Head of School of Physics Newsletter - August 2011

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Acting Head of School

During my absence, Prof Martijn de Sterke will be Acting Head of School from 5 – 23 September 2011.

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John Hooke $5M Gift

I am very pleased to be able to inform you all of the extremely generous gift of $5M by School of Physics alumnus, Mr John Hooke to establish a Chair of Nanosciences in the School.

John originally graduated from the University of Sydney with the degree of Bachelor of Science majoring in Physics, followed by a Bachelor of Engineering with First Class Honours and University Medal. After university he joined Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Ltd where he was involved in the production of the first transistors. He rose through the company to became Chairman and Chief Executive of AWA from 1974-1988.

John’s passion for science and new discoveries mirrors that of his father, Sir Lionel Hooke. As a young man Lionel Hooke was attracted to experimental wireless and aged 19, as an employee of AWA he was selected to join Sir Ernest Shackleton’s expedition to the South Pole. It was Sir Lionel’s morse code messages which eventually saved the expedition after they were trapped in pack ice for months. Sir Lionel went on to run AWA until 1974 during which time the company expanded and was responsible for Australia’s first radio, television and optical fibres.

John took over as Chairman and CEO of AWA on his father’s death. He was heavily involved in manufacturing policy issues for many years, served on several government committees and was Chairman of the Defence Industry Committee. He was also was Chairman of Tubemakers of Australia and a director of a number of companies, including BHP, National Australia Bank, AMP General Insurance, Channel Ten, Crane Group, and Interscan Australia. John was a member of the Williams Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training and is currently Chairman of Universal Solar and Surface Science Pty Ltd.

He has for many years been a council member of the Science Foundation for Physics and is a past deputy president of the Foundation.

The person appointed to the Chair of Nanosciences will take a significant role in shaping the future of the Australian Institute of Nanoscience. This is a very exciting development for the School and the University as we explore new frontiers in the field of nanoscience.

Further details regarding John’s generous gift may be found at http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newscategoryid=2&newsstoryid=7651

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AIN-Physics Building

We have just completed 2 weeks of extensive meetings with the principal design consultants / architects for the new building, the international consortium of architects, coordinated by Architectus (Sydney), in conjunction with Jestico +Whiles (UK) and a specialist lab design team from the US and
UK practices of CH2M Hill. We were also joined by our Harvard/Boston consultants to the University, Prof Charlie Marcus and Mr Mark Reed.

I would like to thank all who were involved in the many meetings in what was a heroic effort by all staff involved. All showed exceptional commitment whilst engaged in normal teaching and research duties.

The next stages of the design process will be as follows:

1. The design team will issue a Reverse Design Brief to the University which in essence starts with the previous DEGW Detailed Design Brief plus any modifications advised to them, augmented by their understanding of user needs based on the information gathered over the recent two weeks of meetings. We will then have several weeks to review the Reverse Design Brief. Concurrently, the cost planner will use this information to further refine the cost plan. The review period is long enough to enable all user groups to comment on the Reverse Design Brief, along with Marcus and Reed, with comments collated by the Project User Group and approved as appropriate by the Project Control Group.

2. In the week commencing October 10 the principal design consultant team will re-assemble in Sydney to discuss a number of options for the building design based on the signed-off Reverse Design Brief. One design option will be agreed and approved and form the basis of the subsequent concept design. Our consultants Marcus and Reed will be present for this review process.

3. The concept design will be developed and presented to the University Buildings and Estates Committee in early November.

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Open Day

I would like to thank the following staff and students for their hard work and effort that they put into representing the school of Physics as volunteers at the recent University of Sydney Open Day. The day was a great success as seen by the number of people both asking questions and getting involved in the hands on demonstrations.

Staff:

Tim Bedding
John O'Byrne
Iver Cairns
Lisa Fogarty
Pulin Gong
Dick Hunstead
Joe Khachan
Ross McPhedran
Kevin Varvell
Mike Wheatland

Students:

Deepak Basula
Jason Cheng
Prajwal Kafle
Alice Poppleton
Daniel Poppleton
The only ‘low-light’ of the day was the very low light, and the sun was hiding for most of the day, so the Solar viewing telescope was out of action. But that gave the team a chance to explain optics and astronomy by looking at the beautiful Sydney skyline which as always is great viewing. A particular highlight for our new Science Communicator, Tom Gordon was being introduced to a visitor who had brought his son to ask some questions and who previously worked at NASA writing the assembly instructions for the Hubble Space Telescope.

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Planning Day

All academic and general staff are reminded of the forthcoming School Planning Day and are encouraged to attend on 29 September. All staff are asked to let Elizabeth Starkey know if they will be attending by sending an email to the new Physics Administration email address: physics.admin@sydney.edu.au

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Postgraduate Interviews

We are approaching the time of year when research students have their annual progress review interview. Academic staff will be contacted in the near future by Student Services indicating when they will be required to attend to be part of the interview process of our postgraduate research students. Staff are reminded of the School policy regarding this process at http://www.physics.usyd.edu.au/restricted_docs/local/Guidelines_for_supervisors.pdf

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Summer Vacation Scholarships

As in previous years, the School will be offering a number of summer vacation scholarships over the forthcoming summer period. Further details will be circulated in the near future.

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2010 Annual Report

Dr Chris Stewart is working on the draft School Annual Report for 2010. Academic staff will be asked to provide information in due course regarding their research activities. Please assist Chris in providing information if requested by him.

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Go8 University European Fellowships – call for applications

The Group of Eight (Go8) Fellowships are open to early career researchers from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Croatia and for the first time Russia. Each fellow will receive benefits worth up to $20,000 to travel to Australia in 2012 and work at a Go8 university for up to six months. Applications close on 21 October 2011.
The Warren Lecture and Prize

The Warren Lecture and Prize has been established this year by the Royal Society of New South Wales (with support from the Warren Centre of Advanced Engineering at the University of Sydney and Engineers Australia (Sydney Division)) to acknowledge Professor Warren’s contribution both to the Society and to the technological disciplines in Australia and internationally. William Henry Warren established the first faculty of engineering in NSW and was appointed as its Professor at the University of Sydney in 1884. Professor Warren was President of the Royal Society of New South Wales on two occasions. He had a long career of more than 40 years and during this time was considered to be the most eminent engineer in Australia. When the Institution of Engineers, Australia was established in 1919, Professor Warren was elected as its first President. He established an internationally respected reputation for the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Sydney and published extensively, with many of his papers being published in the Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales. The aim of the award is to recognise research of national or international significance by engineers and technologists in their first two decades or so of professional practice. The research must have originated in or have been carried out principally in New South Wales. The prize is $1,000 for the winner and a prize of $500 for each of two runners-up. Entries are by submission of an original paper written to academic standards. The paper should review the research done and identify its national or international significance. Entries that demonstrate relevance across the spectrum of knowledge – science, art, literature and philosophy – that the Society promotes will be considered favourably. An interview may be required. The paper may refer to previously published research but must not violate copyright of previous publications. The winning paper and a selection of other entries submitted will be peer-reviewed and are expected to be published in the Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales. Depending on the number of acceptable entries, there may be a special edition of the Journal and Proceedings that would be intended to showcase research by early and mid-career Australian researchers. A judging panel appointed by the Royal Society of New South Wales and the Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering will determine the winners and runners-up. The RSNSW Warren Lecture will be held during March each year and the winner and two runners-up will be invited to read their papers and will be presented with their awards.


Entries close on Monday 31 October 2011.

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PROF CLIVE BALDOCK
Head of School | School of Physics | Faculty of Science