

Moving out of traditional boundaries

Law, Business and Arts may not be obvious bedfellows, but **GARY DAVIS**, the Faculty's new Dean, argues they have much to gain from a collaborative approach.

ANTENNAE

Professor Gary Davis is Dean of the Faculty of Law, Business and Arts.

He was previously Dean of Law at Flinders University in Adelaide.

Professor Davis's teaching and research interests include property and trusts, conflicts of law, defamation, and legal education and teaching.

It is the 1st day of July. This is a significant day for me. Being a Canadian, I can today celebrate Canada's National Day. I also note that, with one exception, 1 July is the day that I have officially started every job I have ever had since entering the full-time workforce, whether in Canada, Sydney, Perth or Adelaide. The exception is my current position here at Charles Darwin University — and even then, 1 July marks exactly two months since my arrival in Darwin. Furthermore, the Territory Day fireworks I am listening to at the moment remind me of my new life here.

So it is an opportune time to reflect upon the matter that occupies almost all my waking hours, namely the Faculty of Law, Business and Arts. This is a faculty that brings together a diverse range of people and activities. I cannot help but view it, at least initially, through the prism of my discipline background, which is law. What strikes me as immediately attractive about this Faculty is how it links together the three disciplines. Apart from those law courses that are housed in a faculty of their own, it is not unusual at Australian universities to organise law and business into a common faculty. This reflects some commonly held assumptions about law and business somehow being two sides to the same coin. It is a model that legal academics do not tend to embrace immediately, and many bemoan this tendency towards association exclusively with business. I won't say that the things that we claim we are interested in — justice, human rights, the public good — are antithetical to business, but they do sit a little more comfortably with our common perceptions of the humanities and the arts.

CDU, in bringing law, arts and business together, recognises the affinities that exist among all three disciplines. One of my early goals for the Faculty is to ensure that this structural linkage becomes a positive substantive force within the Faculty and the University as a whole. To that end, I have been looking for ways that will allow those within the Faculty to perceive it as something other than some sort of administrative shell housing individual segments of the Faculty. The University and this Faculty, in particular, are too small for an approach of that nature to be viably sustained. More positively, there is so much to be gained by looking outwards and moving across traditional boundaries. Teaching, research and community engagement





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are all capable of benefiting when such a perspective of collaboration and enquiry lies at the heart of the enterprise.

In this spirit, one of my first initiatives has been to inaugurate a Faculty Seminar Series. Starting in a modest way with the commencement of Semester 2, fortnightly seminars are being held on Monday afternoons for the benefit of Faculty staff and postgraduate students (and any other members of the CDU community who might be interested). These will allow the research and scholarship of the Faculty to be shared and celebrated, on a regular and frequent basis.

The seminars will traverse the range of interests across the Faculty, from preserving Aboriginal song and dance to enhancing the capacities of Timor-Leste society; from desert business potential to virtual art galleries; and from understanding the landscape painting to understanding the criminology of northern Australia. Although in terms of the source of presentations, they will be shared equally by each of the Faculty's three Schools, they are being put forward as Faculty events designed to enlighten and interest attendees from across the Faculty.

I have been encouraging staff to attend the sessions notwithstanding that a seminar topic might not fall within their own particular area of immediate interest or scholarship. One reason for this, not least, is to break down the disciplinary barriers and to provide some scope for researchers in one part of the Faculty to be stimulated to see possible affinities elsewhere in the Faculty, which might well enhance their own research and collaborations.

Secondly, those presenting their research – and we are encouraging in equal parts the presentation of finished products and early explorations – will benefit from the feedback they can gain, not only from their disciplinary peers but from the different, often unique, perspectives of scholars from other parts of the Faculty. Drawing again from my own background, law in particular can be a lynchpin. Law intrudes in almost every element of human endeavour and interaction, as well as being influenced by the society in which it is embedded. For example, how we as a society effectively preserve and sustain traditional song and dance dovetails with principles of intellectual property law and international treaties on cultural heritage. How we understand and deal with the causes of crime can be

intimately affected by matters such as politics and traditional knowledge systems.

In addition, hearing about the research work of others, including its successes and its frustrations, can be inspiring and instructive. Early career researchers, including postgraduate students, are given an opportunity to observe how the product of one's research can be presented to a community of peers. Thus, the seminars offer more senior academics the opportunity to model effective approaches and processes. When it is a junior person who presents, he or she can receive constructive feedback and advice in a relaxed and unthreatening environment. This is how a research culture can be developed, nurtured and enhanced.

Finally, and certainly equally importantly to my way of thinking about universities, these seminars will serve as a means for academic staff within the Faculty to demonstrate the respect and collegiality for which academe has long been known. To be professionally courteous in respect of the work and scholarship of others who, by being members of the Faculty, are part of the same joint endeavour, is a hallmark of academic life. It adds to a university's attractiveness as a place to fulfil one's career ambitions and follow one's desires for intellectual enquiry and engagement.

The Territory Day fireworks seem to have stopped now. In due course, I'm hoping there will be other fireworks, at least metaphorical ones, celebrating the achievements and cohesion within the Faculty of Law, Business and Arts at CDU.

IMAGE
Sally Carrington

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To find out more about the Faculty of Law, Business and Arts, visit [W: www.cdu.edu.au/lba](http://www.cdu.edu.au/lba).

