

Research News

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Researcher receives Rising Star Award

BY SEAN MOORE
Research Promotion

"A lot of good things happen when you let other people help decide what you should be researching," said community health science's Randy Fransoo.

Fransoo is a researcher with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) and he recently won a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Rising Star Award, given annually to five Canadian graduate students or post-doctoral fellows for excellence in the area of health services and policy research, and knowledge translation.

"I almost didn't apply for the Rising Star Award because the very thing I've learned here is that it's not about stars," Fransoo said. "It's about teamwork."

Fransoo was recognized for his contributions to two projects. The first used a new approach to study the impact of socioeconomic status on educational outcomes.

Grade 12 students in Manitoba have long taken standards tests, and the MCHP team started by looking at results from the 2001/02 school year. The usual way of assessing the social gradient is to compare how well students from low income areas did compared to those from wealthier areas. Like many previous studies, they found that students from low income areas didn't do as well.

"The big problem with that approach is that kids from low income

areas are also more likely to have dropped out or been retained, so they're not in Grade 12 to write the test. The challenge is – how do you account for those that weren't even there?"

That's where their population-based approach comes in.

"It's the difference between the truth, and the whole truth," Fransoo said. "There's nothing incorrect about the usual way, but it's not the full story. The population-based approach followed all children born in 1984 – the kids who should have been in Grade 12 and writing the test that year.

"What we found was that the social gradient in education is much steeper. The real gradient is not about test performance – it's about staying in school, and staying with your peers year after year," he said.

Fransoo also co-directs *The Need to Know* team with Patricia Martens, the Director of MCHP. The award-winning team is a leader in knowledge translation.

"One day in 1999 we realized that dissemination was completely wrong-headed, timing-wise. The way to get research results used is to get the people who want to use the results involved before the beginning."

This idea was a cornerstone in the second study Fransoo's award recognizes.

After a year's worth of meetings with partners in government and all



Photo By Sean Moore

Randy Fransoo, community health science, recently won the Rising Star Award for his contributions to two research projects.

Regional Health Authorities, all parties decided to examine mental health. The data the team had, however, was not the qualitative sort usually used to study mental health issues.

Instead, they had administrative data; if a Manitoban used the health care system, they knew when, where and what for (but not, it should be noted, who).

They learned one quarter of Manitobans age 10 or older have received a diagnosis for a mental illness, and they see doctors and

get hospitalized twice as often; but only a portion of that use is for their mental illness. Overall, one in 10 hospitalizations and one in 10 physician visits in Manitoba are for a mental health problem.

"Effective knowledge translation is much more than a publication," Fransoo said. "It requires involving the target audience from the very start. By doing so, you ensure the results are relevant, and more likely to effect change."

Looking at the intricacies of consumerism

BY SEAN MOORE
Research Promotion

"Do these pants make me look fat?" requires a delicate response if you want a kiss at the end of the date, but if you couch your response in lavish flattery you'll likely get your peck.

If you're looking to sell pants, however, flattery is a bad approach.

Marketing professor Kelley Main and colleagues from the University of British Columbia and Florida State University recently published an article in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* that reported on the detriments of flattery in a retail setting.

One of their experiments tested consumer responses to flattery during retail transactions. Subjects were flattered either before, during or after the sale and then answered a questionnaire about their experience and how trustworthy they found the clerk.

Main found that flattery given even after the sale took place, even if the store was going out of business so no ulterior sales-motive could exist, resulted in consumers becoming suspicious and harboring negatively biased judgments of the clerk's trustworthiness.

This sinister attribution error, as it has been called, results when

individuals are overly paranoid regarding the behavior of other's. This ends up fostering feelings of distrust and suspicion regarding the other person's motives, in this case the salesclerk's.

So what to do? Let customers decide for themselves if the pants make them look fat.

Her curiosity with this issue sated, Main began to look for other angles to study the antecedents to consumer suspicion and it wasn't long till she found one.

In a recent study, which has been submitted for potential publication, Main and her colleagues at York University and Queen's University examined consumer suspicion in the context of products failing to live up to expectations.

The retail marketplace offers a bewildering array of products, most of which come with their own advertisements proclaiming them to be an "est" – the biggest, the brightest, the strongest or fastest – but such adjectives can be a backstabbing lot.

