SUPPORTING OUR FUTURE

YOUR DONATIONS TO RMIT IN 2014
Thank you for supporting our vision.

As RMIT’s new Vice-Chancellor, I am delighted to join an institution with a long history of philanthropy and a growing, passionate community of supporters.

RMIT is an incredible organisation, as a global university of technology and design and as one of the largest educational institutions in Australia. The University has a significant global footprint including Melbourne, Vietnam, a centre in Barcelona, and programs through partners in Singapore, Hong Kong, mainland China and Indonesia, which creates unique opportunities for our students, researchers, staff and supporters.

In the last few years, there have been more transformative gifts to universities in Australia than ever before. More than ever, our community has demonstrated its belief in education and the transformational effect it has on individuals, families and societies.

You are part of this groundswell of support. You believe that those who have benefited from education in the past have a crucial role to play in helping secure education for the next generation.

RMIT has a strong commitment to providing access to education for people from all backgrounds. Our Scholarship Philanthropy Fund is part of this commitment: we will match donations to the fund up to $10 million until the end of 2015, or until funds are allocated.

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Many of you have already taken part in the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund and seen your gifts matched – helping even more students in their journeys to success. This is an important opportunity and I hope many more of you will take advantage of it.

RMIT is a strong organisation for so many reasons, including the support we receive from our community of donors.

We thank each and every one of you for your generosity and vision in giving to RMIT, supporting our students and researchers, enabling them to achieve great things and helping to empower the next generation.

Martin Bean CBE
RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President
Thank you for supporting RMIT.

One important thing I know about philanthropy is that each gift is unique. Whether you’ve chosen to give to RMIT as the result of your own experience of education, in memory of a loved one, as a corporate gift, or to support an area that inspires you, the reasons you give are so often tied closely to your own story.

Your gifts to RMIT are the expression of your vision as a philanthropist. You are creating opportunities that may not exist without your support.

Part of our role here at RMIT is to connect your vision with that of the University, to ensure your gift will have a direct impact on our students, academics and our community.

In this magazine, our annual publication to say thank you to donors, we aim to show that every donation to RMIT is individual and impactful.

To do this, we invited every person featured in this year’s magazine to choose an object which represents the story behind their gift to RMIT, or its outcome.

The stories that arose out of this are wonderful: a leading nanotechnology researcher tells us about the moment he received, on behalf of RMIT, a medal representing excellence, but also a philanthropic gift to help build a state-of-the-art nanotechnology lab.

A student who struggled to find the resources to get into university found a sense of confidence when he received a George Alexander scholarship and tells us about the object that embodies his dream career.

These reflect your own stories, as people with passion and conviction to create something better for the future. Of course, we could only select a handful for the magazine, but there are so many powerful stories like this in our community of donors.

These stories are unique, yet as donors, we are also united by a collective belief: a belief in RMIT and its mission, a belief that giving to education is powerful, and a belief in the capacity of philanthropy to make a profound difference in this world.

As individuals we can make a deep impact, but as a community, we can create significant momentum.

That’s why RMIT is matching donations to the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund until the end of 2015. Already, many of you have seen your donations matched, doubling the impact of your gifts – which will create powerful outcomes into the future.

Many of you are considering this opportunity, which will be open until the end of the year.

Enjoy the magazine. We hope it encourages you to reflect on your own story of giving, from the gifts you may have received in your own life, to those you choose to pass on to the next generation.

Melissa Smith
Director, Advancement
THANK YOU
Your stories of giving in 2014
Professor Vipul Bansal explains how a new NanoBioSensing Facility, supported by The Ian Potter Foundation, could change the way diseases are diagnosed and treated, and how philanthropy has changed the way he approaches science.

“To me, this medal represents excellence, of both research culture and the reputation RMIT has developed in nanotechnology over the last seven years.

On behalf of RMIT, I accepted an Ian Potter Foundation 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal at a ceremony when the Foundation announced a special gift of $500,000 to create Australia’s first purpose-built NanoBioSensing Facility. This new lab will support our project to develop a special biosensor that can diagnose diseases – with very big potential.

When I was around 10 years old, I became very sick with stomach pain. It lasted for around 10 years, and none of the best doctors in India at the time could diagnose it. We now know it was an ulcer problem caused by helicobacter, but this bacteria was not discovered at the time. This shows how diagnosis of disease is so important – it means you can get the right treatment.

There is so much potential in nanotechnology. A nanoparticle is one billionth of anything. Nanoparticles show remarkably different properties than other particles, which creates many new scientific possibilities.

Initially, we received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to use nanotechnology to develop portable biosensors that could instantaneously diagnose malaria in rural areas of Asia and Africa. The device needed to be cheap, minimally invasive and easy to use in areas without electricity or resources.

