

FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

GRADUATION CEREMONY, WEDNESDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2001, 2 PM

VICE CHANCELLORS AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING TEACHING 2001

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SYBILLE LECHNER FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

One of the pleasures of my job as Chair of Academic Board is the opportunity to deliver citations that recognise excellence in teaching. The Vice-Chancellors Awards for Excellence in Teaching provide public and university-wide recognition of those members of staff judged outstanding for their contributions as teachers. Staff are awarded these awards on a competitive basis. Associate Professor Sybille (Nigi) Lechner from the Faculty of Dentistry is a recipient of the 2001 Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Lechner has an impressive record of dedication to teaching and to research and scholarship in teaching. She has had a long association with the Dental Faculty and the University of Sydney.

Professor Lechner graduated with a Bachelor of Dental Science from the University of Sydney in 1956 and a Master of Dental Science in Prosthetics in 1961. She began her teaching career in 1956 as a teaching fellow in the then Department of Operative Dentistry. In 1961 she was appointed to the position of lecturer, one which she held until 1965 when she resigned to raise a family. She returned to the university in 1979 as a part-time lecturer. From 1981- 82 she was a visiting associate professor at Northwestern University in Chicago. She came back to Sydney in 1982 and worked as a part-time Senior tutor in the then Department of Prosthetic Dentistry. In 1984 she returned to full-time work as a Senior Lecturer and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1997.

Throughout her distinguished academic career Professor Lechner has devoted herself to understanding and improving the interplay between teaching and learning. She has applied her understanding and insights to a notoriously difficult discipline within dentistry.

During her career she has changed more than just the style and the substance of teaching materials but also the way they are to be utilised by students. In her teaching work Professor Lechner has also changed the concept of the discipline of prosthetics itself. Through her work, the normally technically based discipline of Removable Prosthodontics has been transformed to an intellectually challenging field of oral rehabilitation.

Professor Lechner has developed various resources to stimulate student learning. These include procedural manuals, a text book, teaching video tapes, modifications to a teaching simulation aid (a phantom head), problem based lecture presentations, interactive CD-ROMs, and a hybrid www/CD ROM collaborative problem-based

learning module.

These developments have been based on the thoughtful filling of an educational need and not driven merely by new technologies. Furthermore, the quality and innovative nature of her work has been recognised by international universities participating in piloting these resources.

It is an enormous challenge to engage students in learning in a clinical environment when a patient and their welfare is directly and simultaneously involved. There are major sensitivities to be respected for all parties in terms of attitude, demeanour and confidentiality. Ultimately the paramount requirement is of appropriate patient care. Professor Lechner has absorbed these ever-present considerations into all her teaching approaches and materials.

Professor Lechner uses student feedback to improve the quality of her teaching and enhance student learning. She regularly gets very positive feedback from students in regard to her teaching and the materials she prepares to support her teaching. The best judges of any teachers' performance are his/her students. In the words of one student from a student feedback survey, 'she's great'. Professor Lechner is a worthy recipient of the Vice Chancellors Excellence in Teaching Award.