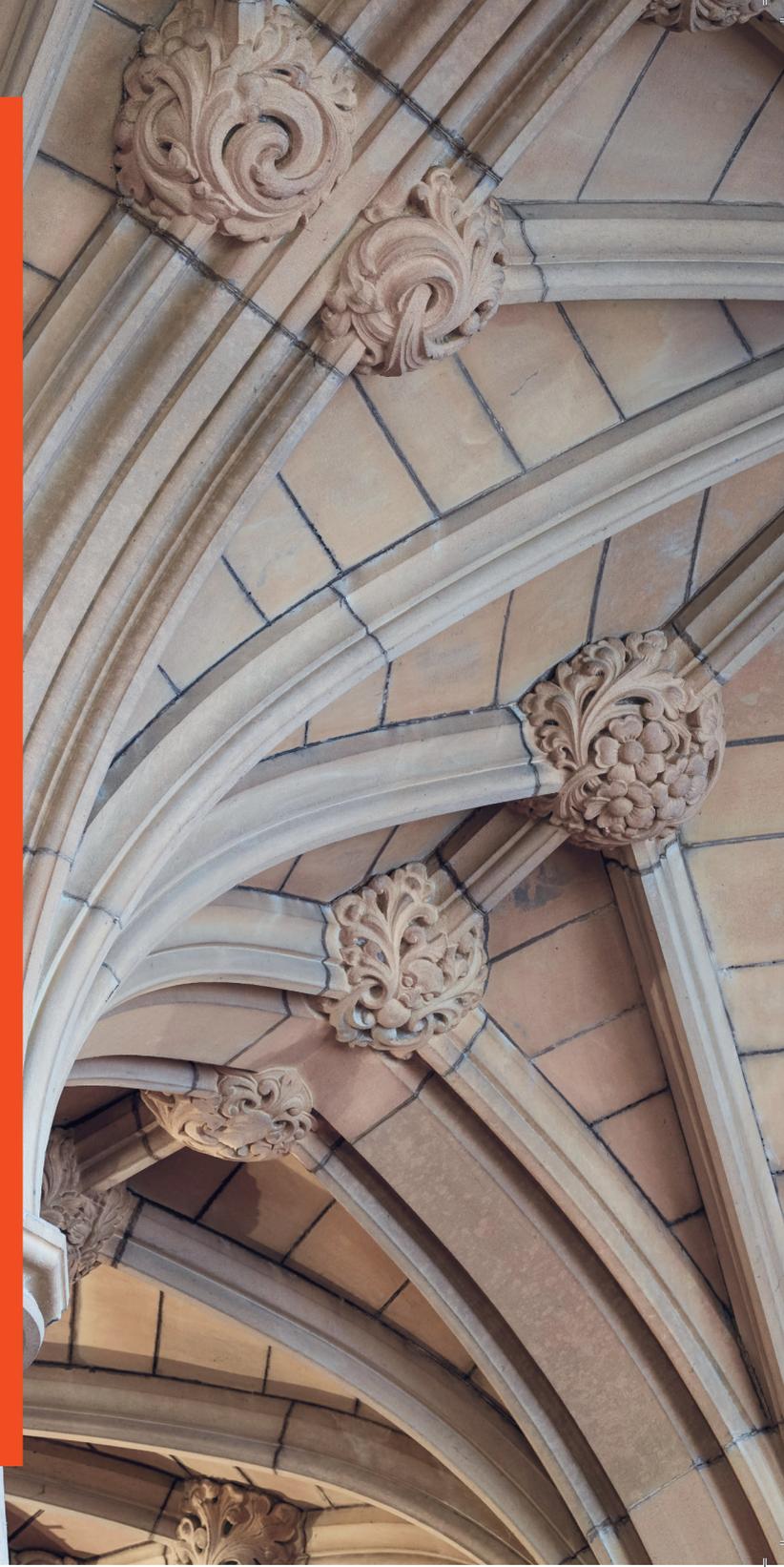


THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

The Great Hall  
The University of Sydney  
Thursday 27 April

Program 2017

# Alumni Awards Presentation







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## Program

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# Alumni Awards Program 2017

The annual Alumni Awards program celebrates the achievements of our alumni and honours their contribution to the University and wider community.

Tonight we will acknowledge the recipients of the Alumni Achievement Awards and announce the winners of the Graduate Medals.

## Order of proceedings

6pm	<b>Cocktail reception</b> Drinks and canapés served
6.20pm	<b>Formal proceedings commence</b> <b>Welcome</b> Ms Helen Dalley (BA '79) Journalist and broadcaster Master of Ceremonies  <b>Address from the Alumni Council President</b> Mrs Annie Corlett AM (BEC '80) President, Alumni Council  <b>Alumni Achievement Awards presentation</b> Dr Michael Spence AC (BA '85 LLB '87) Vice-Chancellor and Principal  <b>Graduate Medals presentation</b> Professor Stephen Garton (BA '78) Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
8pm	<b>Formal proceedings conclude</b> Drinks and canapés served
8.30pm	<b>Event concludes</b>

# Honouring our outstanding alumni

## Alumni Achievement Awards

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The Alumni Achievement Awards recognise the success of graduates who are established in their careers.

### **Alumni Award for Cultural Contribution**

This award recognises alumni who achieve excellence in the arts, creative or cultural sectors, and/or whose efforts promote the value and understanding of cultural diversity.

### **Alumni Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

This award recognises alumni who are forward thinking leaders in their industry, profession, field of research or area of expertise. The award celebrates the visionary and the daring, across any field.

### **Alumni Award for International Achievement**

This award recognises the outstanding contributions that alumni have made to international society through community service and/or professional achievements that have made a significant global impact.

### **Alumni Award for Professional Achievement**

This award recognises outstanding achievements of alumni in their professional fields.

