

Graduation celebrates student achievement

More than 500 friends, family and supporters attended the Geraldton Universities Centre (GUC) graduation on February 11, celebrating the successes of 38 graduating students.

It was the GUC's fifth graduation, bringing the number of people to have graduated through the centre to 147. Students graduated in a range of disciplines including Indigenous Services Management, Education, Nursing, Visual Arts, Creative Industries and Town Planning.

The GUC welcomed representatives from our three partnering universities including Professor Jennifer Nichol from Curtin University of Technology, Professor Brenda Cherednichenko from Edith Cowan University and Professor Sally Sandover from the University of Western Australia to share and officiate the celebration.

Having been Welcomed to Country by Yvonne Radcliffe, Terry Werner, Chair of the GUC Board, then addressed the audience. He explained how the GUC was building on past success, undertaking a process of transition to a new regionally based board. He also highlighted the critical need for funding for the GUC to grow. (See funding report on page 3)



Graduating class of 2009

Recipients of the GUC's 2009 Encouragement Awards were recognised as were the recipients of scholarships presented to GUC students from the Mid West Development Commission, City of Geraldton-Greenough, Shire of Northampton,

Grant Woodhams MLA and 2008 Bachelor of Education Graduate Ben Knight.

Moving and personal accounts of their time as students were also conveyed by former graduates Violet Drury, Pamela Ford and Ben Knight.

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GUC Board Chair Terry Werner



Martika Morcom & Mid West Development Commission Board Chair Murray Criddle.

Graduation celebrates student achievement (cont)

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Violet greeted the audience in her Mother ' s principle language – Nhandá before going on to tell the story of her own achievements, culminating in the recent publishing of two books about birds and animals in the Mid West using their common, scientific and Aboriginal names.

Pamela highlighted the advantages of studying in Geraldton.

“ We may have lacked some resources at times but this was compensated by small class sizes, a short and stress-free drive to get there, no hassles with parking, no problems finding our classes and no Tavern to tempt us, ” she said.

“ Financially it was certainly advantageous, particularly to the younger students who were still living at home. ”



Violet Drury delivers her speech

Then it was time to award each student their testamur, each meeting with raucous applause as the large crowd acknowledged each individual ' s achievement.

The Ceremony concluded as graduates enthusiastically threw their mortar boards in the air, before joining their families, friends and supporters to continue their celebrations.

Friends make a difference

For the first time, the GUC could call on the newly established Friends of the GUC to help at the Graduation.

Our thanks go to:

- Janita Eckersley for providing sandwiches for our graduates prior to the ceremony. It kept them going!
- Sari Jacobsen for organising the Graduates on stage to receive their awards. It all went smoothly!
- Wendy Whitfield for meeting the caterers and serving our guests. They all had a ball!

We also thank current GUC student Melinda Adshead for her assistance.

There are now more than 130 Friends of the GUC. Friends are invited to our events and are encouraged to suggest new activities that will strengthen the life of the GUC.

To become a Friend, call Natalie Nelmes on 9920 4403.



The Official Party and Graduates on stage at the QPT

GUC seeks Federal Government funding support

The Geraldton Universities Centre had a constructive meeting on January 19 with one of Julia Gillard's key advisors on funding arrangements for the Centre.

GUC Director, Meredith Wills, and Board members Steve Douglas and Professor Sally Sandover met with Jim Round, the Deputy Prime Minister's Economic and Budget Advisor for Higher Education and Student Income Support.

Ms Wills said the GUC was undergoing a period of transition that required a reshaping of the Centre's financial arrangements.

"To date, the GUC has operated under a funding agreement between three Perth based universities, the University of Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology and Edith Cowan University," Ms Wills said.

"Under the agreement the GUC received a fixed proportion (48.5%) of the funds generated by student enrolments, with the universities retaining 51.5% to meet the costs of instruction.

"What we want is a direct and separate funding input to the running costs of the GUC."

