

From the Editor's Desk

NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL WITH A CLEAR VISION

The stirring strains of the traditional *Gaudeamus igitur* surrounded the foundation students of Wollongong University's new medical school as they filed into the University Hall for their welcoming ceremony. As proceedings unfolded, it soon became obvious that this fledgling Graduate School of Medicine (GSM) was embarking on a different journey to that taken by our established medical schools.

Significantly, the school has already forged strong partnerships with communities in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven districts, as was clear from the many community leaders present at the ceremony. The GSM's primary goal is to graduate doctors committed to serving in regional, rural and remote Australia. In the words of the university's Vice-Chancellor, the school's model is designed "to address the shortage of [country] medical practitioners". And this commitment explains why many of the inaugural students hail from regional and rural communities.

But it is its educational philosophy that really sets the GSM apart. It has shifted its teaching from tertiary care hospitals, with their emphasis on *specialism*, to health resources within the community, with their value of *generalism*. Almost 300 local doctors (more than half GPs) have honorary academic appointments with the GSM, and more than a third of its permanent academic staff members are from the local region. The focus of its research will be education.

A US academic recently observed: "Academic medicine is like a tripod, standing on three legs. One leg is patient care, one is research, and one is education. Over the course of the twentieth century, the emphasis placed on each of these missions has changed. In recent years, education has become the short leg of the tripod."

The new medical school at UoW seeks to lengthen this leg. May its vision endure.



Martin B Van Der Weyden

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Cover: Robotic surgery at Epworth Eastern Hospital, Melbourne. Courtesy of Dr Laurence Harewood.



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