### **Alumni Award for Service to Humanity**

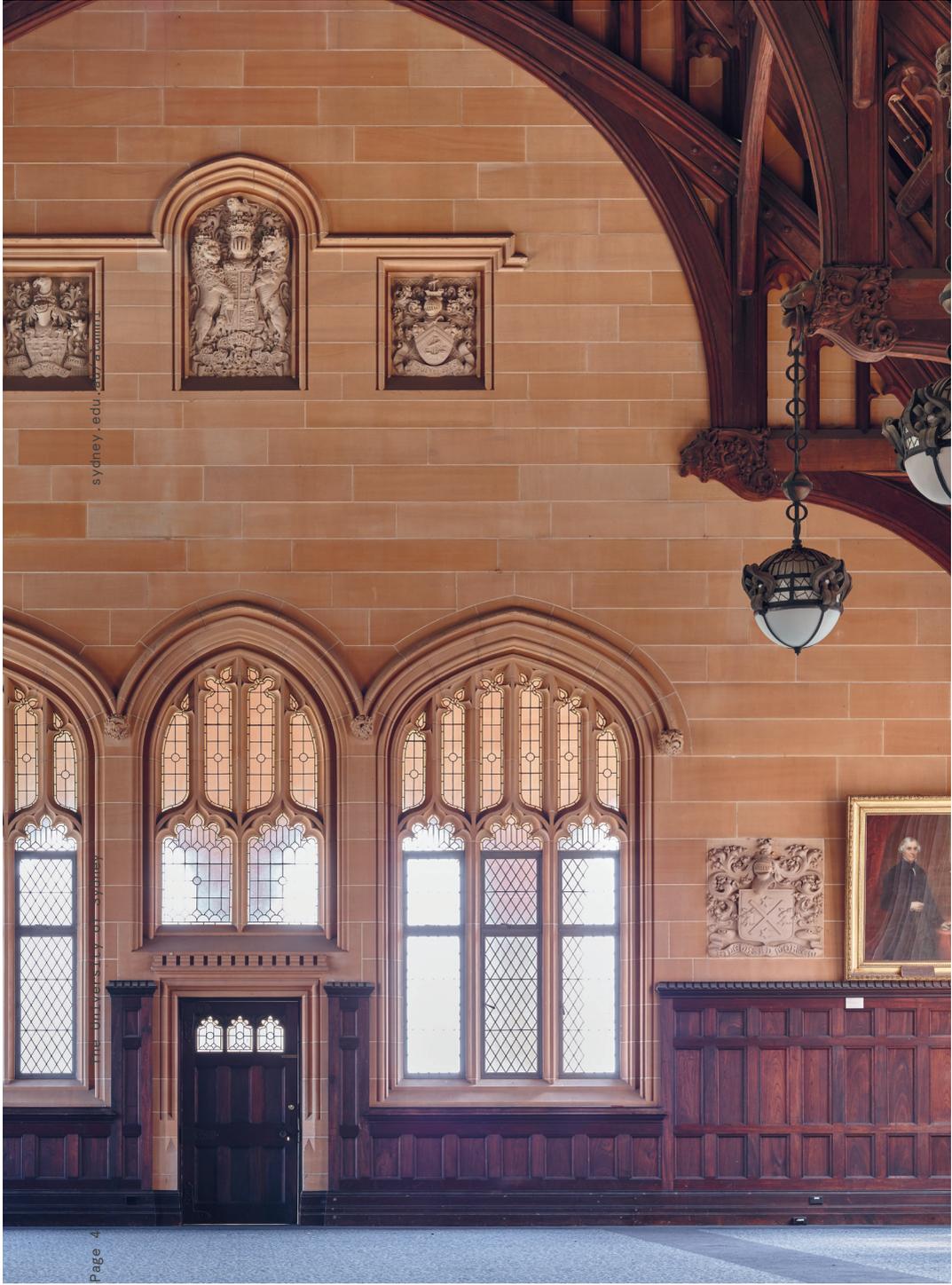
This award recognises the personal contributions of alumni who, through service or philanthropy, improve the lives of those in need. This award also seeks to recognise the significant involvement of our alumni in projects that enrich local or international communities.

### **Outstanding Achievements of Young Alumni**

This award recognises outstanding achievements made by alumni aged 35 and younger (at close of nominations).

### **The President's Award**

This award celebrates exceptional and sustained achievements made by alumni in their field of professional endeavour and/or their contribution to community, and takes into consideration those who have achieved relative to opportunity.



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The University of Sydney

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## Graduate Medals

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The Graduate Medals recognise the academic excellence and contributions to the University of Sydney's diverse intellectual life from our most recent graduates.

### Convocation Medal

For undergraduate achievement.

### Nigel C Barker Medal

For academic and sporting achievement.

### Edmund Barton Medal

For master's by coursework achievement.

### Rita and John Cornforth Medal

For PhD achievement.

### John C Harsanyi Medal

For international student achievement.

### Sister Alison Bush Medal

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement.



# Alumni Award for Cultural Contribution

## Penelope Seidler AM

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### BArch '64

Few can compare with Penelope Seidler's contribution to the Australian cultural sector.

Penelope has been a driving force behind Sydney's art and architecture. As wife and business partner to Harry Seidler, Penelope has played a leading role in one of Australia's most influential architecture practices while defining herself as a key figure in the arts.

It was a chance encounter that decided the course of her life, when an 18-year-old Penelope Evatt entered a party in North Sydney and met an ambitious young Harry Seidler. His enthusiasm inspired her to study architecture at the University of Sydney.

She recalls her studies being a fascinating time, "drinking coffee with fellow students and talking about everything, we were all desperate to impress each other so we had to read up on today's topics

so as to appear knowledgeable the next day!" Seidler says.

"[Artist] Lloyd Rees' art history lectures were spellbinding, I remember him whenever I visit the great galleries of Europe. Sydney University gave me the opportunity to enjoy learning and life."

Over the 50 years since graduating, Penelope has cemented her role as an architect, advocate and patron of music, architecture, art and performance. Together, Harry and Penelope pioneered the integration of modernist art and architecture in Australia.

Penelope has nurtured the emerging careers of countless contemporary artists as a private patron and collector, and she has been the willing subject of many portraits, including the 2014 Archibald Prize winning portrait by Fiona Lowry (BVArts '99), also a University of Sydney alumna.

Penelope has been a member of the International Council of New York's Museum of Modern Art for more than 40 years, and she was an International Council Member for MAK Museum in Vienna from 2001–12.

She has advocated for Australian artists within the global art world through formal and informal roles with the Australian Commissioners' Council for the Venice Biennale, the world's largest international art fair, and roles with the Biennale of Sydney, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.

Reflecting on her achievements, the University's Director of Museums and Cultural Engagement, David Ellis, says, "Penelope's cultural contribution will be felt for generations to come through her advocacy and philanthropy across contemporary art, architecture and education."

More recently, Penelope has provided her invaluable expertise – and a generous donation – to the University's Chau Chak Wing Museum, set to open in 2018. She was inspired to make this donation from her time as a student when artist JW Power made a bequest in 1962 that is worth \$55 million today.

She remembers its electrifying effect. "During my architecture

studies in the late '50s and early '60s, Lloyd Rees taught us about art and art history, which was magnificent," Penelope says. "But there was not anything else in terms of art education at that time – until the Power Institute and its collection.

"I am thrilled to be associated with this museum which will allow so many unseen works from these marvellous collections to finally be on display," she says.

Penelope sees her legacy as simply nurturing enthusiasm for the arts, but she has also led a vital cultural shift for which many artists are grateful.



# Alumni Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

## Emeritus Professor Vaughan Pratt

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**BSc '67 MSc '70**

There are two sides to the work of Emeritus Professor Vaughan Pratt.

He is a pioneering mathematical theorist who has consistently opened up new areas of thought. He is also a real-world problem solver tackling everything from self-driving cars to his new field of investigation, climate change.

