

3 February 2010

Global partnerships for global solutions

A collaboration between the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) and the Canadian University of Waterloo (UW) will bring together researchers from six universities to deal with issues of global concern.

The new Researcher Exchange Program is intended to foster collaboration between ATN and UW researchers in areas of mutual strategic interest - tackling research questions of substance; giving the next generation of researchers experience and linkages outside their home institution; and building lasting partnerships that are of increasing importance in a global research environment.

Announcing the program at the ATN National Conference in Melbourne today, Professor Margaret Gardner, Vice Chancellor of RMIT University, emphasised the importance of international researcher collaborations in dealing with some of the global 'big' issues.

"There are research problems that we all have in common." Professor Gardner said. "In particular, sustainable energy, climate change and environmental impact are issues of global concern that researchers in every country are examining."

"While of course each country will have its own specific concerns and individual situation when it comes to these issues, the majority of the underlying principles and technologies will remain the same. It is for that reason that the 2010 round of the program is focusing heavily on sustainability. While the program is open to researchers in any field, we hope that the strong background that Waterloo and many of the ATN universities have in sustainability will kick start the program by building researcher relationships that demonstrate the value and desirability of inter-university research collaboration.

"By utilising the resources available at multiple universities, both physical and intellectual, much more can be achieved than by researchers working only with colleagues at their own institution."

The Researcher Exchange Program will support short term visits in Canada and Australia for ATN and UW researchers to build such collaborative research projects. The scheme also strongly encourages the involvement of Masters and PhD students in these projects.

“Giving our research students exposure to such collaboration and the opportunity to build links at overseas universities gives them an invaluable edge as they move forward in their careers” Professor Gardner said. “The researchers of tomorrow will operate in an increasingly global environment and we should give them every preparation that we can.”

There is a clear desire at a governmental level to build closer university ties between Australia and Canada. Associated with the program’s launch, the High Commission of Canada has supported this drive to increase research linkages by funding a visit to Australia by one of UW’s prominent sustainability researchers. Professor David Johnson, Head of Waterloo’s Wind Energy Laboratory, is holding seminars at RMIT in association with the ATN Conference, UniSA and UTS to identify areas of mutual research interest and build interest in the program.

Projects associated with the Researcher Exchange Program will commence in July 2010.

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