In the study Main gave participants some background on a little-known cleaning product and then asked them to try and clean out some stains.



Photo By Sean Moore

Marketing professor Kelley Main examines the implications of consumer suspicion.

Main manipulated the wording of the advertisements, tweaking the boldness of their claims so some subjects read performance statements while others read just basic facts. She also manipulated the outcome of the product test so the stains were either permanent or of the easy-to-remove variety.

After completing this phase of the experiment, subjects went to another lab where they read about, tested, and

evaluated a pair of headphones.

"What we found was that the greatest levels of distrust carried over to the headphones when that subject had high expectations for the cleaners' performance and then that cleaner failed to work," Main said.

"What this means is that the behaviour of others in the environment can have implications for those that haven't done anything wrong."

Bringing Research To Life

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Engaging with the world

Scowcroft balances school work with social responsibility

BY DALE BARBOUR
The Bulletin

Electrical and computer engineering student Jane Scowcroft, set to graduate at next week's convocation, is as perfect a match for the U of M's Engineers Without Borders Chapter as you could imagine. She was born in Australia and with a father employed by the United Nations toured the world as a youth living in places ranging from India, through Uganda to Columbia before her family settled in Winnipeg and she headed to Balmoral Hall to wrap up her high school education.

But when she traveled to Tanzania to work with the Family Alliance for Development and Cooperation she was seeing a different world than the one she had grown up in.

"Having traveled, helped me deal with the culture shock, but there's a big difference between traveling with the United Nations with a private driver and living life with people who are in poverty. You can't understand the challenges they face until you're living on \$1 a day."

Scowcroft's goal when she was working in Africa was to help the Family Alliance develop local fixes for local challenges and the only way to do that is to come at the challenges knowing exactly what resources people in the community have, or more often than not, don't have.

"I lived with a family with seven kids, collected water every day, cooked, cleaned, and tried to live a regular life," Scowcroft said.

That engagement with the world is only part of what EWB does, an equally important education aspect had Scowcroft and other members of the group talking with would-be engineer students in Canada about what the programs can do for them and the world. If that wasn't enough, Scowcroft has also been involved in the University of Manitoba Student Engineering Society, which also focuses on outreach and education, and a range of other outreach projects including the Centennial Homecoming Committee and the Engineering Endowment Fund Advisory Council.

That level of engagement has earned Scowcroft a string of recognition ranging from being named one of Canada's Top 20 under 20 in 2006, to one of the *Globe and Mail's* Top 100 Women in Canada last fall and just this spring the Manitoba YM-YWCA Young Woman of Distinction award.

Recognition is something she's ambivalent about.

"It was a reminder that the reason I do these things is not for the reward," Scowcroft said. "You go on stage, have your three minutes to speak and then you have something to store on a shelf."



Photo by Dale Barbour

Electrical and computer engineering student Jane Scowcroft is set to graduate this month. Given her track record as a student she's set to have a bright future.

However, what's more tangible in the long run than the trophies handed out at these ceremonies are the links that Scowcroft has been able to make through them.

"With the Top 100 Most Powerful Women, I was nominated as a future leader and it was really great to see women more established in their careers and to get advice from them. There's a built-in mentorship program with the awards and I think that's a great attribute."

And the sort of engagement that earned her those awards is something she takes seriously.

"It shows that when you go into engineering you don't turn into a bookworm. There's a good social aspect to it," Scowcroft said. "One of my favourite quotes is 'Don't miss 50 per cent of your education by spending 100 per cent of your time in the classroom.'

You can't learn it all from textbook."

Scowcroft actually wrapped up her high school program at an accelerated pace – she graduated from Balmoral Hall School at 16 and while her university-bound classmates were entering University 1 to get a feel for where they wanted to take their education, she headed straight into Engineering.

"I've always loved the interplay between computers and people, so it was a natural fit," Scowcroft said.

Of course it also meant heading directly from an all-girl's high school into a field that is still male dominated.

"It was a bit of a shock, but you find a good group of friends and go from there," Scowcroft said. "The gender balance in Engineering is kind of outdated and we need to be proactive about making sure we have more gender equity." She already knew she wanted to give back to the community, but getting involved with outreach projects also helped Scowcroft settle into Engineering.

