“Collaborating Externally for Research Funding”
Thursday 28 May via video conference

Notes and documents following the workshop

Chair: David Cahill. Associate Dean (Research)

Invited speakers for this workshop

- Dr Peter Macreadie, Honorary Fellow. School of Life and Environmental Sciences.
- Associate Professor Giovanni Turchini, Associate HoS (Research and Warrnambool), School of Life and Environmental Sciences.
- Dr Craig Sherman, Senior Lecturer, School of Life and Environmental Sciences.

Secretary: Teresa Treffry
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This is the second in a series of workshops planned for 2015
The notes and slide presentations from all workshops are available via the following links

SEBE staff intranet - https://wiki.deakin.edu.au/display/SEBE/Research+Administration
SEBE Information for HDR students - http://www.deakin.edu.au/sebe/research/student-information
This is the second in a series of Faculty research workshops planned for 2015. The first workshop ‘Why & How to work with Industry’: a presentation from the Faculty Research Partnership Managers, looked in depth at the issues that need to be considered when entering into an industry partnership and it should be remembered that any researcher who would like to discuss their research and the possibilities of industry engagement further are welcome to contact either of the partnership managers *

Today’s workshop follows on from this theme in presenting the personal experiences of three Deakin staff members who have all had considerable success with industry collaboration and are able to provide their own insights into the process.

Guest speakers for this session are:

- **Dr Peter Macreadie**, Honorary Fellow, School of Life and Environmental Sciences. Peter is also an ARC DECRA Fellow at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and has had a number of successful collaborations with a range of agencies.

- **Associate Professor Giovanni Turchini**, Associate HoS (Research and Warrnambool) Giovanni has been a recipient of two ARC funded Discovery fellowships and has engaged in research activities funded by both, governmental agencies and private industries with several national and international collaborators.

- **Dr Craig Sherman**, Senior lecturer, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, has had the experience of working with several government agencies and gives a personal insight into the question of how skill sets may be adapted to apply to industry needs.

* Research Partnership Managers for the Faculty are as follows

**Ashley Bowen** ashley.bowen@deakin.edu.au [for the Schools of Life and Environmental Sciences and Architecture and Built Environment.]

**Steve Trpkovski** steven.trpkovski@deakin.edu.au [for the Schools of Engineering and IT]
Presentation 1

Dr Peter Macreadie, is a marine ecologist whose current research focuses on four main areas: (1) impacts of human disturbance on the carbon sink capacity of coastal vegetated habitats; (2) dynamics of microbial priming within wetlands; (3) factors mediating resilience in seagrass ecosystems; and (4) environmental and socio-economic consequences of converting offshore petroleum structures into artificial reefs (rig-to-reef conversion).

Peter completed his PhD at Melbourne University in 2010 having received his first grant funding at the start of his PhD in 2006. This initial funding success is something he attributes to being guided by supervisors who knew what each funding body wanted. Noting that there have been a lot of failures along the way and learning from these and from observing others, the successes to date include a career total of $5.36M (including fellowships).

The PowerPoint presentation considers the following.

1. Why do the same people get funded?

2. Building a track record.
   - Academic bodies and potential industry partners view track records quite differently. Industry will Google your name, what does your web presence say?

3. What are the elements of a good writing style?
   - Don’t oversell but make the first paragraph as strong as possible, this is where you grab the attention, then lead the rest of the way. Rewrite and revise – the more you write the easier it will become.

4. What are the strategies for success?
   - Do your homework, really get to know your potential partners and their needs.
   - If possible meet face to face rather than using email. Make yourself known, attend industry meetings. - At one meeting aimed at the oil industry. Peter found that his group was the only environmental group represented.
   - Use workshops to build confidence for the project. Let people see the group and the level of interest in the project.
   - Consider the economies of scale for example a project with one Catchment Management Authority may not be viable, one that covers a number of CMA’s is a different proposition.
   - It’s easier to get smaller sums of money from several than a larger amount from one, have multiple stakeholders who all want the same thing and update them regularly.
   - Once you have been successful in your funding application – be a good steward, be grateful, thank your sponsors and tell them of your progress.

The full slide presentation from Dr Peter Macreadie with additional information follows.
Research Workshop 2-Collaborating externally for research funding, from first steps to success

Dr Peter Macreadie
ARC DECRA Fellow & Senior Lecturer
My experience

- Marine ecologist mostly working on coastal ecosystem services (namely nature-based climate mitigation – i.e. carbon offsetting)
- Lots of failures!
- Learnt a lot from observation
- Received first grant at start of PhD (2006)
- Career total: $5.36 M (incl. fellowships)
- Lead on 76% (41 grants), but only received ~35% of the pie (reasons: collaborative projects + big grants led by grey beards)
- Sources...
What funding does

• Buys freedom/time and builds capacity (early postdoc example)
• Teaches budget management (and, sometimes, how to do research on a shoe string...)
• Demonstrates leadership and independence
Why do the same people keep getting funded?

