As we celebrate our Centenary year there has never been a more important time to recognise the achievements of our Alumni. The Victoria University of today is built on the successes of our graduates – our Alumni, and we are proud of the contribution they have made to our University, to the west of Melbourne, to our nation and across the global stage.

Since their inception in 2011 our Alumni Awards have showcased the diversity of the programs of VU and our predecessor institutions. Nominees have included local and international business leaders, philanthropists, world class sportspeople and musicians, politicians and those who tirelessly volunteer to help make their communities better places to live.

Their achievements are in keeping with our strategic goals. As the University of Opportunity and Success, our core promises are to deliver high quality learning opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to enable them to create personalised career success, and to undertake high impact research that shapes healthier, smarter and more sustainable communities.

Congratulations to all nominees. We are extremely proud of your achievements, which fully embrace our values and which bring our mission and core promises to life. Your talent and determination mean you are both an inspiration and a wonderful ambassador for our university.

Professor Peter Dawkins
Vice-Chancellor and President
Victoria University
Victoria University has a strong focus on community and staying connected, and we seek a lifelong mutually beneficial relationship between the University and our Alumni.

Our VU Alumni community is now a global network of over 220,000 people across more than 130 countries, and it continues to grow rapidly. This community can provide a professional network for our Alumni, to support their personal and business success. The relationship also provides information and opportunities for Alumni to actively engage in VU activities, which support VU’s strategic ambitions, goals and success.

This network helps our Alumni to flourish, which in turn generates high quality and inspirational nominations for our Alumni Awards across a wide range of industries, occupations and geographic locations, such as those received for this year’s Awards.

Thank you to all members of our Alumni community who contribute their time, expertise and resources to support the VU mission and strategy. Thank you also to all our nominees and those involved as nominators or referees, for the support you have provided to our Alumni Awards.
OUTSTANDING STUDENT ALUMNI AWARD

This award is presented to no more than two current students who have demonstrated outstanding qualities in one or more of the following: student leadership, academic success, business initiatives, volunteer or community related work or extracurricular pursuits.

FINALISTS

Mr Francis Killackey
Bachelor of Laws

Francis has courageously pursued a major career change to become a mature aged law student; bringing his business and life skills as well as experience to his extracurricular activities to support other students and the College. His ability to provide helpful advice and insights sees him sought out by students. He runs a range of workshops which help others benefit from his experiences, including how to increase their employability in the “real” world.

A High Distinction student, he was awarded the 2014 Booth Medal for Best Law student, and provides support for all Careers programs including peer mentoring programs. Francis also has a long history of community volunteering in youth support, charity and legal aid programs.

Dr Ancy Ramasamy
Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Business (Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management)

Arriving in Australia in 2010, Ancy has pursued excellence in studies and in her community and student leadership activities. A valedictorian at graduation and recipient of the VU International Research Scholarship due to her academic results, she has also been heavily involved in supporting other students.

In this area she has been an English language facilitator, Resident Assistant supporting international students in the Student Village, organiser of social events that brought together students, and also a Senior Rover, supporting new students with their academic endeavours and ability to access VU resources. Her kindness and professionalism have touched and supported many fellow students.
OUTSTANDING STUDENT ALUMNI AWARD

FINALISTS

Ms Anna Smith
Bachelor of Laws

Anna’s support of others started in her native Tajikistan, where as a music student she offered free piano classes to disadvantaged students to help improve their skills and results. She has continued to support others during her time at VU. In addition to her studies she immersed herself in a range of programs that have expanded her knowledge and capabilities. She has also volunteered her time to share these insights and experiences with other students commencing their law degrees, to help provide them with guidance and support.

Anna’s journey to achieve her dream of becoming a qualified lawyer has not been easy, taking her across a number of countries as she and her young family fled religious persecution. Her experiences have driven her passion for learning and supporting others to also achieve their dreams.

Mr James Sorensen
Bachelor of Science (Biomedical Science) Honours

James has been widely acknowledged for both his academic and student leadership achievements, including the 2015 VU Individual Student Leadership Award for his commitment and demonstration of leadership through multiple roles at VU; and being the recipient of the 2016 Vice Chancellors’ research scholarship.

Whilst achieving High Distinctions and First Class Honours, he also co-founded the College of Health and Biomedicine Society, was elected to the role of General Secretary of the VU Student Union, and served on the VU Council. James also actively promotes VU, presenting to both careers teachers and students. His Honours’ research has been published in top tier journals and received international acclaim for its innovative approaches.
YOUNG ACHIEVER
ALUMNI AWARD

This award recognises Alumni aged 35 or younger who have demonstrated significant achievements early in their career or chosen field of endeavour.