Talk to anyone with even a passing knowledge of the evolution of computer systems and they will be aware of key concepts that Vaughan has been instrumental in developing, and that carry his name: Pratt certificates of primality, the Pratt parser and the Knuth-Morris-Pratt algorithm that substantially streamlined the search for patterns in computer data.

Vaughan is also well known for building what was the world's smallest webserver, in 1999. It could fit into a matchbox and

demonstrated his ability to take available knowledge and turn it into practical advances.

In the early 1980s, when computer technology was rapidly evolving from a corporate and government tool into a device almost every home would eventually have, Vaughan was at the birth of one of the most influential computer companies, Sun Microsystems. The company grew from the ideas of a student at Stanford University, where Vaughan was a staff member.

In 1980, he became the unofficial faculty leader of the highly influential Sun workstation project, developing a modular computer system that gave rise to various commercial products.

He later became Sun's director of research before returning to Stanford in 1985. His mark on the company is indelible – he even designed its iconic and ingenious logo.

Another key achievement was his invention, in 1976, of Dynamic Logic, a method of reasoning about computer programs. The richness of this idea has seen it used in linguistics and philosophy, and it has had a recent resurgence in the design of high-speed digital electronics.

Vaughan's fascination with science started early. By the age of 13 he was building radios and oscilloscopes with parts from army surplus stores. At 15, he moved onto theoretical physics, which led, eight years later, to his graduation from the University of Sydney with double honours in pure mathematics and physics. It was in the Physics Department that he discovered the emerging subject of computing, which would become a major part of his life's work.

Vaughan also traces his current work on climate change and debunking the fallacies of climate-change denialism back to his University days. In the 1960s, he'd been taught at the



University about the greenhouse effect and he was unhappy to see so much of that information later ignored or misrepresented in the media. He is currently working on ideas for a low-carbon energy future and on ways to improve climate change forecasting.

Vaughan is now an Emeritus Professor at Stanford University, having retired in 2000. Ask him what his greatest career challenge has been and he will say “procrastination” – an unexpected answer from a hugely influential academic and researcher who has achieved so much across so many disciplines.

# Alumni Award for International Achievement

## Antony Walker

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**BMus '91**

Having studied voice himself, conductor Antony Walker is known for having a particular affinity with singers. He took this to a whole other level during a 2008 performance of Verdi's opera *Aida*.

The tenor for that performance was unwell and, by the fourth act, his voice was gone. Antony did what few

other conductors could have done: he sang the role from the conductor's podium while still conducting as the tenor played out the action on stage. It was a heart-stopping demonstration of the focus, energy and broad skillset of this energetic and very gifted music professional.

Music became a big part of Antony's life at age eight, when he was introduced to his inspirational piano teacher, Elizabeth Kozma. She in turn introduced him to the music of Bartok, Kodaly, Mozart and Beethoven, planting the seed for Antony to start composing and learning the cello. He was just 12 when this teacher predicted he would become a conductor.

A little later, when Antony was in Paris with his father, his French music teacher gave him recordings of operas by Benjamin Britten and Richard Strauss. This opened his eyes to the extraordinary operatic world. As his engagement with music



continued, Antony thought he might be a composer or a singer, both of which he studied at the University of Sydney, along with cello and, importantly, conducting. His talent was noticed early. Still a student, he was invited to conduct the Sydney Symphony and the Melbourne Symphony. This was the beginning of what has become a dynamic international career.

At just 22, Antony became musical director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs before becoming chorus master for the Welsh National Opera in London. From there, he was appointed Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera and Music Director of Pittsburgh Opera, making him one of the youngest music directors of a regional company in the United States.

Antony has now conducted extensively across Europe and the United States, including choral, symphonic and chamber works and more than 100 operas. Over the past decade, high points include conducting two productions at the English National Opera in London, a production of Rossini's *Semiramide* in Florence (the city where opera was born), and five different productions at one of the most prestigious opera companies in the world, the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Antony has recorded 30 CDs and DVDs celebrating composers from Beethoven to Fauré and Handel. A CD he produced with operatic baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes won the 2004 ARIA award for Best Classical Music Album of the Year.

Despite his many overseas engagements, Antony still regularly returns to Australia to conduct around the country and stay engaged with three of his more personal music projects: chamber opera company Pinchgut Opera; the original instruments ensemble Orchestra of the Antipodes; and vocal group Cantillation.

Antony helped start these companies when he was a student, and he continues to bring tremendous creative energy and dedication to their productions.

In fact, Antony brings the same energy and dedication to everything he does. The 12-year-old who used to sit in concerts reading along with the scores as the orchestra played is now a seasoned conductor bringing a dazzling range of music scores to life.

What his teacher told him all those years ago now underpins his extraordinary career: Antony Walker understands the drama of music.

# Alumni Award for Professional Achievement

## Dr Patricia Selkirk AAM

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**BSc(Hons) '64 PhD '69**

Dr Patricia Selkirk doesn't mind the cold. Awarded the Australian Antarctic Medal in 2004, she has spent big chunks of her career on Macquarie Island (1500km south of Tasmania) and Heard Island (4000km southwest of Fremantle) where the temperature hovers about five degrees Celsius. How did she work in such conditions? "I just put on more clothes," she laughs.

In the summer of 1983, Patricia was the first woman to live at Antarctica's Casey Station while conducting research, though she characteristically downplays this too. "I didn't know I was going to be the only woman until the ship was part way there," she says. "Not that it would've changed my mind – I just got on with it."

Graduating from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in 1964 then completing a PhD in 1969, she attributes her abiding interest in bryophytes (mosses and



liverworts) to an inspiring botany teacher, Geoff Berrie, and the collegial, academic atmosphere at Women's College, where she lived for four years.

Her studies led her a long way south. "The subantarctic islands are of immense interest botanically because they're very isolated," Patricia says. "They've not previously been connected with a continental

land mass.” Plants got here “by air mail” – carried by the wind. “The islands are beyond the latitudinal limit at which trees can grow, the largest plants are tussock grasses,” she says. Bryophytes assume a vital role here in soil formation, water retention and nutrient cycling.

Dr Selkirk’s book, *Subantarctic Macquarie Island: Environment and Biology*, published in 1990, is a key work in the field. She describes working with a colleague to blend nascent satellite technology with exploration on foot, “scribbling on image copies in the rain”. The result was a detailed map that is still very much in use for both research and island management.

Possessed of a great spirit of adventure, Patricia describes a trip to Heard Island made possible only by helicopter support. She and two colleagues were the first to visit some sites, collect mosses and “expand the knowledge of the island’s vegetation”.

With this comes a note of caution, however. “Since the 1950s, the glaciers have retreated by a kilometre or more and there are big lakes in front of them that you can’t get across, where once you could walk across snow and ice,” she says. “That’s the most dramatic evidence of climate change that I’ve seen.”