1. They apply (be proactive)
2. They have a good track record
3. Their proposal appeals to funders
4. Good communication

Also,
- The more you write, the easier it becomes
- Money attracts money
Track records

• Industry and traditional academic grant bodies (e.g. ARC) treat track records differently

• Reputation: how does industry assess track records? (web presence)

• If you don’t have the track record, consider adding a ‘grey beard’ to your proposal (but don’t sit in their shadow too long)

• #1 goal: to demonstrate you are an investment without risk

• Start small and build confidence

• Competitors: If you can’t beat them, join them (DSE example)
Writing style

- Write simple
- Don’t over- or under-sell your work
- Think: who cares?
- Demonstrate why your work is important with facts and figures, not with your opinion
- Always make the first paragraph a slap in the face (and then hold their hand) (e.g. UTS VC postdoc applications)
Elements of style

• Use the active voice
  
  *It’s more direct and vigorous than the passive*

• Use definite, specific, concrete language.
  
  *Avoid tame, colorless, hesitating, noncommittal language*

• Omit needless words
  
  *You’re wasting someone’s time! Vigorous writing is concise.*

• Do not overstate
  
  *It puts readers instantly on guard*

• Revise and rewrite
Tips for success

- Be ambitious, but be realistic
- Know your funders ... and get inside their heads
- Use grant statistics to guide your effort (what does % success mean?)
- Never submit a bad application
- Budget should demonstrate ‘bang for buck’
- The value of workshops (confidence building)
Tips for success continued...

- Get the most out of your grant by adapting to other funding bodies (without double dipping)
- **Hit the streets** (benefits of F2F vs email – avoid the silence response; AINSE eg)
- Figure out who has the power
- Leverage
- Use multiple stakeholders who all want the same thing
- **Economies of scale** (CMA example)
- Update stakeholders regularly
- **Make friends in high places** (influence, not coercion)
Once you get the money...

- Be a good steward
- Be grateful, thank your sponsors, and tell them of your progress
The ability to obtain independent funding is a skill that is absolutely essential for future professional success within and outside academia.
Presentation 2

**Associate Professor Giovanni Turchini** has been a recipient of two ARC funded Discovery fellowships, and his research interests cover nutrition (animal and human), food quality, lipids, fatty acid and omega-3 metabolism, fish oil replacement and fatty acid metabolism in cultured aquatic species, fatty acid-hormones and fatty acid-micronutrients interactions, seafood quality and traceability, and ethical issues encountered in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

He is also part of a collaborative team involving researchers from the University of Tasmania, the CSIRO and the Australian Institute of Marine Science which has won the Aquaculture Science Research Award. The findings from the winning project titled ‘Fish Oil Replacement in Australian Aquafeed have enabled industry to develop new cost effective and more sustainable aquafeeds for the Australasian market.

Modestly describing his contribution to the workshop as ‘two cents worth’ Giovanni notes the need to target industry partners and that his own experience has been primarily with for profit companies rather than government agencies.

In addition to the report which follows, the following advice and strategies are given.

- Building a relationship with industry partners takes time and maintaining the relationship is hard work but it is worth the effort. It also brings the benefit of knowing that your research is not only published in journals but is making a real and positive difference to the world and/or its communities.

- How to get there may seem daunting but at any conference there will be industry members present. They may not be presenting but you can find them, show interest - ask if you can look round.

- What can you offer? –Study the sector as much as you can. Source and individuate your potential partner, what do they need from you? - lead them to your idea.

- Constantly review rethink and refine.

- Know your competition, your partner’s competitors may be your enemies now but could become your partners in the future offering the opportunity for future collaboration and expansion.

- Find your niche – in other words make yourself known for a specific area or skill set so that potential industry partners will seek you out for your work in this area and your competitors look to you for collaboration.

The full slide presentation from **Associate Professor Giovanni Turchini** follows
Engaging with Industry: my two cents worth

Gio Turchini

Different kinds of “industries”

My experience is primarily with real industries (for profit companies) and not governmental agencies. So I won’t be able to comment on the latter.
Engaging with Industry: my two cents worth

Gio Turchini

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• Working with Industry partners is not an “easy job”

• They are extremely demanding & you cannot just turn them on/off, as you wish

• But working with industry is also extremely rewarding
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• They are extremely demanding & you cannot just turn them on/off, as you wish

• But working with industry is also extremely rewarding

  • Relatively large availability of $  
  • Little reporting and “waste of time” exercises  
  • Addressing some real-world issues and finding solutions  
  • Seeing the result of your work, not just published in a scientific journal, but actually being put in place and benefitting the community  
  • Making a difference
How to get there...: the Industry

• Think big, and think outside the box

• Individuate your industry/sector

• Study the sector in depth, and become very familiar with the sector:
  • What, Why, How, Where, When, Who
  • Read technical magazines
  • Participate/attend workshops, meetings for the industry
  • At scientific conferences: always be alert and look around (also visit the booths at the nearby tech/commercial exposition, if present)

• Individuate your potential industry partner(s)
How to get there... : the Industry

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- Individuate your potential industry partner(s)

