

Graduation Ceremony, Friday, 29 October 2004

## Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Support of the Student Experience

**Maryanne Large and Leon Poladian**  
**Optical Fibre Technology Centre**

Members and Guests of the University and graduating students.

The Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Support of the Student Experience recognise exactly that - outstanding achievements in supporting students and enhancing their experience at the University of Sydney. These awards reflect the University's strong commitment to providing the highest quality learning environment for all its students.

Dr Maryanne Large and Dr Leon Poladian from the Optical Fibre Technology Centre (OFTC) are joint winners and recipients of one of these Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Support of the Student Experience for 2004.

Dr Maryanne Large holds a Bachelor of Science degree from this University and a Doctorate in Physics from the University of Dublin. She is an Australian Research Council Senior Research Fellow, a student co-ordinator, and Deputy Director at the OFTC.

Dr Leon Poladian holds a Bachelor of Science degree and a Doctorate in Theoretical Physics from this University. He also holds a Graduate Diploma of Education from the University of New England. He is an Australian Research Council Senior Research Fellow at the OFTC and an Australian Professorial Fellow in the School of Mathematics and Statistics in the Faculty of Science.

The collaboration of Maryanne Large and Leon Poladian has led to the initiation of an inspirational project which, in addition to pursuing the University's goals of research-led teaching and interdisciplinarity, also provides our talented students with an excellent student experience. This project has been identified as a model of best-practice and has been added to the University's Best Practice database.

The OFTC is fundamentally an interdisciplinary department of the University. Historically, it has attracted students and researchers from both the Faculties of Science and Engineering. Maryanne and Leon have built on these features to create a learning environment which exemplifies the University's commitment to research-led teaching. Students who engage with them are exposed to cutting-edge research in the field of optical fibre technology. They learn the fundamental principles of physics, optics and engineering, while immersing themselves in the solution of very practical problems.

It is significant that Maryanne and Leon have managed to foster an environment which encourages researchers, supervisors and students to exchange information and ideas freely across discipline boundaries. Students have commented on the atmosphere of collegiality supported by Maryanne and Leon, on the richness of the learning, and the stimulating research experience at the OFTC. Most importantly they have noted how much they enjoyed their time and their learning experience at the Centre. Maryanne and Leon have

succeeded in showing students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, that research can be fun.

I have pleasure in presenting, two truly worthy recipients of the 2004 Vice-Chancellor's Award for Support of the Student Experience, Dr Maryanne Large and Dr Leon Poladian from the Optical Fibre Technology Centre.