FINALISTS

Mr Rene Noguiera
Commercial Manager, Level Crossings Removal Program,
Metro Trains Melbourne
Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Engineering

Rene’s career has moved swiftly forward since his high potential was identified and he was plucked from an engineering graduate program to tackle major programs at Melbourne Airport, including works to accommodate the new A380 aircraft. His next move was to major projects at Metro Trains Melbourne to work on some of the largest public infrastructure programs in Australia.

As well as his Engineering degree, Rene completed a Bachelor of Laws, mostly at night classes. He was awarded a scholarship to complete his final year at The Hague University, where he learnt from some of the world court international experts in law. He now combines his engineering and legal knowledge as a senior executive on the major State Government level crossing removal program.

Mr Vincent Shin
School Lawyer, WestJustice based at The Grange P12 College
Bachelor of Laws

Alongside his law studies, Vincent worked as a Child and Youth Residential Care Worker, supporting young people facing similar challenges to those he had himself experienced. His early legal work was as a volunteer at Footscray Community Legal Service and Sunshine Magistrates Court, where his passion for providing accessible legal services to the people of the West was cemented.

His current role is the first of its kind. The school has a high percentage of students from backgrounds of social and economic disadvantage, and many who are also victims of family violence. Vincent’s role includes casework and court work for a range of legal matters. He provides an important community legal education service on a wide range of matters which support prevention and resolution of issues that impact students, their families and the school.
Ms Celia Tran
Engagement Officer, Capital City Local Learning and Employment Network
Master of International Community Development

Recognised as someone with boundless energy, compassion and leadership potential, Celia has worked actively with peak bodies for young people and multicultural affairs and is passionate about supporting refugees. She has taken part in the Dual Identity Leadership program which supports young people taking leadership roles in the broader community and received the award for the “person most likely to be Prime Minister”. Through her role as the Victorian Ambassador to the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia, Celia influences the national agenda on youth issues.

Celia has been recognised for her contribution to the Vietnamese community in Australia, and also received awards from the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the 2016 Youth Leader of the Year Award from the Maribyrnong City Council.

Mr Christian Williams
Primary School Teacher, Catholic Education Office (St Michael’s Primary School)
Bachelor of Education

Despite having a severe congenital heart condition, Christian initially pursued his passion for sports and captained Australia’s junior lacrosse team. However in trying to qualify for the London Olympics in archery it became clear his health required him to pursue a different path and he traded the sporting field for a classroom. Success followed this move, being recognised as the Victorian/Tasmanian Teacher of the Year and a Young Australian of the Year finalist.

His innovative classroom activities include running a real café as a social enterprise, and creating an iPhone app to teach kids about healthy eating and exercise. For these approaches he was one of only 2 teachers in Australia to be picked from 8,000 applicants across 148 countries to be a finalist in the “Nobel Prize of Teaching” – the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher prize. Christian also continues to meet with children who have congenital cardiac conditions, inspiring them to dream big and fulfil their ambitions.
OUTSTANDING SERVICE ALUMNI AWARD

The recipient of this award will have offered exceptional service to their local community or the Victoria University, Alumni or Student community.

FINALISTS

Dr Peter Condliffe
Barrister and Mediator
Doctor of Philosophy

Peter’s distinguished career sees him respected as one of Australia’s most experienced conflict management teachers and practitioners. His roles have seen him involved in a large number of environmental and planning cases, native title disputes, mining, water and fishing rights matters. He also held a senior role with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Cambodia.

Peter has made significant contributions to his fields in justice, law and mediation, including helping to design courses, instructional materials and as a teacher in university and other settings. Having argued significant cases at the Refugee Review Tribunal, Peter also founded the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice and has significantly promoted support and understanding for those involved.

Mr Nasir Sobhani
Barber, Brother Wolf Barbershop
Certificate 3 in Hairdressing

Nasir became Victoria Polytechnic’s Ambassador in 2015. Whilst training at VU, Nasir began offering homeless people complimentary grooming services, and respectfully learned their stories. Through realising the influence he could have on the self-esteem of others, he became “The Street Barber”. On his days off he takes to the streets to give free haircuts to people who are homeless and/or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

His integrity, compassion and works are followed globally, including in Russia where a local barber chain brought him to Russia and together they visited various homeless shelters and hospices providing free haircuts. Nasir has also travelled to Philippines to do the same type of volunteer work. Nasir was one of 5 people profiled as part of the Kenneth Cole Courageous Class Campaign in New York, which celebrated individuals who have overcome life’s challenges to become inspiring role models.
OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP ALUMNI AWARD

This new award recognises the respect and acknowledgement that the recipient has earned within their profession and the broader community, and that they are well on the path to establishing themselves as an outstanding leader.

