INSPIRING STUDENT SUCCESS

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT JAMES BEGLEY

Even small expenses can add up quickly when you’re a student.

For James Begley, 19, in his second year of a Bachelor of Applied Science (Exercise and Sport Science) degree, the cost of public transport was a significant cause of financial stress. Buying a weekly train ticket for $26 added up to more than $1000 a year, just to get to and from university. As James explains, “When trying to work out my weekly budget, I sometimes wouldn’t know if I was going to be able to get to uni.”

But thanks to a generous legacy from the late Bernard Lee, who died in 1997, part of that burden has now been lifted. The bequest created the Bernard Lee Scholarship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which provides $5000 to help recipients with the costs of study. James, an Awabakal man, won the award in 2013 and 2014. “It has just taken the stress off, because I know I can afford the train,” he explains. The scholarship has also enabled him to give more attention to his studies, since he no longer needs to work a part-time job. “I was doing three or four shifts a week,” he says. “That means I now have 20 hours more that I can study at home.

He also points out that scholarships serve as an incentive for students to work hard in order to qualify for them: “It makes you want to succeed.”

Since it was established a decade ago, the Bernard Lee Scholarship has been bestowed no less than 87 times, helping a diverse range of Aboriginal students. “I’m very proud of my Indigenous heritage,” says James, who adds that there is a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence at his Cumberland Campus. “We have an Indigenous room where I’m constantly meeting other students, and it’s great for us to find out about each other’s very different cultural routines.”

Inside the classroom, James particularly enjoys learning about the science of human movement in subjects such as exercise physiology and biochemistry. A much valued member of the University basketball team, the 6’3 athlete puts theory into practice on the basketball court, where he sometimes finds himself observing the biomechanics of sprinting and stopping during games.

After he graduates James hopes to use his degree to help rehabilitate those recovering from illness. “Walking up a flight of stairs is something that people take for granted, but with respiratory disease, for example, it can be a big struggle,” he says. “If I can help people get back into sport or even just daily activities, that would be fantastic.”
Australia had seen small numbers of migration throughout the 19th century, but it wasn’t until the interwar years that the beginning of cultural diversity emerged. This was marked by an increased migration of people, especially from southern Europe. Frances Merenda’s parents were among those who migrated.

Frances’ parents migrated to Australia from the Aeolian Islands, off the coast of Sicily, in the early 1920s. These years were characterised by high unemployment, poverty and hardship. Like many, Frances’ father struggled to find a job in the gold fields and eventually settled cutting sugar cane in northern Queensland.

Frances was born in 1924 and describes growing up in Australia as simple. Having not learnt any English until the age of four she explains her childhood as “living in two worlds”.

WARTIME INTERNMENT
By the Second World War Italian migration had slowed, however, poor treatment of the Italians was not uncommon. Migrants were targets of discrimination, racism and hostility. There was a fear and dislike of their customs and culture. Frances believes the negative stereotypes were reinforced by the language barrier and cultural differences in Australian society.

“You could not walk down the street and speak a different language. They would tell you to go home – you felt like you were not wanted,” she says.

When she turned 18, at the start of the war, Frances and her mother were arrested and sent to an internment camp in NSW – her father, already interned, joined them shortly after their arrival. Here they spent 16 months as prisoners and upon their release in 1944 moved to Sydney to start a new life.

LIFE AFTER WAR
In Sydney, Frances and her family dedicated their life to the welfare and education of Italian migrants. Her father became president of the San Francesco Catholic Italian Association and helped establish the Italo-Australian Welfare Centre.

In 1972, Frances was asked to work for the Department of Immigration. She was the first Italian-speaking welfare worker and knew the community better than anyone. Frances assisted Italians to integrate into Australian society – she provided them with social assistance, helped them find accommodation and work and taught them English and the Australian laws. In 1976, she was awarded an MBE for her service to the community.

THE MERENDA SCHOLARSHIPS
Frances continues to maintain an interest in education and welfare issues. At the beginning of 2009 she established the Merenda Scholarships to promote the study of Italian languages and culture, by giving students the opportunity to travel to Italy to pursue further study or research.