Solitary fieldwork is unsafe in this environment, but this opens up great opportunities for collaboration, says Patricia, who has been involved in finding a new orchid species and a new plant virus, uncovering vegetation history, geomorphology and mapping. “All sorts of things to do with the plants and the climate,” she says. “It’s all interconnected, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.” Patricia’s PhD students also speak highly of her warmth and mentoring.

Yet there have been frustrations too, some to do with funding, some with logistics. Then there was the reporter from a popular women’s magazine who, even in 1980, was more interested in questioning Patricia about “abandoning” her husband and children than finding out about her research. “The world has moved on now,” Patricia says.

Patricia exudes a great love for the unique landscape of her research. “The islands are wonderful, just magic,” she says. “The scenery, the plants, the whole environment, are just beautiful. And on the beach you’ll meet, depending on the season, seals and penguins and all kinds of seabirds.” She sums up her hopes for the region in one elegant phrase: “Peace, conservation and science.”

# Alumni Award for Service to Humanity

## Annabelle Chauncy OAM

BA '07 LLB '10

When Annabelle Chauncy took time out from her studies at the University of Sydney in late 2007 to travel to Africa and volunteer with an aid organisation, she didn't foresee the Kenyan crisis erupting that would force her to evacuate to neighbouring Uganda.

"I basically just had to wander around and figure out what to do," Annabelle says. She talked to people, asked what they needed – and listened. "The residing thing for me was that education is something you simply can't take away from someone," she says. "Even if a child has two years of education, that's going to change their life." Thus the idea for the School for Life was born.

Annabelle and fellow student David Everett OAM established Katuuso Primary and Vocational School in 2011. From an initial enrolment of 80 children there will soon be three schools welcoming 560 children – and transforming thousands of lives.



This may read like a tidy upward trajectory, but life in developing countries doesn't work like that. Just getting started came with all kinds of challenges such as raising funds, acquiring land, building classrooms and negotiating with government.

Graduating with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws in 2009, Annabelle says her degree helps her navigate a highly complex environment. "Sydney Uni has set me up with the footing and the foundation for every part of the business we're now

running,” she says. “From setting up the constitution to getting the governance right, through to the corporate side of the law, contracts, all the everyday things that you use in a business have come in so handy.” She traces her negotiating and leadership skills back to her arts degree, which helped her understand how government works and foreign aid is delivered.

The school’s first cohort of children came with unanticipated issues: they had never worn shoes, never seen a book or a pencil, did not know about hand washing or tooth brushing. “We thought education was going to be the priority,” Annabelle says. “But the kids were falling asleep at their desks because they didn’t have enough food, so then we started feeding them three meals a day.”

This back-to-basics shift led to community-wide engagement. The school now grows sustainable crops and has a piggery and goat farm. There’s a health clinic, solar electricity and clean-water tanks. And there are 25 teacher houses to attract and retain the best teachers. “It’s the beating heart of the community,” Annabelle says.

Annabelle shares two anecdotes that encapsulate the school’s transformative effect. The first stars the school cleaner, who was

desperately saving up to become a teacher. Annabelle found her a scholarship to university. “Now she’s one of our strongest teachers,” she says.

Then there’s Joyce, an eight-year-old with epilepsy. The local community, with its strong belief in witchcraft, took her thrice-daily fits to mean she was possessed. “We take a light-touch approach,” Annabelle says. “We’re not saying you can’t believe that, we’re just giving people access to more information so they can make up their own minds.” Healthcare and education eased the family’s fears and liberated Joyce to come to school.

Annabelle’s vision is of creating a sustainable model that can be replicated across the developing world. “We’ve taken a crawl-before-you-walk and walk-before-you-run approach to growth,” she says. “We’ve created manageable goals. It’s been organic growth, responsive to the needs of the community.”

Annabelle works gruelling hours that preclude a personal life, yet she radiates the kind of happiness that only comes from helping others. “The part I love most is being in Uganda and seeing lives changed,” she says. “It really is such a positive and beautiful place.”

# Outstanding Achievements of Young Alumni Award

## Eddie Woo

### BEd(Second)(Math)(Hons) '08

Described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as “arguably the country’s most famous maths teacher”, Eddie Woo is a self-made ambassador for mathematics. His YouTube channel, WooTube, has amassed more than 3 million views and he’s inspiring a generation of learners.

In 2012, motivated by a student who was too sick to attend class, Eddie began filming his lessons. While Eddie himself was in high school, his mother was diagnosed with cancer and its devastating impact meant he too struggled at school, giving him the strong sense of empathy with his students that underpins WooTube.

Eddie’s videos have attracted more than 35,000 subscribers, meaning he is now teaching thousands of students around the world every day.

The single-shot videos, first recorded on a smartphone and now on an iPad, aren’t revolutionary pieces of videography. It’s Eddie’s teaching

style that has impact. He explains complicated mathematical theories in a big-picture style that his students can understand.

One video starts with an explanation of the word ‘calculus’ – to calculate. It comes from the Latin for ‘small pebble’, the original counting tool and the basis of the abacus.

“Understanding mathematics offers a greater appreciation for what’s happening around you,” Eddie says.

“When you look at a rainbow across the sky, you see a semi-circle. Why is that? There’s a beautiful piece of geometry as to why it’s a semi-circle – well actually it’s a circle if you’re looking at it from the sky – when you understand the conspiracy of a million raindrops turning into a perfectly circular rainbow-coloured object that you couldn’t believe exists unless you’d seen it with your own eyes, that’s really special.”



Mathematics Education in NSW and the 2016 National Choose Maths Teacher Excellence Award, Eddie is also an active mentor beyond the classroom. Working with the University's Compass program, he supports students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low socio-economic communities to participate in higher education.

In 2015-16 he was elected to a position on the NSW Mathematical Association executive, allowing him to share his expertise both in curriculum and pedagogy. His dedication to his students and the practice of teaching is exceptional.

Eddie believes his studies at the University of Sydney have shaped his career, encouraging him to become part of a community of learners and equipping him with skills to approach his work in a thoughtful, critical and refined manner.

Through "passionate conversations" he learned not just what to think, but how. "Encountering people whose opinions and perspectives and values were different to mine, yet realising we're all in this education game together," he says.

Awarded the 2015 Premier's Prize for Innovation in Science and

"The future of Australia's education system would be far brighter if there was an Eddie in every high school," says Gary Johnson, Principal of Cherrybrook Technology High School in Sydney's north-west where Eddie is Head Teacher of Mathematics.

Eddie has three young children he describes as "his world". He is young, bright and capable, and his career could take him anywhere, but teaching holds his heart. "There's such an opportunity to help motivate young people for the rest of their lives," he says. "Students are waiting for someone to enter their story to add light and hope."

# The President's Award

## Dr Colin Mathers

**BSc '75 PhD '79**

Dr Colin Mathers was one of the first to know that a girl born in Korea in 2030 is likely to have an average life expectancy of more than 90 years.

