

NEWSLETTER

Department of Mathematics & Statistics

Friday, 10th May 2002

This Week: **Item - Research Exercise a Damaging Distraction**
Item - Support for Core Educational Role of Universities
Published and Accepted Papers
Congratulations
Puzzle Corner

From the desk of the HoD:

RESEARCH EXERCISE A 'DAMAGING DISTRACTION'

A parliamentary report released in Britain says an exercise in 1996 to assess research at universities had positive effects, but also distorted research practice, ruined careers and contributed to the closure of university departments. The report by the House of Commons science and technology select committee concluded that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) had stimulated universities into managing their research and targeting areas of research excellence. It noted, however, that some researchers had been excluded from the exercise by their institution, a practice that was "divisive and demoralising". The committee says the RAE may have discouraged long-term speculative research and stifled breakthroughs, commenting that if James Watson and Francis Crick of DNA fame had been working at the time, they could have been "branded as inactive and shunted off to teach first-year undergraduates."

SUPPORT FOR CORE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

The Association of University Staff (AUS) has restated its support for the liberal arts and basic sciences as the core educational role of universities. The AUS national president, Dr Grant Duncan says that with the government currently conducting a strategic review of the tertiary education sector, the case in favour of a liberal education in the arts and humanities or in the natural and social sciences has "never been stronger." He says many students feel obliged to take courses that have a narrow vocational focus, such as law, business or engineering. It would be better for their development, he says, if they followed their passions, and did well in an arts degree rather than dragging themselves "reluctantly" through a business qualification.

[Some of us have been saying this for years...]

"Dr Duncan says many universities overseas are now placing greater emphasis on qualities such as critical thinking, aesthetic and ethical awareness, cultural and creative capabilities and communication, while a widespread knowledge of the basic sciences will be increasingly important for New Zealand's participation in economic innovation. He welcomes the fact that the new legislation will continue to require universities to provide an "advanced education that promotes intellectual independence, and that is closely linked to research".

PUBLISHED AND ACCEPTED PAPERS

Wake, G.C., Shorten, P.R., Vetheranium, I., Soboleva, T.K. and Davis, S.R. "Influence of milking frequency on mammary gland dynamics" (in press, accepted April 2002) *Journal of Theoretical Biology*.

Wake, G.C. and Hamzah, N. "The solution and the stability of a nonlinear age-structured population model" (in press, accepted April 2002) *ANZIAM Journal of Applied Mathematics*.

Wake, G.C., Soboleva, T.K. and Pleasants, A.K. " The evolution of a truncated Gaussian probability density through time" (in press, accepted March 2002) Mathematical and Computer Modelling.
 Watson, N.A. Elementary proofs of some basic subtemperature theorems. Colloq. Math., to appear.

REFEREED CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Wake, G.C., Chase, J.,G., Lam, Z.H., et.al) "Steady state optimal insulin infusion for hyperglycemic ICU patients", Proc ICARV conference, NTU, 2002 (in press).

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Dr. Jennifer Holden, an honours statistics grad of 1998 from our Department, who has completed her Ph.D. at the University of Auckland, graduating last week!

Frank Lad (in Italia)

OFFICE OLYMPICS

Three way tie for the Office Olympics Rubbish Bin Challenge. Gunter, John and Michelle took out first place with a stunning show. Followed closely by Rob and Al in fourth equal position. Thanks to all those who took part. Overall in the competition the staff are leading with a points tally of 17, hot on the trail (yeah right, Ed) are the students with 12.

Robin Turner

PUZZLE CORNER

Solve in radicals: $2x^5 - 10x^3 + 10x - 5 = 0$

Bill Taylor