“They are travel scholarships. I hope for Australia and Italy to know each other better,” she says. Professor Duncan Ivison, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, applauds her vision. “Cultural understanding and the appreciation of difference that comes through language acquisition is vital for social and political peace and economic prosperity,” he says. “In our globalising and interconnected world we need more people – especially young people – learning languages other than English.

He adds that “the University of Sydney has one of the most comprehensive language programs in the country and we want our students to have the opportunity to deepen their language skills in every way possible. People like Frances help to support our efforts to ensure future generations of Australian students can be inspired by their study of language.”
REALISING A CAREER DREAM

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT OLIVIA DICKSON

When she was in primary school, Olivia Dickson’s sixth grade teacher told her that she would make a wonderful teacher one day if she ever chose to enter the profession. Those words made a lasting impact on the 23 year old, who is currently in the third year of her Bachelor of Primary Education degree.

In primary education, Olivia feels that she has found her vocation. The best parts are the “energy and positivity” of the children she encounters and the insights she is gaining into their psychological development. “I find it fascinating learning all about how humans progress,” she says. Yet Olivia’s road to her dream job has not been without obstacles. After moving from her family home in Bega to study at the University of Sydney’s Camperdown Campus, she had to find work in a bar to cover her rent in Sydney’s notoriously expensive housing market.

Juggling part-time work and study can be difficult for any student, but was all the more challenging for Olivia because she has cystic fibrosis: a chronic lung disease which causes a wide range of symptoms including fatigue, chest infections and overall ill health. “I was working two nights a week and studying four, and was continually run-down, stressed and exhausted,” she explains. “I’d just come home and crash most days. It took a fair bit of a toll on my body and my semester [work] completely went down.”

Then, at the end of her first year, Olivia received the Stanley and Ivy Tipper Trust Scholarship, which was established in 2011 by a gift from the late Beryl Mary Bubacz. It provides up to $6000 per year to promising students in the Faculty of Education and Social Work whose studies are being impacted by sickness or loss of employment. The scholarship allowed her to give up her evening job in the bar, freeing up her energy for coursework. “I was able to focus on getting on top of my studies and staying relatively healthy,” Olivia says. “It saved me from a lot of stress and sickness.”

When she finishes her degree, Olivia is looking forward to moving back to the Bega Valley region and teaching at a local primary school. “I cannot express how grateful I am to have received this scholarship,” she says. “It is such a great opportunity for people in a situation like mine, or worse. It’s given me an opportunity to succeed at university.”

RETHINKING PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy has a reputation for being a stately and rather solemn intellectual pursuit. But the Challis Chair of Philosophy – created from the famous bequest of John Henry Challis, who left an estate worth £276,000 to the University in 1880 – has been held by some of the most outspoken figures in Australian academia.

One of the most colourful was free-thinker Professor John Anderson, who held the Chair from 1927 until his retirement in 1958. During his tenure, he caused an outcry in the NSW Parliament and earned a censure from the University Senate by criticising war memorials and other patriotic symbols. He also argued that education should be free of religious influence, causing another major scandal.

The current Challis Chair holder is female Professor John Anderson, but just as ground-breaking, Moira Gatens is the first female professor of philosophy at the University and, to date, the only female Challis Chair of Philosophy. She has a string of honours to her name, including fellowship of the Academy of the Humanities and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship. Professor Gatens’ philosophical interests are partly shaped by her experiences as an undergraduate at the University of New South Wales, where she was the only female philosophy student who went on to do honours. “I had a real love for the discipline but also a bit of a feeling of exclusion and isolation,” she explains. As a result, she says, one of her passions has been to bring “more and different voices into the conversation of philosophy”.

That has meant allowing the voices of women such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill and Simone de Beauvoir to be heard in philosophical conversations that have been historically dominated by men, as well as forging links with other disciplines traditionally not regarded as philosophical, such as literature. A recent focus has been the novelist George Eliot, who explores a range of profound philosophical issues in her work. In her novel Middlemarch, for example, Eliot employs a metaphor of holding a candle up to a polished metal surface covered in tiny scratches, which creates a circle of light. “She uses that optical illusion to talk about the way events are like the random scratches, but the egotism of each of us tends to make us interpret those events only insofar as they affect us,” says Professor Gatens. “Through her use of an optical metaphor, Eliot raises important issues about ethical life, but also self-knowledge and how difficult it is to achieve.”