A scientist to his core, Colin is not inclined to gaze into a crystal ball, so how did he know this? His forecasts are based on thorough analysis of comprehensive population health data collected by his team at the World Health Organization (WHO), looking at death rates and causes of death in more than 100 countries.

It's the first time life expectancy will crack the 90-year barrier, which is an astounding feat and a welcome surprise for many experts who never expected to see this happen.

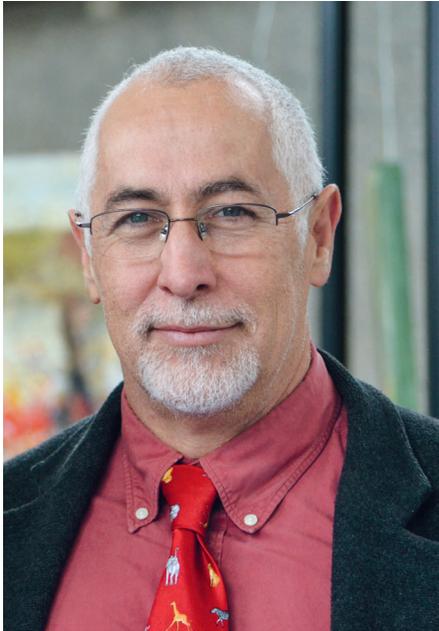
With his vision for improving health outcomes across the world, Colin has led WHO's work on global health statistics for more than 15 years as the Coordinator of its Mortality and Health Analysis Unit in Geneva.

He became interested in this work while studying for his doctorate in theoretical physics at the University of Sydney. It was the 1970s, and debate was raging over the impact of nuclear power on our health.

"On one occasion I shared a public platform with a junior opposition parliamentarian, Paul Keating, later to become Prime Minister of Australia," Colin says.

His first encounter with summary measures of health, which express large amounts of statistical information as simply as possible, came in 1989 when French demographer Jean-Marie Robine established the International Network on Health Expectancy, and Colin was asked to contribute.

"I had never heard of healthy life expectancy and I went to the library and randomly opened a volume of the *WHO Bulletin*," he says. "It



fell open at an article by Robine. Within a couple of hours, I had calculated healthy life expectancies for Australia from datasets I already had; the start of my involvement in international research in this area.”

Soon after starting his role at WHO in early 2000, Colin worked on the World Health Report, ranking various countries on the overall performance of their health systems. Its publication sparked huge media and political controversies, including the sacking of a high-ranking health minister.

“It was an intense, stressful and exciting period,” he says. “I worked 110 hours in the week before publication – not something I want to do often, but an unforgettable memory of mammoth effort to achieve a very influential outcome.”

Colin recalls a time when WHO member states, UNICEF, the World Bank and the United Nations Population Division published different statistics on child mortality.

“In part stimulated by a complaint from the UN Secretary General about this, I was instrumental in establishing an Interagency Group which now annually publishes child mortality statistics used by all four agencies,” he says. These statistics are now used by all UN agencies and recognised as the world standard.

Colin has played a key role in ensuring WHO’s ongoing leadership of the monitoring and reporting of global health progress – not an easy task given the limited data available in some parts of the world. This is part of his legacy, finding a way for agencies to work together and report as one voice, an achievement that is improving health outcomes for people around the world.

# Convocation Medal

For undergraduate achievement

First awarded in 1980, the Convocation Medal honours bachelor's degree graduates who have shown strong leadership and enriched the diverse life of the University of Sydney.

For more than three decades, the recipients have played an integral role in our continual quest to improve the academic and student experience that Sydney offers, transforming people, lives, outlooks and the community.

The term 'Convocation' is enshrined in the University's history and its founding Act of Parliament. Accordingly, Convocation is an important part of the University's fabric, and the medal reflects the considerable contributions of the recipient.

# Edmund Barton Medal

For master's by coursework achievement

The Edmund Barton Medal honours master's by coursework graduates who have achieved academic excellence and enriched the diverse life of the University and the broader community.

Sir Edmund Barton PC GCMG QC (MA 1870) was the first Prime Minister of Australia and founding Justice of the High Court of Australia.

His greatest contribution to Australia was arguably his management of the federation movement through the 1890s. Elected at the inaugural federal election in 1901, Sir Edmund resigned from the position of Prime Minister of Australia in 1903 and became a judge of Australia's High Court.



Sir Edmund Barton

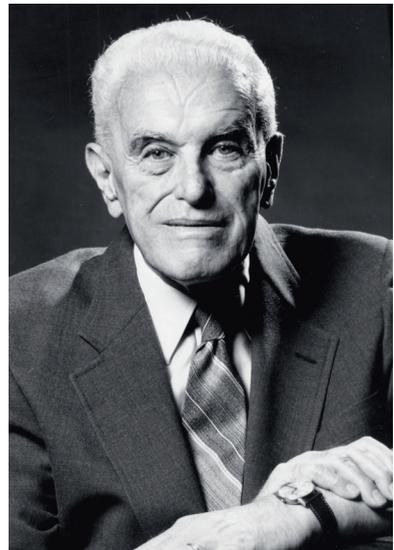
# John C Harsanyi Medal

For international student achievement

The John C Harsanyi Medal honours academic excellence and contribution to the diverse life of the University and the broader community by an international student.

John Charles Harsanyi (MA 1953, DScEc 1995) was a Hungarian-Australian-American economist who won the 1994 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics (with John Nash and Reinhard Selten). A survivor of the Nazi Holocaust and a refugee from Stalinist Hungary, he emigrated to Australia in 1950 and put himself through postgraduate evening classes at the University of Sydney to graduate with a Master of Arts in 1953.

John is best known for his contributions to the study of game theory, decision theory, utilitarian ethics and the philosophy of mathematics, and the practical application of these concepts to economics, sociology, political science, and political and moral philosophy.



John C Harsanyi

# Nigel C Barker Medal

For academic and sporting achievement

The Nigel C Barker Medal honours graduates who have achieved academic excellence and enriched the diverse life of the University and the broader community through sporting achievement.

Nigel Chase Barker (BE 1909) was an outstanding all-round athlete and sportsman. He represented the University and New South Wales on a number of occasions.

Nigel competed in the 1906 Intercalated/Interim Olympic Games in Athens where he was the most successful Australian, winning bronze medals in both the 100m and 400m races. Although the International Olympic Committee subsequently decided not to recognise the 1906 games in Athens as an official Summer Games, Nigel is arguably the University's first Olympian, Olympic medallist and world-record holder in athletics.



Nigel C Barker  
Image courtesy of the University of Sydney  
Archives, Ref: G3\_224\_1101

# Rita and John Cornforth Medal

## For PhD achievement

The Rita and John Cornforth Medal honours PhD graduates who have achieved academic excellence and enriched the diverse life of the University and the broader community.