(Before you even start thinking about approaching the industry for some $)
- **Make yourself known**
  - Present at technical workshops/symposia
  - Talk with the industry
How to get there... : **the Industry**

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- **Constantly go back, rethink and refine**
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How to get there... : the Partner

• Develop a two-way very open and trustworthy relationship

• What any industry stakeholder really values:
  • Confidentiality (*it is a competitive market!*)
  • Responsiveness (*time is $*)
  • Reliability (*you only have one shot*)

• Initially be generous:
  • Offer your services on a “gentlemen’s agreement” basis
  • ... But not too much (do not spoil them, nor give them the impression you are cheap and desperate)
  • Be ready to accept jobs that are relevant for them, and maybe not the most exciting for you

• Always be frank and honest:
  • Never promise things you cannot do
  • Respect timelines

• Wait for the right moment to come-up with your super brilliant new idea
How to get there...: the Partner

It must be a two-way relationship in order to last for any length of time.

- ....make sure you embark on something you really like and with the right partner!

- **Know your partner:** who is who, and what are their roles and KPI

- **Know their competitors:**
  - their competitors are your new enemies
  - But they could also be your future partners!
  - Never burn any bridge!!
How to get there... : what can you offer?

• **Know your potential and your limits (and be realistic!)**
  • What can you really do?

• **Know in depth all existing competitors you may have!** (other Unis, CSIRO, etc...)
  • Who are they?
  • What and how are they doing?
  • What are their capabilities?
  • What’s their current industry engagement?
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- **Can you compete with them?**
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  - What are their capabilities?
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- **Can you compete with them?**
  ...if *not*:
  - **Can you collaborate with them?**
How to get there... : **what can you offer?**

- Know your potential and your limits (and be realistic!)
  - What can you really do?

- **Know in depth all existing competitors you may have!** (other Unis, CSIRO, etc...)
  - Who are they?
  - What and how are they doing?
  - What’s their capabilities?
  - What’s their current industry engagement?

- Can you compete with them?
  ...if not:
- Can you collaborate with them?

- **Create your niche! Specific topic/skills/capability so that:**
  - You have no direct (serious) competitors in that niche
  - You could be of value for your own broad competitors, and transform them into collaborators
  - The industry partner(s) will know that when it comes to that specific topic, you are the solution to their problems.
It is hard work!  ...but I’m loving it
Dr Craig Sherman is a Molecular ecologist, his research focuses on the evolutionary biology and ecology of natural populations. Working on a range of marine and terrestrial organisms and using a combination of ecological and molecular approaches to address fundamental questions in the fields of genetic adaptation, mating systems evolution, population connectivity and sexual selection.

Arriving at Deakin in 2009 with no previous experience of working with industry partners, Craig has since developed partnerships with a number of government agencies rather than for profit industries and as previously noted by Giovanni ‘found a niche’.... so how did this happen?

The following insights and strategies are offered.

- It cannot be stressed enough that you must take time to identify your potential partners. They may have existing partnerships, what are you bringing that is new or different? Show interest in them, read reports. Consider how you can adapt your skill set to be useful to industry.

- Make contact, making them aware of your skill set. People are busy so follow up after a week or two, phone or e-mail but don’t leave it so long that they have forgotten all about you.

- Be prepared to start small perhaps only 2 -3 thousand dollars or a student project. The onus is on you to make regular contact and it takes a while to build up trust but once this relationship is established, industry partners will not waste time or money looking elsewhere but will come to you as the person to solve their problems.

- Remember there are often more failures than successes but failures provide a good learning experience. The most common mistakes being not understanding the needs of the partner. Not having researched the market and asking for too much (or too little).

- Do your groundwork, focus on your potential partner, start from a reasonably mature platform and all should be well.

More information from Dr Craig Sherman is in the presentation following.
Research Workshop 2
Collaborating externally for research funding

Craig Sherman
My background

- Arrived at Deakin 2009
- Molecular ecologist
- Mating systems and sexual selection
- Mostly ‘blue sky’ science
- So how did I get funding from industry?
Identify potential partners

- First need to identify the skill sets you have to offer
- Identify potential partners
- Speak to colleagues, research office
- Research potential partners
- Identify what their problems are – how will your research help them solve problems/make money?
Identify potential partners

• What are their research priorities
• Industry already has many partners, so why should they take a risk on you?
• Read any reports, strategic plans, budgets
• Make use of colleagues established contacts
Making contact

- Identify the right people to contact – who makes the decisions about funding?
- Arrange face to face meetings
- Give presentations – make your work relevant to their problems
- Be persistent (but not annoying) – follow up
Selling yourself

• Need to convince them that you have something to offer them
• If there is a funding available, leverage from our own institution – value for money (additional funding, student scholarships)
Establishing a track record

- I started small
- Student projects
- Make sure you deliver
- Build up trust
- Go out of your way
Nurture the relationship

- Onus is on you to make regular contact
- Meet reporting deadlines and acknowledge in any publications
- Be open about any problems. If you are not going to meet deadlines, let them know early
- Identify potential areas they haven’t considered
Questions?