Professor Gatens says that holding the historic Challis Chair is a tremendous privilege. “Part of what is so wonderful about being bestowed with the honour is that it puts you in a direct lineage to a long line of distinguished scholars, as well as John Henry Challis himself. “To be associated with a benefactor who was so extraordinarily generous is an honour in itself. My understanding is that his bequest saved the University.”
SIR CHARLES NICHOLSON:  
MAN OF VISION, MAN OF MYSTERY

AUTHOR: MICHAEL TURNER, SENIOR CURATOR, NICHOLSON MUSEUM

“Douglass moved Wentworth, Wentworth moved Nicholson, and Nicholson moved heaven and earth to found the University” (Unknown Sydney wit in the 1850s).

Henry Douglass (1790-1865), William Wentworth (1790-1872) and Sir Charles Nicholson (1808-1903) were the driving forces behind Australia’s first university, established on 1 October 1850. Nicholson went on to become the University of Sydney’s first Vice-Provost (1851-54), its second Provost, or Chancellor, (1854-62) and was to remain a member of Senate until 1883, long after his final return to England in 1862.

Nicholson was knighted in 1852 following his appointment, for the third time, as Speaker of the Legislative Council of New South Wales.

In 1856, Nicholson returned to Europe for the first time since his arrival in Sydney as a young doctor in 1834. The purpose of his trip was for the edification of the new university.

Between 1856 and 1857 he travelled in Egypt and Italy where he personally acquired more than 1000 ancient artefacts that he donated to the University in 1860. This was the beginning of what is today the largest collection of antiquities in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere, the Nicholson Museum.

On his return to England from Italy in 1858, Nicholson was instrumental in obtaining a Royal Charter whereby degrees issued by the University were to act as spokesman on the occasion. Prince Albert made his comments and criticisms on several of the objects brought under view, and I was perfectly astonished at the minute knowledge he seemed to have on points of history suggested by some of the figures delineated. The Queen [Victoria] seemed deeply interested in the whole proceeding, and asked many pertinent questions respecting the colonies, and particularly about the climate. I ventured to ask Her Majesty if she would allow me to leave with her a few photographs of Sydney and its surroundings, and she graciously replied that she would; and so my intercourse with royalty ended, leaving a most pleasant recollection in my mind of royal intelligence and urbanity.

On 28 February 1859, a few months after his encounter with the Queen, he was elevated to the peerage, becoming Australia’s first Baronet. He styled himself Sir Charles Nicholson of Luddenham with the motto ‘Sola virtus nobilitas’. This motto and his coat of arms can be seen today in the stained glass window outside what is now the Oriental Studies Room, and what was once the original Nicholson Museum on the eastern side of the main quad.

Nicholson’s achievements are impressive – the more so considering that we now know he was born a bastard, in hundreds of years Nicholsons had held high office, as the University’s founder, it was the untiring energy of his friend John Henry Challis (1806–80) that was so often guessed the truth, which was only revealed through research by Michael Turner, Senior Curator of the Nicholson Museum, in 2010.

As recently as 1969, David Macmillan (archivist of the University of Sydney 1954–69) wrote in the series Great Australians that “Charles Nicholson was born in the little market town of Cockermouth, Cumberland, in 1808. For hundreds of years Nicholsons had held high office, as sheriffs and local administrators in Cumberland, and the boy’s father, Charles Nicholson, as well as being a merchant, was agent or manager for the Earl of Egremont, a nobleman with great estates in this county. His mother, Barbara Ascough, was the daughter of a wealthy London merchant, a fact that was to prove important in Nicholson’s life.”

The secret to Nicholson’s success was twofold: the wealth of his marriage uncle William Ascough (1777–1834) and the fact that he was able to reinvent himself in Australia under a different name and with the personal protection of Prince Albert.

Nicholson worked tirelessly to promote support for the University of Sydney. He approached numerous Sydney siders for their support, including local businessman Thomas Barker (1799–1875) to whom he wrote, “those who desire to make the Colony their permanent home … will require no argument to induce them to enrich as much as possible the land of their choice with all those attributes and associations connected with art which in so large a measure constitutes the chief charm of older countries”. Barker became the first financial benefactor in the University’s history, while his friend John Henry Challis (1806–80) was the first to leave a major bequest.