"Getting involved in outreach projects gives a break from the day to day grind of classes," Scowcroft said. "When I didn't want to work on a class project I could distract myself with Engineers Without Borders and still feel like I was accomplishing something."

Not that her classwork suffered. Scowcroft and her thesis partners Chris Nichols and Dario Schor won the IEEE award for their Windcube project, a miniature satellite.

"I have a good support group and an awesome laptop that helps keep me sane and organized," Scowcroft said. "It's almost impossible to do engineering by yourself. You need to have a group of people to work with you."

As for graduating, Scowcroft doesn't have a three-minute speech prepared quite yet.

"I'm speechless. It blows my mind that five years have passed with all those projects and all the people I've met," Scowcroft said. "Being a student is really the life. You're always working. It's challenging and it's interesting. But while we work hard we get to play hard too."

Currently Scowcroft is developing a collaboration and mentorship program with Wardrop Engineering – her work there will keep her busy until winter. After that she's off to Australia for six months to re-connect with family and friends. And after that? Well, we'll see.

"That's the big question mark. I want to explore my options and see what's the best fit for me," Scowcroft said. "Now is a good time to step back and breathe before taking on the next challenge."

Edie supports Bison volleyball program

BY CHRIS ZUK
Bison Sports Information Officer

Allan Edie has gifted \$300,000 to the Bison Men's Volleyball Program, a sum to be matched by the University of Manitoba through the Province of Manitoba's Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. The amount will be placed into the Bison Men's Volleyball Scholarship Endowment Fund and create 12 scholarships for Bison Men's volleyball players.

This tremendous act of generosity is the single largest individual donation to a Bison Sports men's team in history. The endowment fund will generate revenue to provide substantial support to men's volleyball student-athletes in perpetuity.

Allan Edie, an alumnus of the University of Manitoba (BPE/80, Cert Ed/81), played men's volleyball for the University of Manitoba Bisons from 1976-81. He was part of the teams that were C.I.A.U. National Champions in 1978 and 1980 plus Canadian Senior Champions in 1981 and 1982. In 1981, he was also named University of Manitoba Male Athlete of the Year.

Edie is currently in the real estate development business with projects in Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Campbell River, B.C. Edie's 12 Men's Volleyball scholarships named in honour of many of his former teammates. Beginning in the 2009-10 season, each year, there will be 12 scholarships presented under the names: Randy Anderson, Robert Eger, Terry Gagnon, Robert Glacken, Tom Graham, Phil Hudson, Rick McMillin, Paul Paquin, Jim Schreyer, Lloyd Voth, Bison Men's Volleyball Coach Garth Pischke and Allan Edie.



Submitted Photo

From left, President Emöke Szathmáry and Bison men's volleyball coach Garth Pischke thanked Bison alumni Allan Edie for this \$300,000 gift to the program.

President Emöke Szathmáry said, "It takes brains and perseverance to be a successful student athlete. Bison athletes are our leaders of tomorrow. I am

grateful that Mr. Edie has the foresight and generosity to support top amateur volleyball players at the University of Manitoba and inspire them to reach their athletic and academic goals."

Edie, CEO of A.B. Edie Equities in Edmonton, described his Bison experience, "My five years of being a Bison was an important part of my life. My motivation for success stems from what I learned on the courts at the University of Manitoba. In real estate, I have a different team, but it's similar. You take that level of commitment and you become an expert in whatever you do."

BISON BRIEFS

Five Manitoba Bison football players were selected in the 2008 Canadian Football League (CFL) Canadian College Draft on April 30. Fourth year DL Justin Shaw, third year DL Justin Cooper, fourth year WR Terry Firr, fourth year DB Brady Browne and third year DL Don Oramasionwu. In the CFL Draft, Manitoba have accounted for the most players drafted by a school in the 2000s (over the last nine years) with 25.

Three Bisons hockey stars are ready to move on to professional hockey teams. Fourth year forward Chris Falloon and fourth year defenceman Rob Smith have both signed contracts with the Fischtown Penguins (REV Bremerhaven) of the Bundesliga league, the second division in Germany, while third year Nick Cowan signed with the Tulsa Oilers of the Central Hockey League. All three players completed graduating from the University of Manitoba.