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WELCOME

The ANU Integration Network meeting on the 28th of August generated many ideas for strategies to encourage and improve cross-disciplinary research at ANU. Please see Part 1 of our 3-part report on this meeting below under News & Events.

We invite you to join us for the next meeting of the ANU Integration Network on Thursday, 6 November 2008. This meeting is being organised by the Student Group of the ANU Integration Network and will involve a panel of successful cross-disciplinary researchers who will give an overview of their experiences. Cash bar and refreshments will be available. We hope you can join us.

Gabriele Bammer and Caryn Anderson

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NEWS & EVENTS

Cross-Disciplinary Undergraduate Group Projects

Discipline-based undergraduate project courses generally fail to develop our students' appreciation for the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration when working to solve complex real-world problems. In coming weeks, Shayne Flint and colleagues will hold a short workshop for academic staff to explore the possibility of trialling a cross-college undergraduate group project course which aims to give students practical experience working on cross-disciplinary teams. They are particularly keen to meet with staff interested in helping design and teach such a course, as well as staff who teach courses which have natural intersections with this proposal.

The idea of the course is to form groups of later year undergraduate students from a number of different disciplines such as engineering, science, commerce, law, social sciences and the arts. Each group would be expected to draw on their diverse expertise to identify, implement and evaluate an improvement within a nominated dynamically complex problem situation. The aim is to work on real world problems, such as, for example, making the ANU a sustainable campus, which would require the application of a variety of tools and methods in technical, scientific, economic, legal and social dimensions, both for understanding the problem and developing proposed interventions. A coursework component would introduce students to current cross-disciplinary thinking.

If you are interested in participating in the proposed workshop, please contact Shayne Flint (shayne.flint@anu.edu.au), Senior Lecturer in the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

REPORT: Suggestions for Improving Research Integration at ANU (Part 1 of a 3-part report on the 28 August 2008 ANU Integration Network Meeting with presenter Professor Stephen Dovers of the Fenner School of Environment and Society)

On the 28th of August 2008, the ANU Integration Network met for a conversation about strategies to encourage and improve cross-disciplinary research at ANU. The conversation was led by Steve Dovers, who provided suggestions in three areas: Incentives, Skills & Guidance, and Teaching and Learning. The participants engaged in discussion on these issues and contributed further suggestions. Over the next three issues of the ANU Integration News we will highlight the strategies discussed. The following ideas were proposed in the area of Incentives:

- A university prize for the best interdisciplinary PhD (or MPhil) thesis each year
- A mechanism for allocating funds for cross-area PhD supervision, equivalent to RO-AC4 (Agreement for Income Shared between Two or More ANU Budget Units)
- Seed funding for innovative projects
- Clarity in performance management process which provides a mandate for such work, rather than seeing it as an optional extra
- Within Academic Organisational Units, encourage senior staff with continuing appointments to lead by example, recognizing that early career academics should not bear all the risks
- Raising the profile by hosting a conference on interdisciplinary research and development to produce a (hand)book for researchers, managers and PhD scholars

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Readers interested in actively pursuing any of these ideas are encouraged to contact Caryn Anderson at caryn.anderson@anu.edu.au. In the next issue we will cover suggestions in the area of Teaching and Learning (the Cross-Disciplinary Undergraduate Group Projects described above is an example).

Thursday, 6 November 2008, 4-5.30p, ANU Integration Network Meeting: Integration in Action – A Discussion Panel and Case Studies (organized by the ANU Integration Network Student Group)

The next meeting of the Integration Network will involve a panel of successful cross-disciplinary researchers who will give an overview of their experiences in the context of the Integration and Implementation Sciences framework. Specifically, they will describe and analyse their experiences by answering these 6 questions:

1. What is/was the integration aiming to achieve and who is intended to benefit?
2. What is/was being integrated?
3. Who is/was doing the integration?
4. How is/was the integration being undertaken?
5. What is/was the context for the integration?
6. What is/was the outcome of the integration?

Details to be announced. *This event is partially supported by a grant from the Higher Degree by Research Innovation Fund of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University.*

REPORT: Monday-Tuesday, 8-9 September 2008, Introduction to Research Integration for Knowledge and Action: A Short Course for Graduate Students

On the 8th and 9th of September, thirty ANU graduate students pursuing cross-disciplinary research participated in a short course designed to introduce them to concepts and methods that could assist them with integrating research from different disciplines and stakeholder/practice groups. Participants included students from all but one of the ANU Colleges, representing a range of disciplinary areas (including anthropology, art, biophysics, computer science, economics, engineering, environment, genetics, management, medicine, mental health, physics) and perspectives from beyond Australia including Argentina, Colombia, Germany, India, Papua New Guinea and the United States.

Students reported gaining value from the course in a variety of ways. Most commonly they identified learnings from the 6-question research integration framework, discussions on boundary-setting, and the expansion of their views on ignorance and uncertainty. Quite a few mentioned that they found it useful to be able to meet other students who are also engaged with cross-disciplinary research challenges. Many students expressed interest in pursuing subjects in further detail in courses or modules. A summary of the participant evaluations of the course will be posted on the Courses page of the Integration and Implementation Sciences website (www.anu.edu.au/iisn) shortly.

This event was partially supported by a grant from the Higher Degree by Research Innovation Fund of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University.