In 1902, shortly before Nicholson’s death, the University’s Registrar, HE Barff, wrote, “while Wentworth is recognised as the University’s founder, it was the untried energy of Nicholson which placed it upon its firm base.” The Nicholson Museum is today a fitting monument to Mr Charles’ vision.

Thank you to all members who completed and returned the recent survey on the Challis Bequest Society program. Your responses have been collated and reviewed and will greatly assist us in tailoring our communications and events to your varied interests over the next few years.

The Nicholson Museum tour in July, with the opportunity to handle and examine artefacts in the collection, proved very popular. More than 60 Challis members and guests registered for the event. Given this marvellous interest in our famous museum, we have decided to schedule a follow-up visit in 2015. We are currently working with Craig Barker and Michael Turner to bring you greater insights into the collection and the work of our archaeologists. Details will appear in our next newsletter.

Reading the stories of our very grateful students who have received scholarships established through gifts and bequests is really heartwarming. The University remains committed to increasing its scholarships and bursaries so that a tertiary education is accessible to promising students, whatever their social or cultural background.

As government support declines, your valuable gifts will keep on supporting our talented students.

WENDY MARCEAU

CHALLIS BEQUEST SOCIETY EVENTS

FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER, 12 TO 2.30PM
CHALLIS BEQUEST SOCIETY LUNCH
Venue: Great Hall, the Quadrangle

MONDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2014
FACULTY OF VETERINARY SCIENCE SEMINAR
Time: 9.30am to 12pm
Speakers: Associate Professor Robyn Alders AO
Healthy poultry, healthy people
Dr Niek Beijerink
Slowing or halting heart disease in animals and humans

PUBLIC EVENTS

A NIGHT AT THE NICHOLSON: ADVENTURES IN HISTORY, CULTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURE SERIES
The ticketed talks in this series start at 6pm (for 6.30pm) to 7.30pm.
Venue: Nicholson Museum
Complimentary tickets for this series are available to Legacy members only.

THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2014, 6PM (FOR 6.30PM) TO 7.30PM
Speaker: Sarah Staniforth FSA, National Trust UK
Fire, wind and flood: extreme conservation at National Trust properties (in the UK)

WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2014, 6PM (FOR 6.30PM) TO 7.30PM
Speaker: Professor Peter Hiscock, University of Sydney
Archaeologists wear black hats: why archaeologists are bad guys in cinema

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2014, 6PM (FOR 6.30PM) TO 7.30PM
Speaker: Dr Penelope Allison FSA, University of Leicester
Cooking, eating and drinking in Pompeian houses

NICHOLSON MUSEUM’S SERIES ITALY: TRAVELS IN ART, HISTORY AND CULTURE
The free talks in this series start at 2pm. Bookings are essential.
Venue: Nicholson Museum

SATURDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2014
Speaker: Dr Kathleen Olive, Academy Travel
Mantua reborn, Mantua despoiled

SATURDAY 4 OCTOBER 2014
Speaker: Michael Turner FSA, University of Sydney
The Nicholson Museum is born: Sir Charles Nicholson in Italy 1856-57

SATURDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2014
Speaker: Dr Nick Gordon, Academy Travel
Traveling without moving: Titian’s assumption of the Virgin and its children

SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER 2014
Speaker: Dr Christopher Allen, art critic for The Australian newspaper
Mythology in Italian art

For details of all University of Sydney events, please visit our website whatson.sydney.edu.au/events
To RSVP for the events listed, please contact:
Angela Topping
T +61 2 8627 8824
E angela.topping@sydney.edu.au

CHALLIS BEQUEST SOCIETY

CONTACTS
Wendy Marceau
Bequest Manager
T +61 2 8627 8492
E wendy.marceau@sydney.edu.au

Angela Topping
Development Officer
T +61 2 8627 8824
E angela.topping@sydney.edu.au

Development Office
Level 6, Jane Foss Russell Building
The University of Sydney NSW 2006
sydney.edu.au/supportsydney

Printed on ENVI Recycled 50/50 by Spicers Paper.
Produced by Marketing and Communications, the University of Sydney, August 2014. The University reserves the right to make alterations to any information contained within this publication without notice. 14/3477