Sir John Warcup 'Kappa' Cornforth AC CBE FRS (BSc 1938, MSc 1939, DSc 1977) and Lady Rita Cornforth (BSc 1937, MSc 1938) were among the most outstanding students of their respective years and had a profound influence on the study of penicillin during the war. John had been deaf since his teens, and Rita relayed speech to him by lip reading throughout their life together.

John won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry (with Vladimir Prelog) in 1975 for his work on the stereochemistry of enzyme catalysed reactions. John was knighted in 1977 and awarded the Corday Morgan Medal in 1953, the Royal Medal in 1976 and the Copley Medal in 1982.



Sir John and Lady Rita Cornforth at the University of Sydney in the 1930s

# Sister Alison Bush Medal

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander achievement

The Sister Alison Bush Medal honours academic excellence and contribution to the diverse life of the University and the broader community by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander graduate.



Sister Alison Bush  
Image courtesy of  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

Sister Alison Bush AO, RN CM FRACOG (Hon) FRCNA (Hon) FCN (NSW) (Hon), was descended from the Ngalakan clan of Ngukurr (Roper River), in the traditional language group of Garawa Borrooloola. She and her twin sister Jennifer were members of the Stolen Generation taken to Groote Eylandt.

An icon and pioneer, Sister Alison was the first Aboriginal midwife to work at a major maternity hospital in New South Wales, delivering more than 1000 babies during her 40 years of service at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. She spent the final decade of her life travelling to remote regions in her role as Aboriginal liaison midwife, bringing compassionate and culturally sensitive care to Aboriginal mothers and their babies.

# Graduate Medal finalists

## Mina Askovic

BHlthSc '16 BHlthSc (Hons) '17  
Finalist for Convocation Medal

Mina spent January of 2017 in rural India leading a team of eight students using social enterprise solutions to empower women. Throughout her undergraduate career, Mina has consistently balanced outstanding academic achievement with a commitment to social engagement.

Mina maintained a high distinction average, ranking in the top three for four of her courses. She has received many commendations and awards.

Mina co-founded the Illicit Project, which uses peer-led, neuroscience-based and technologically driven modules to create informed debate about youth drug use. Supported by a \$10,000 grant from Macquarie Bank, the program also won a \$5000 M H Carnegie Social Business Award.

In 2017, Mina received a scholarship from the University of Sydney Business School where she will focus on the benefits of corporate volunteering. "My achievements were made possible by the incredible network of University of Sydney people who have supported, challenged and inspired me," she says.

**Greatest lesson:** "Stay committed to your passions but be flexible in your approach. Not everything is meant to go the way you imagined."

## Jack Blair

BSc '17  
Finalist for Nigel C Barker Medal

Jack has always been fascinated with how things work, leading him to study chemistry; and his love of problem solving and technology led him to study computer science. Emphasising the importance of balancing sport and study to maximise achievement, he has also achieved extensively in rugby.

Jack mentors several Aboriginal students through the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience. He is also a volunteer tutor for aspiring rugby players who are struggling with university. Through Jack's mentorship, some of his teammates have passed exams and achieved academic goals.

"The University has provided me an incredible opportunity and environment in which to learn and grow both in and out of the classroom," Jack says.

"The University challenged me to learn in complex fields and helped me develop time management skills to facilitate all aspects of my life. I have been exposed to new and diverse people and situations that have led to incredible opportunities."

**Greatest lesson:** "Believing in my own ability to achieve through consistent effort can have incredible, unforeseen results."

## Sarah Bradbury

BA(Media&Comm) '14 LLB(Hons) '16  
Finalist for Convocation Medal

Sarah's proudest moment came when, along with four fellow law students, she won the 2015 Jessup International Law Mooting Competition in Washington DC. More than 150 teams from 90 countries participated, and Sarah was named the best advocate in the competition overall.

Sarah has been awarded the Andrew M Clayton Memorial Prize for Law. She is also a distinguished athlete and a respected member of the St Andrews College community.

Sarah volunteered at the Refugee Advice Casework Service, helping families to apply for community detention (as opposed to offshore processing) and permanent protection visas. Her article on recent changes to the Migration Act was published by *The Immigration Review*.

"I credit much of my success to the unfailing support of my lecturers, who always challenged me, supported me and encouraged me to pursue opportunities," Sarah says.

**Greatest lesson:** "While it is good to take inspiration from peers and mentors, your journey is unique to you. And if you know where you want to go or what you want to do, you can almost always find a way to get there."

## Clare Britton

MSA '16  
Finalist for Edmund Barton Medal

Clare's distinctive art projects find beauty at the intersection of the tangible and the intangible, combining physical artefacts with meditations on memory and landscapes, all buoyed by a strong mastery of technical skills.

Clare received her master's degree in 2016, culminating in the exhibition of her first visual art project that was inspired by her daily walks along Sydney's Cook River in Marrickville.

Clare received the 2014 Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship. As co-founder of My Darling Patricia, a dynamic art and performance collective, she received a range of awards and nominations, including a Melbourne Fringe Award for Best Production and Best Design, 2006.

"Studying at Sydney College of the Arts has stretched my range, honed my critical thinking and developed my practice," she says. "I've been able to do this with the support of studio space and workshop facilities, with the supervision of leaders in my field."

**Greatest lesson:** "I've learned the importance of balancing my present activities with forward planning and reflection. This has unlocked new areas of interest and ways of working that I will explore for years to come."

# Graduate Medal finalists

## Dane Drivas

BA '15 MTeach '17

Finalist for Edmund Barton Medal

After completing a Bachelor of Arts in Latin and Ancient History, Dane decided to put his passion for the classics to use in the classroom.

Completing his Master of Teaching at the University, he was offered a position at Sydney Boys High School, where he has revitalised the Latin and Ancient Greek program, introducing a new generation of students to the pleasures of a classical education.

Dane's original and thoughtful style saw him win first prize in the Australasian Society for Classical Studies' Latin unseen translation competition in 2013 and 2014, making him the only person to win this category in consecutive years.

"Having such caring, passionate and knowledgeable teachers opened my eyes to the power a good teacher can have on the development and upbringing of young people," Dane says. "I decided to pursue teaching, so I could one day have the same inspiring influence on my students."

**Greatest lesson:** "By keeping an open-mind and being willing to take on new experiences and challenges, I have noticed a stark difference between the boy I was when I entered university, and the person I am today."

## Dr Kerryn Drysdale

BA(Hons) '03 MA '09 PhD'16

Finalist for Rita and John Cornforth Medal

Kerryn's PhD, an ethnographic project on Sydney's drag king culture, was swiftly awarded after receiving three highly congratulatory reports from international examiners noting the quality of her writing, calibre of analysis, and contribution of her research to international scholarship.

During her candidature, Kerryn published journal articles and book chapters, and she is working on her first monograph. A decorated researcher in LGBTIQ social phenomena, Kerryn receives invitations to speak at conferences both here and overseas.

Kerryn has contributed to programs promoting employability within the humanities and social sciences. Driven by an ethic of inclusion, she has worked tirelessly to generate opportunities for differently abled and diversely identified people.