Now, with the new lab supported by The Ian Potter Foundation, we can develop this technology further. We can create a device that could be used to diagnose of a wide range of diseases like cardiovascular disease and even cancer. It could be used for diseases like meningitis, to reduce the time of diagnosis from hours to minutes – whereby faster diagnosis could save lives.

The plan for the new advanced lab is to have chemistry, biology and interdisciplinary space all sitting together, allowing researchers to work with pathogens and microorganisms within a nanotechnology space.

The aim for The Ian Potter NanoBioSensing Facility is to have real-world outcomes, to have an impact that could change people’s lives. Personally speaking, the philanthropy that has supported this project has made a big difference in the way I approach science.

I have always been a fundamental scientist, I always try to write quality papers and so on. I think philanthropy is focused on creating real-world outcomes, and that has changed my own focus. My goal now is to produce one product, at least one product in my lifetime that gives a benefit back to society. To the Ian Potter Foundation, all I can say is: thank you for supporting us.”

Janet Hirst, Chief Executive Officer, The Ian Potter Foundation

Nanotechnology to create better health

“This is an excellent project that has the potential to have a long-term and transformative impact on nanobiosensing research with far-reaching implications for human health. This grant recognises the achievements of RMIT and its team, and their contribution to the community.”

Janet Hirst, Chief Executive Officer, The Ian Potter Foundation

Image Right: Professor Vipul Bansal in RMIT’s MicroNano Research Facility, which opened in August 2014.
Extraordinary things can happen when you bring people together from different communities in the spirit of reconciliation, says RMIT’s Dr Elizabeth Kath.

“The olive branch is a symbol of willingness to extend a hand to others despite the circumstances, to make a commitment to keep talking and to stay at the table, for as long as it takes to reach a better understanding.

I was part of a fantastic reconciliation project recently called ‘Changing the Score’, where we brought a group of Australian Football League (AFL) players together with community members from favela communities in Rio de Janeiro. It was organised by RMIT University, Bluestone Edge and Global Reconciliation.

The favelas in Rio are very poor communities that largely operate outside of the formal state. They have an informal leadership system, often led by drug cartels. There are thousands of children in the favelas of Rio working in the drug trade, as soldiers guarding points of contact for traffickers and guarding the edges of the community and so on. It’s a very dangerous existence and most of these kids don’t live for very long.

The AFL players and young Indigenous players spent eight days with the communities in Rio, hosted by Brazilian NGO, IBISS (Brazilian Institute for Innovation and Social Health Care).

The core idea was to explore how everyday practices such as sport can become vehicles for reconciliation and social inclusion. But the project also created real change for the people who took part. When people from different communities come together and meet the human beings on the other side of stereotypes, the changes in perspective that result can be quite extraordinary.

Some of the young Indigenous men in our group performed a war cry dance before the community, which was incredibly special for the Australian group, but it was also very special for the Brazilian group. I’ve heard that they’re still talking about it in Rio!

I interviewed the Australians after the exchange in Brazil and most of them said it had changed their lives. Many of them thought they were just playing sport in the public eye, but now a lot of these young guys realise that they can do something more. The staff at IBISS said the exchange with the Australians was also an inspiring and important experience for the Brazilians who participated.

The trip was part of a series of reconciliation journeys run through Global Reconciliation that use sport and other everyday activities (such as health, education and the arts) to build community resilience.

Global Reconciliation seeks to build global support for local projects that use everyday practice as vehicles for reconciliation. It started off as a loose network of people around the world interested in reconciliation theory and practice, and has now become a more formal collaboration called Global Reconciliation. Philanthropy is very important in making possible the work we do.

Reconciliation has often been understood as a notion of peace or harmony. But we don’t see reconciliation as that. We see reconciliation as building resources that help us as human beings to live with the tensions and difficulties of difference that are always going to be there.

I’ve always had a belief that, at the end of the day, we’re human beings and if we try there’s always some way that we can reach each other.”

The power of reconciliation

“I have chosen to support Global Reconciliation for two reasons. Firstly, its core function is, as its name declares, reconciliation. The greater part of the world’s turmoil is generated from fractured cultures and mutually antipathetic communities. Secondly, Global Reconciliation is a team of dedicated professionals with a long-term commitment to undertaking specific and measurable projects, and I see this as far more effective than other common approaches that pursue broad unmeasurable altruistic goals in an uncoordinated way or with a short-term focus. I would hope that my contribution assists in enabling Global Reconciliation and RMIT to achieve success in their selected reconciliation projects. I find it far more productive and cost-efficient to work through proven organisations rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.”