"However, a recent review of this funding split showed we can no longer sustain the quality of instruction that we want for local students, especially face-to-face delivery in the early years of a course. The GUC sees that the way forward must involve an increase in the total amount of funding available to support higher education in the region. In particular, what we want is a direct and separate funding input to the running costs of the GUC so that the universities can then have more money to spend on quality local instruction. In essence, the current funding "cake" to be split between universities and the GUC is too small," she said

"We explained these issues to Mr Round along with the need to ensure equity of access and face-to-face educational opportunities for local students. We requested Federal Government assistance to meet the operating and student support costs of the GUC."

Ms Wills said the delegation felt they had been given a good hearing by Mr Round.

"Mr Round showed genuine interest in our case," she said. "He has undertaken to write to me with the Government's response to our proposals."

Ms Wills said in the meantime the GUC had been proactive in seeking additional funding sources to support students in 2010.

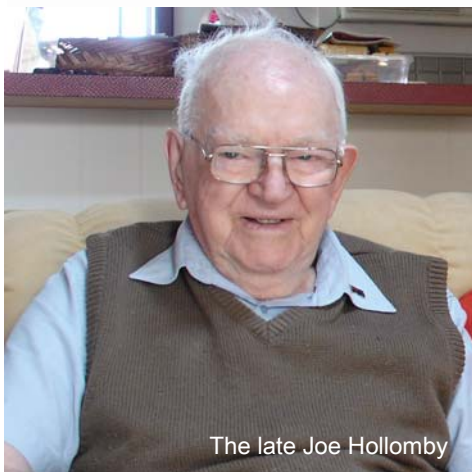
"We have secured Royalties for Regions funding via the Mid West Development Commission's Regional Grants Scheme which will enable us to add value to university delivery by providing extra face-to-face tutorials and study skills support," Ms Wills said.

Parents and students information evening

The GUC staged our first Parent and Student Information Evening in January, with 30 people taking the opportunity to discuss their options for 2010. Of these 30, 19 were prospective students interested in the University Preparation Course, Teaching, Nursing and Science courses. Director, Meredith Wills explained how Royalties for Regions funding would provide more face-to-face tutorials for students while Special Projects, Natalie Nelmes discussed available scholarships, Friends of the GUC and the Hollomby Foundation. Seven attendees signed up to join Friends of the GUC on the night.



Meredith Wills addresses parents and students



The late Joe Hollomby

Hollomby Foundation to enhance student opportunities

Family and supporters of the late Joe Hollomby are working with the GUC to establish a philanthropic Foundation in his honour.

Joe was a tireless charity worker affectionately known around town as the Shortbread Man. He was tragically murdered in 2008.

The Hollomby Foundation is expected to be launched by mid-year and will provide another avenue for funding support for GUC programs and our students.

The GUC has already received \$10,000 seed funding from Regional Development Australia for this Foundation.

Our aim will be to raise \$1 million over three years to put into programs and initiatives that directly support Mid West students.

For more information, please contact Natalie Nelmes on 9920 4403.

GUC moves closer to regionally based board

The GUC is currently undergoing a period of transition that will soon see it incorporated with a regionally based Board of Management.

To date, the GUC has operated under an Agreement between the Geraldton University Access Group (GUAG), Central West TAFE (now Durack Institute of Technology), and our three partner universities, The University of Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology and Edith Cowan University.

A Working Group, set up by the current GUC Board, will recommend to GUAG members that the constitution governing GUAG be amended to cover management of the GUC.

"Under the new structure, the GUC

will be a not-for-profit, incorporated body," Working Group Chair Wayne Hosking said.

"This will take it through the next stage of growth, building on our successes to date. Importantly, the new structure hands decision making and control back to the community it serves. The GUC Board will be primarily drawn from the regional community. The support of GUAG members has always been critical to our development, and the new arrangements will foster an even greater input and involvement by GUAG.

"Therefore, I encourage all GUAG members to attend this important meeting and welcome any new members to join at this exciting time"

Important meetings of the Geraldton University Access Group

Ordinary Meeting

12pm, Wednesday 3 March 2010 (Lunch provided)

Purpose: To discuss proposed changes to the structure of the GUC and its impact on the GUAG constitution.

Special General Meeting

4pm, Monday 29 March 2010

Purpose: To vote on constitutional change and elect members to the new GUC Board of Management.

Both meetings will take place at the Geraldton Universities Centre.