FINALISTS

Mr Paul Booth
Director of Research, Blackrock Inc.
Bachelor of Business

Paul is one of VU’s 90 Legends, having been involved in leadership roles with VU during his student days – including as General Secretary of the National Union of Students, Victoria and a member of the VU Council – and throughout his career. He has maintained a strong interest in VU, instigating the Booth Medal in 2002 in the College of Law, and supports the Award with an annual donation.

His work, primarily in the finance sector has seen him hold very senior leadership roles at a young age. His roles include being appointed Head of Citi Global Data Services by the age of 35 and now his role at BlackRock Inc., the world’s largest asset manager with approximately US$5 trillion of assets under management, by age 44. Paul also volunteers his time and expertise in Board roles including with Surf Living Saving Sydney. He was awarded a Commonwealth Commendation for Bravery for his role as a volunteer lifeguard in 2001.

Mr Simon Lloyd
Director of Coaching,
Geelong Football Club
Master of Applied Psychology (Sport),
Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology (Organisational) and Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)

Simon has spent 19 years in the AFL, working across 4 clubs as a psychologist and in a range of coaching positions; also bringing his knowledge and insights to the key areas of high performance, development and recruitment. He has led large multi-disciplinary teams to achieve goals, with his background in psychology, cultural development and leadership being instrumental in driving value-based environments where standards are lived, not just spoken about.

Simon is recognised for his uncompromising integrity and accountability, and his ability to positively influence both individuals and groups to help them achieve their personal and collective ambitions.
Ms Halinka Panzera
Founder and Managing Director
BDC Market Intelligence
Master of Business Administration

Halinka has now created three start-up businesses, and her work and passions take her across a wide range of areas. Her ideas on innovation, business performance, market insights and customer engagement see her working within a wide range of industries, notably food manufacturing and SME’s. Her branding and packaging knowledge has led to award winning designs for new products developed by leading food companies.

Her passion for leadership through creating and seizing opportunities is evident in her endeavors around inspirational speaking engagements, blogs and writing; with a focus on the benefits of diversity and inclusion. In this area she was an invited participant in a New York working party established under President Obama, to establish diversity and inclusion in the Federal Workforce. Halinka has received a range of accolades and awards including a City of Monash Business Award.
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

This pre-eminent award recognises the recipient’s exceptional contribution to a chosen field of endeavor, and their pursuit of excellence in everything they do.

FINALISTS

Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah AO
Chairman, Sunway University Malaysia
VU Honorary Doctorate, Diploma of Business

Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah AO is the visionary founder and chairman of Sunway Group, a leading Malaysian conglomerate. He is also the founding trustee of Malaysia’s largest education-focused social enterprise, the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation (JCF). He supports his passionate belief in the power of education to raise standards of living and making quality education accessible to all deserving students, through creating a legacy of perpetual scholarships with the Sunway Education Group of 16 institutions, which are now a part of the JCF.

Tan Sri is heavily involved in sustainable development through Sunway’s sustainable development town and city creation and construction programs, and also through helping establish public policy think tanks and research. He has gifted US$10million to establish the Sachs Centre on Sustainable Development, aimed at advancing the UN Sustainable development Goals in Southeast Asia.

With 9 honorary doctorates bestowed by leading international universities, twice recognised as Forbes Asia Hero of Philanthropy, Council member of UN Sustainable Development Solutions network and many other significant roles and awards of recognition, Tan Sri was also awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia for his contribution to strengthening bilateral relations between Malaysia and Australia through education.
Mr Brendan Joyce
Head coach of the Opals – the Australian Women’s Basketball team
Bachelor of Arts (Recreation)

Brendan is a pre-eminent sports leader, acclaimed and respected locally, nationally and internationally for his achievements and contributions as an elite basketball player and coach. A national representative as a player, his career has moved to coaching where he has achieved considerable success in the NBL, with the Australian Men’s team the Boomers as Assistant Coach, and over the past 3 years as head coach of the Australian Women’s team, the Opals.

With a strong focus on teamwork and the pursuit of excellence, in his expanded AIS role as leader of the national women’s basketball program Brendan has overseen a period of unrivalled success with every national women’s team bringing home a World Championship medal. He has received multiple awards recognising his achievements as an athlete and a coach.
The Hon Telmo Languiller MP
Speaker in Victorian Legislative Assembly and State Member for Tarneit
Bachelor of Arts (Australian Cultural Studies)

Telmo was first elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1999, and has a passionate commitment to the western suburbs. Born in Uruguay, he was exiled in Argentina following his involvement in student and union movements, and he continued his active involvement in these areas upon his migration to Australia.

He has held a range of roles within Parliament, heavily focused upon driving policies and services in the areas of health, community services and multicultural affairs. He has been widely recognised for his work including being the recipient of an El Salvador Government Bicentenary Award.
For further information about the Alumni Awards, or to find out how to become more actively involved in the Victoria University Alumni Community, please contact the Alumni Relations Team.

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