

SUGUNA 3 – 5 August 2006

*Recent Developments at the University of Sydney,
particularly international*

For so many of us at SUGUNA this is a journey which had its beginnings in the flowering of our youthful hopes and aspirations at Sydney University.

Jill Ker-Conway, a not so accidental immigrant to the United States and, as you know, one of our most distinguished alumni, captured that sense of return in the words she spoke when receiving her Honorary Doctorate, “*That graduation ceremony was a heart-warming occasion for me, closing a circle left open by 46 years as an expatriate. It was important for me to remember my graduating self in 1957 in the setting [The Great Hall] where we wrote our exams on hot December days, and I thank you for the occasion to encounter myself there once again*”. For her, the Road from Coorain had come full circle.

Let me reassure you that none of us are captives of an idealised retrospective vision of Sydney University – certainly not the Vice-Chancellor nor I. As alumni we deeply valued what we were so ably taught because it fitted us for an outward journey – to North America for you, that most competitive of arenas. Sydney University is engaged in a parallel journey to an international world by no means secure. It is by it that we seek to measure ourselves, collaborating with the very best universities both here in the United States, in Europe and in the Asian Pacific Region. That our Vice-Chancellor has been elected President of APRU (Asian Pacific Rim Universities) is recognition both of the high esteem with which Professor Gavin Brown is held, and also our University.

Because Gavin Brown and John Hearn have given us such a high level conspectus of the University as a whole I can be more specific; to celebrate some of the significant recent developments both here in the United States and in the United Kingdom, where we visited earlier.

Just two days ago in Washington as a result of an initiative of one of our alumni, Matt Hall, currently a chemistry post-doctoral student at the National Institute of Health, Sydney University joined Oxford and Carolinska in Sweden as the unique recipients of the shared NIH PhD program in the medical sciences. NIH and ourselves will send each other outstanding young medical researchers from each institution. Ours will enlist in a PhD program with NIH, studying at both institutions but receive a PhD from Sydney. We will receive a similar number from NIH. What a wonderful demonstration of the enormous potential value of our SUGUNA network.

However, the international dimension of this initiative will be matched with a direct arrangement with Oxford itself. Three weeks ago the Vice-Chancellor and I met Oxford’s Regius Professor of Medicine, John Bell. Already our existing research collaborations are so extensive that it made sense to build on them through the NIH-Oxford model. We will do so by student internships, leading to a PhD in medical sciences shared between Sydney and Oxford. May I pay a special tribute to Diane Brown, here with Gavin. She in her role as Executive Manager – International and Development in Health, saw the opportunity with NIH making sure that the Vice-Chancellor brought it to fruition.

This followed close on the heels of Oxford and Cambridge now agreeing to Law Faculty exchanges and the placement of our top students in the others post-graduate law programs. Money has already been raised for two post-graduate scholarships with some in memory of the late Peter Cameron, distinguished Chair of our Law Advisory Committee and sadly missed. And there is more to come.

I have spoken at previous SUGUNA meetings of an initiative that began three years ago with Columbia University; one which linked us to all the major ivy league universities, with the exception of Harvard. Kofi Anan, the UN Secretary-General, set up through Columbia the Global President's Forum. It meets annually under his auspices. That forum has from its inception included Sydney University as the only Australian participant. Our Vice-Chancellor earlier this year was the rapporteur for the important forum discussion with Kofi Anan on the "Role of the Modern Research University in Contributing to Society". Central to that is Jim Wolfensohn's concern for world poverty, alongside water resources, clean energy and the environment. Indeed it is in that very sphere that we hope our recent visit to the United States may yield perhaps the most exciting initiative of all. If it fructifies, it will I know be of enormous interest to you all at SUGUNA, and our whole University community.

Unless you think I am being unkind to Harvard I should mention, as the result of on-the-ground collaboration between our Law Faculty and Harvard's (through our Dean Professor Ron McCallum and Associate Professor Mary Crock), that Harvard has come to us and proposed a Law Faculty exchange. It will allow two top Harvard students and two of Sydney University's best to spend a semester at the other's campus. The seeds for that were sown three years ago when I was a visiting scholar at Harvard, but the catalysts were Ron and Mary's subsequent visits, followed by Associate Professor Helen Irving who made an enormous impression in her year there.

Harvard Law has been long preceded by similar arrangements with Cornell, Columbia, NYU and Berkeley.

Finally, may the Vice-Chancellor and I and our Provost Don Nutbeam, enlist your help. It is to support our bid for the recently announced US Studies Centre. Prime Minister Howard has promised funding of \$25 million to be matched by the American Australian Association. Our credibility in pursuing this initiative has been enhanced by Michael Hintze's generous endowment for a Centre for International Security Studies headed by Professor Alan Dupont, late of the Lowy Institute. Alan is already in discussion with East Timor to enhance his long-standing consulting role to the East Timorese Government. International security is as you know a vital element in our alliance with the United States. If, in our bid, we can count on the support of the largest and most significant Australian alumni group in the United States, that cannot but help our cause.

With the Lowy Institute itself we have closing links. They have led to our jointly hosting Martin Indyk, of the Brookings Institution, in an important address in Sydney later this month on the Middle East.

Let me close by pointing to the linkage between our Graduate School of Government, and Alan Dupont's interests in the governance aspects of international development and his other interest, the geopolitical effects of climate change. The new head of our Graduate School of Government is the former Premier of Western Australia, Geoff Gallop, a distinguished Rhodes Scholar and Oxford academic. You can see how the infusion of such talent as these two will itself generate an international dimension to the University of Sydney that will add lustre to the University from which you are all its graduates.

G F K Santow
Chancellor
4 August 2006