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Upcoming Conference Reminders

- 30 September – 1 October 2008, 3rd Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Chapter of the Society for Risk Analysis, Canberra, Australia (<http://www.acera.unimelb.edu.au/sra/news.html>)
- 23-26 October 2008, 30th Annual Conference of the Association for Integrative Studies, Springfield, Illinois, USA (http://www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg/Conference/conference_upcoming.shtml)
- 14 November 2008, Analysing Collaborative and Deliberative Forms of Governance, Canberra, Australia (<http://deliberativedemocracy.anu.edu.au/>)
- 27-28 November 2008, Transdisciplinarity Conference 2008: Inter- and Transdisciplinary Problem Framing, Zurich, Switzerland (<http://www.transdisciplinarity.ch/newsmail/detail.php?id=1098>)
- 1-3 December 2008, ANZSYS 2008, 14th International Australian and New Zealand Systems Conference, Perth, Australia (<http://scissec.scis.ecu.edu.au/anzsys08/>)
- 7-10 December 2008, 28th Society for Risk Analysis 2008 Annual Meeting, Boston, USA (http://www.sra.org/events_2008_meeting.php)
- 1-3 April 2009, Recreation and Health in Landscape and Forest: Challenges, Theories, Research Studies and Practical Solutions, Birmensdorf, Switzerland (http://www.wsl.ch/landscapeandhealth/index_EN?redir=1&)
- 12-17 July 2009, International Society for the Systems Sciences, Brisbane, Australia (<http://www.iss.org/world/en/brisbane-2009>)

NEW PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

Breaking News from The Evidence Network at King's College London

"The Evidence Network website is an information resource provided by the Centre for Evidence & Policy at King's College London. The Evidence Network was started in 2001 as part of an ESRC funded initiative. Of interest to anyone concerned with evidence-based policy and practice in the broad field of social and public policy, the Evidence Network:

- * Monitors news and events in the EBPP world.
- * Provides access to a wide range of information resources in social and public policy.
- * Acts as a gateway to the literature of EBPP."

Breaking News is a periodic summary of relevant events and activities:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/interdisciplinary/evidence/breakingnews.html>

Online forum for the *Journal of Research Practice*

The *Journal of Research Practice* focuses on innovations in research practice and research education. The journal is free-to-readers and it is hosted at <http://jrp.icaap.org/>. The forum consists of research-inclined individuals and research students from around the world, associated with multiple specialist domains, who are interested in developing and promoting the journal. Interested readers can join the group here: http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Research_Practice/.

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

29 September – 3 October 2008, Modelling Human Ecosystems with Agents (short course)

This course aims to introduce students to the principles and operation of Agent-Based Modelling (ABM) and participatory modelling. It will provide a clear understanding of the possibilities (and limits) of these approaches applied to the study of human ecosystems. First, we will explain why these systems are inherently uncertain and, probably, unpredictable. Then, we will demonstrate how Agent-Based Modelling deals with the problem of complexity and the related search for simple representations of the real world. Finally we will guide the students through innovative ways to design and use models with stakeholders. The course is equally divided between academic lectures, computer demonstration, and hands-on tutorials. It is expected that by the end of the course students will be able to develop their own simple computer applications, and to identify future opportunities for integrating these innovative approaches in their research.

ANTH8021 is an elective course (6 units) within the Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) and other Master courses across campus. Registration is made through ANU's enrollment system. ANTH8021 is also open to external auditors who wish to learn more about agent-based and participatory modelling. PhD students and professionals are encouraged to register through ANU's Centre for Continuing Education.

For further information contact Pascal Perez at pascal.perez@anu.edu.au, (02) 6125 8705.

JOURNAL PROFILE

Human Relations

"Human Relations was founded in 1947 by the Tavistock Institute and the Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT in the belief that social scientists should work together to combine their disciplinary knowledge in an attempt to understand the character and complexity of human problems. The journal has long recognised that no single discipline or research method could provide a solution to questions pertaining to relations between people, work groups and their organizations. Consequently, *Human Relations* has sought to establish a dialogue between scholars of different disciplinary backgrounds who seek to advance our knowledge of social relationships at and around work.

"Human Relations has also sought to encourage research that seeks to relate social theory to social practice. The journal values scholarship that examines policy-making options that can improve the well being of employees and the effectiveness of organizations. ... We seek debate on policy choices and options for social action that is informed by the complexities of human relationships at work and the nature of political processes within organizations."

* Website: <http://www.tavinstitute.org/humanrelations/>

* Impact factor: 1.103 (2007)

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PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Integrated Assessment Society

"The Integrated Assessment Society (TIAS) is a not-for-profit-entity created to promote the community of inter-disciplinary and disciplinary scientists, analysts and practitioners who develop and use integrated assessment. The goals of the society are to nurture this community, to promote the development of IA and to encourage its wise application."

"Integrated assessment (IA) can be defined as the scientific "meta-discipline" that integrates knowledge about a problem domain and makes it available for societal learning and decision making processes. Public policy issues involving long-range and long-term environmental management are where the roots of integrated assessment can be found. However, today, IA is used to frame, study and solve issues at other scales. IA has been developed for acid rain, climate change, land degradation, water and air quality management, forest and fisheries management and public health. The field of Integrated Assessment engages stakeholders and scientists, often drawing these from many disciplines."

* Journal: Integrated Assessment Journal (available free online)

* Website: <http://www.tias.uni-osnabrueck.de/>

ABOUT ANU INTEGRATION NEWS

This newsletter aims to share updates on events, visitors, activities, opportunities and resources among ANU staff and students with an interest in research integration (or inter- or trans-disciplinarity). In addition to current information, each issue will also highlight a relevant journal and professional society.

Our aim for 2008 is to distribute the newsletter monthly. Back issues are available at www.anu.edu.au/iisn. To contribute material or to subscribe or unsubscribe from the newsletter, please contact Caryn Anderson at caryn.anderson@anu.edu.au.