"Three degrees from the University of Sydney have given me an invaluable outlook," she says. "I am privileged to have been mentored by some of the greatest minds in this field."

**Greatest lesson:** "To take pleasure in everyday life, as seemingly insignificant or ephemeral phenomena often constitute the most fascinating and resilient parts of our worlds."

## Dr Ines Duran Matute

PhD '16

Finalist for Rita and John Cornforth Medal

With a mission to end inequality and achieve social justice, Ines completed her PhD in Spanish and Latin American studies, working with an indigenous community engaged in defence of their land and identity in her home country of Mexico.

She notes the gratitude and approval she received when presenting the results of her research to the community she worked within as among her greatest achievements.

The winner of many accolades and scholarships, Ines is a highly regarded and well-published researcher who has played a pivotal role in organising Spanish and Latin American studies events at the University. She designed a new online unit of study and has taught several subjects within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

“The University of Sydney not only gave me the opportunity to study and earn my degree, it also gave me powerful tools and a new perspective to see and understand the world,” she says. “It gave me the chance to be inspired by others, propelling my passion to construct another world.”

**Greatest lesson:** “By ourselves we cannot transform the world, but we can do it collectively.”

## Janelle Evans

BVA(Hons) '13 MFA '16

Finalist for Sister Alison Bush Medal

Janelle is having an impressive postgraduate career forging her identity as an advocate for storytelling and the benefits of higher education. The first in her family to complete a university degree, Janelle is also making an impact as an artist and filmmaker.

Having conducted workshops in schools and communities, Janelle is most proud of facilitating the production of more than 300 short film scripts and 25 short films as part of a program with Aboriginal middle school students in 21 remote communities. Her tutorship improved student retention and performance.

Working with at-risk students within the social justice program, Janelle has taught communication skills through film and storytelling. As a result, a number of students have gone on to complete the HSC, undertake law degrees, and become Aboriginal youth ambassadors at the United Nations.

“The University has recognised my leadership potential and encouraged my development,” Janelle says.

**Greatest lesson:** “To believe in myself, to develop a greater self-awareness and confidence in my own potential and to never give up.”

# Graduate Medal finalists

## Dr Luciano (Luke) Hespanhol

MIDEA '13 PhD'16

Finalist for Rita and John Cornforth Medal

Luke balances the technical and the creative. His work investigates new strategies for encouraging social interactions by blending digital technology with urban architecture.

He is a visual artist, an interaction designer and a software developer, transforming spaces through novel forms of interaction.

While completing a Master of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts in 2013, Luke led a Vivid Sydney light-installation project, designing a public space in Circular Quay that translated pedestrian movements into real-time light patterns.

Along with Vivid Sydney, he has contributed to Harvest Festival and Sydney Fringe, and he has received many awards and accolades.

Among Luke's proudest achievements is transitioning careers from IT consultant to designer, artist, educator, lecturer and researcher.

**Greatest lesson:** "Show up and never throw any aspect of your research away: observations that may initially appear unimportant become relevant once looked at from a distance, from the perspective of the broader body of knowledge developed over time."

## Yi Yun Low

BSc '17

Finalist for John C Harsanyi Medal

An exceptionally gifted scientist, Yi Yun's family circumstances meant she may never have seen the inside of a university. She attained a full scholarship from the Malaysian government, allowing her to realise her dream of teaching science.

Yi Yun has excelled in her studies, receiving 10 high distinctions in her first year with an average mark of 91.4.

Sharing her passion for science, love of community and interest in multiculturalism, Yi Yun is an active volunteer and mentor. She has worked as a primary and secondary teacher in Malaysia, volunteered with an Aboriginal community and tutored first-year students at the University.

"Physics is exciting and fascinating, and having a passion for both research and teaching, physics was the perfect degree for me," Yi Yun says. "The opportunity of research has trained me to be a problem solver, developed my analytical skills and, more importantly, given me the curiosity to discover more."

**Greatest lesson:** "I learnt to not resist change, but embrace it and regard it as a new adventure to learn new things, and be challenged to be better."

## Rhys Michie

MHR '17

Finalist for Edmund Barton Medal

Rhys has had an impressive postgraduate career while carrying out research for his Master of Human Rights.

Beyond the classroom, he has engaged with the NSW Parliament, informing and progressing law reform to overhaul the legal and social ramifications of sexting and revenge porn. This reform will leave a lasting legacy for future generations, and he is now continuing this work in Canberra.

During his studies, Rhys demonstrated leadership qualities, taking on a mentorship role in his class of culturally and linguistically diverse students. He generously provided advice to students and volunteered an information session on the process of writing submissions to government in Australia.

“I’ve been deeply inspired by the people I’ve encountered at the University,” Rhys says. “They’ve encouraged me to challenge myself and develop new means of applying my research in advocating for change in our society.

**Greatest lesson:** “Inspiration is a priceless gift that costs nothing to give.”

## Nur Nazurah Mohd Nasir

MPE '17

Finalist for John C Harsanyi Medal

Nur is the first in her family to go to university. Growing up in a military family, she adjusted to a new home every few years, attending more than five schools. This instability cemented within Nur a determination that has seen her excel both academically and in sport, and she has received many awards and accolades for both.

Graduating with a Master of Professional Engineering (Power), Nur is focused on making renewable energy more predictable so it can replace fossil fuels and cut the cost of clean power.

Nur competed in the 2015 Australian University Games, winning gold in fencing for the University. “From this experience I learned the true meaning of victory that is shared with the team and how to put trust in others in achieving a common goal,” she says.

“The University of Sydney has helped me to reach my full potential,” Nur says. “My involvement in clubs and societies together with volunteering activities has taught me the value of improving my soft skills, which are valuable for my career and life.”

**Greatest lesson:** “Our attitude to life will determine life’s attitude toward us. Positivity is the key to success.”

# Graduate Medal finalists

## Samuel Murray

BA '14 LLB(Hons) '16

Finalist for Convocation Medal

Samuel was one of the top five students in his graduating class, receiving first class honours for his thesis on constitutional law that was subsequently accepted for publication in the *Monash Law Review*.

Along with winning several academic merit prizes, Samuel achieved the maximum grade point average of 4.0 while attending the University of Pennsylvania on a partial scholarship in 2013. He was also a member of Sydney's team that won the 2015 Jessup International Law Mooting Competition in Washington DC.

Samuel is passionate about promoting the law to prospective students, and his 'Day in the life of a criminal lawyer' program received two prestigious awards. He is currently a law graduate at Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

"The University of Sydney has taught me the value of an inquisitive mind and introduced me to truly wonderful people who push me to work harder and be better in unexpected and brilliant ways," Samuel says.

**Greatest lesson:** "As important as it is to do the right things in life, it is equally as important to do those things the right way."

## Nate Phumitharanon

BA(Hons) '17

Finalist for John C Harsanyi Medal

Nate defines his life goal as helping those in need. As a team leader of the Australian–Thai Ambassadors Program, he has taught English to more than 1000 students in northeast Thailand. While President (Acting) and Vice-President of the University of Sydney's Thai Students' Association, Nate helped to raised more than \$10,000 for children in Thailand.

Nate served as an International Student Ambassador for the City of Sydney in 2013–2014. He volunteered more than 100 hours helping international students settle into new surroundings, contributing to public events, and project managing the Sydney Chinese New Year Parade.

Attaining first-class honours, Nate focused on 'employee silence', designing a survey of 500 people in Thailand supplemented by more than 40 interviews. He won second place when he presented his findings in the Three Minute Thesis competition.

**Greatest lesson:** "There are bright sides to undesirable events. My parents' divorce motivated me to work harder, become more independent, and take better care of my mother. Rejection has taught me to never give up."

## Tian Qin

BA '14 MCom '16

Finalist for John C Harsanyi Medal

Tian has made it her mission to contribute to the diverse life of the international student community. She knows the difficulty of settling into an unknown environment, so she has dedicated herself to easing the isolation, stress and language barriers for international students.

“To engage the broader international communities in Sydney and bridge them with local society, I joined the City of Sydney’s International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program,” Tian says. “I volunteered more than 250 hours for various community projects and organised networking events and employability seminars.”

This experience gave Tian invaluable insights for a research report and proposal for engaging the international student alumni community.

Tian graduated with a Master of Commerce. “Social business is powerful in making a positive impact on our society, especially in third-world countries,” Tian says. “So I chose to study commerce to obtain business knowledge and inspiration.”

**Greatest lesson:** “Dare to dream. Think big about yourself, seek opportunities and take actions.”

## Philippa Specker

BPsych(Hons) '17

Finalist for Convocation Medal

A member of the Faculty of Science’s Talented Student Program (requiring a high-distinction average), Philippa’s research focused on the psychological impact of sexism and how this relates to gender inequality more broadly.

Throughout her academic career, Philippa was elected to a range of extracurricular positions, including a two-year term on the Science Faculty Board in 2015 and an appointment to the University’s Academic Board in 2016.

Demonstrating community spirit, Philippa served as a welfare officer on the Students’ Representative Council. She is a tireless advocate for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees, and the LGBTIQ community. She was awarded the Helen Beh Citizenship award in 2015, and achieved first class honours the following year.

“The University gave me membership to a diverse community of people who fostered my academic and personal growth,” Philippa says. “And University-run outreach programs provided me with avenues to meaningfully contribute to the wider community.”

**Greatest lesson:** “Time spent pursuing your passion is never time wasted.”

# Graduate Medal finalists

## Dr Lukasz Swiatek

BA(Media&Comm)(Hons) '11 PhD '16  
Finalist for Rita and John Cornforth Medal

Lukasz's research was inspired by a scholarly article discussing a worrying research finding: awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize often causes conflict and backlash, especially when the recipient comes from a country ruled by an authoritarian regime. This prompted Lukasz to examine the Nobel's media and communications in an effort to help us understand this phenomenon better.

An avid mentor and thought-leader, Lukasz has had three journal articles, four book chapters and three academic book reviews published, with more due in 2017.

He has presented 12 conference and symposium papers arising from his work, given guest lectures and shared his insights in local and national media. As an undergraduate student, he volunteered as the chief copy editor for *The Sydney Globalist* magazine, co-edited the University of Sydney Union's magazine, *The Bull*, and the literary journal *Hermes*.

**Greatest lesson:** "I've learnt so many different lessons through my time at the University. I'm so grateful for the rich array of life lessons that I've received from all of my incredible mentors."

## Kane Townsend

BSc (Hons) '17  
Finalist for Nigel C Barker Medal

Kane's uncompromising focus has seen him excel in both studies and sport.

He is currently the number three male table tennis player in Australia and he considers competing in the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games as one of his greatest accomplishments. He won the 2013 national under 21 table tennis men's singles championship and the 2016 national men's singles open championship.

Keen to share his enthusiasm for table tennis with the wider community, Kane has served as both captain and vice-president of the University's Table Tennis Club. He is an active participant in the Bennelong Cup, a friendly match between teams from Australia, China, Japan, Korea and more.

Kane is grateful for the support he has received from the University. "Staff from the School of Mathematics and Statistics were always accommodating with assessment dates or providing assistance when I was absent due to sporting commitments," Kane says. "They also taught the material in a positive and clear way, happy to expand on concepts when the class had difficulties."

**Greatest lesson:** "Keep yourself busy."

## Geoffrey Winters

BA(Hons) '11 LLB '16

Finalist for Sister Alison Bush Medal

Geoffrey is passionate about social justice. Graduating with a Bachelor of Laws in 2016, he continued working with Sydney firm Chalk & Behrendt where he is now a director specialising in Aboriginal land rights, native title and economic development.

As president of the Sydney University Law Society, Geoffrey organised the highly successful Social Inclusion Road Trips: 40 law students travelled to country NSW to talk with students about their options after high school. Several have since applied and been admitted to university as a result.

“I was inspired to study arts/law due to the extraordinary impact graduates have had on social cohesion, progress and justice,” Geoffrey says. “It has sharpened my world view and equipped me to make a positive and lasting contribution to the community.”

At 26, Geoffrey became the youngest ever council member for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and, in 2016, ran as the Liberal Party candidate in the seat of Sydney.

**Greatest lesson:** “To be patient. Perhaps the toughest lesson of all, but the most important if we are to achieve real and lasting change.”

## Yiu Cheryl Wong

BE(Hons) '16 BSc(Adv)(Hons) '16

Finalist for Convocation Medal

Cheryl unites high achievement in both the arts and sciences. A classically trained oboist and pianist, she performed as part of the Auckland Youth Orchestra before commencing her distinguished academic career at the University of Sydney. She was also part of New Zealand Symphony Orchestra's Mentoring Program.

Cheryl's novel approaches to challenges in chemical engineering helped her win a range of awards. She graduated with first class honours in two programs, appearing twice on the Dean's List of Excellence in Academic Performance.

A proud moment for Cheryl came in 2015 when she published a paper in the prestigious *Journal of Solid State Chemistry* and presented her findings at the Asia-Oceania Conference on Neutron Scattering.

“At school, I enjoyed maths and science, but they told me I wouldn't succeed in such a male-dominated field. This just motivated me to study it even more and prove them wrong.”

**Greatest lesson:** “Nothing in life ever goes as planned. The majority of my successes have been a result of leveraging unexpected opportunities and a string of happy coincidences.”



# Nominations for 2018 Alumni Awards

Help us acknowledge the outstanding achievements of our graduates by nominating them for a 2018 Alumni Award.

– [sydney.edu.au/alumni/awards](http://sydney.edu.au/alumni/awards)

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