Robert Costa, Director of Costa Group, board member and donor to Global Reconciliation

Image: Dr Elizabeth Kath, Vice-Chancellor’s Research Fellow, Honorary Research Fellow with the ULI Global Compact Cities and Co-Director of Global Reconciliation, pictured on City Campus.
A lifelong passion for language and learning and a stint working in Vietnam led Joyce Kirk to create a scholarship supporting RMIT Vietnam students.

“When my mother died, I decided I would invest in this pen. It is a way of honouring both my mother and my father, who placed a very high value on education, even though they didn’t ever complete high school. I was the first in my family to go to university, and my brother went after me.

For me this pen represents the gift of words and the value of elegance in expression: I think it’s an elegant pen. It also represents the absolute necessity of people being able to read and write so they can live and create lives that are as fulfilling as possible, whatever that might be. I use the pen almost every day, I rarely sign my name with anything else.

My passion for education is what led me to donate a scholarship fund to support RMIT Vietnam students.

I was lucky enough to live and work in Vietnam for 18 months when the then Vice-Chancellor invited me to fill the role of President of RMIT Vietnam during the recruitment process for the position.

It’s extraordinary to think the RMIT Vietnam campus started as a swamp. It had to be drained, and all of the military ordnance left over from the war had to be cleared. And now it’s a beautifully lush campus that people can walk around and enjoy. It really is the envy of many universities in the region.

Vietnam is a wonderful country. There is a strong focus on family, ancestry, an attachment to people’s roots and to their home towns. I’m really very humbled and impressed by that. At RMIT Vietnam, that meant some families pooling their resources to give one family member the chance to make a better life through their education at university. It also meant some talented and successful students having to withdraw from their studies when family circumstances changed.

Although Vietnam is becoming increasingly prosperous, not all young people who aspire to university are able to afford it. There are so many people there that need assistance to have the sort of education that allows them to reach their real potential and that we in Australia might sometimes take for granted. That’s why I decided to donate the scholarship to RMIT Vietnam.

For a long time I thought that supporting a scholarship that includes tuition fees, a computer and accommodation was beyond me, but the people in Advancement showed me a way of packaging a gift so that I can contribute to it over a period of time to make it sufficient to make a difference to the life of a young person.

Last year I met two of the students who are benefitting from the gift when I was invited back to RMIT Vietnam for the scholarships ceremony. Their stories are quite touching and they’ve both been through a lot in pursuit of their education.

One of the marvellous things about education is that it helps things improve exponentially. The impact of more people with a good education flows right through the whole country.

When you talk to a lot of the students at RMIT Vietnam, there’s a high degree of loyalty and altruism. They make a point of saying that when they graduate they want to contribute to their country and you know jolly well that that’s what they’ll go on to do.”

“Both the students who were awarded these scholarships are extraordinary young women. They each had come from difficult backgrounds, but showed huge potential. One of the recipients said she hoped to contribute back to that community that she came from, to try and improve the lives of that community. That’s the power of scholarships – not only helping individual students, but their communities as well.”

Professor Gael McDonald, President and General Director, RMIT Vietnam

The power of scholarships

Image: After time serving as President of RMIT Vietnam, Joyce Kirk donated a scholarship to help RMIT Vietnam students, matched through the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund.
Artist Linda Tegg was an adventurous young RMIT student on exchange in New York when an unexpected scholarship helped boost her early career.

“I never decided to be an artist. I just always was. At RMIT I learned my craft, photography. I came to understand something about quality that I have applied to almost every task I have undertaken since.

My parents bought this Nikon FM2 with a 50mm lens as an ex-demo model for me when I first started at RMIT. As a student this camera came with me everywhere. It’s a basic camera that has seen me through a lot. I’ve taken it around the world and it’s something I’ve grown with. It instigated many adventures and learnings about the world around me and my perspective within it.

I received the John Story Junior Memorial Scholarship while I was struggling to get by in New York City in 2001. The scholarship reminded me that even though I was just starting out, that my work was valued. I felt enormously grateful for the scholarship and responsible for making the most of the opportunities it enabled. The scholarship was for a thousand dollars, you would be surprised at how far a young artist can make that stretch.

I am fascinated by how we arrive at our understandings of the natural and the artificial. In my work, I seek out subjects that I feel embody tensions between natural and cultural forces. The resultant artworks contribute to an ecology of images that, I believe, form many of our feelings and reactions to the world around us.

When I think back to the time I was awarded the John Storey Junior Memorial Scholarship, I think of the artworks that I was exposed to and the people that I met. I found an important sense of connection which gave me the focus to do something with it.

Art is essential to our society. No matter what form it takes, art progresses our thinking and understanding of what is possible and how we are connected. Philanthropy makes whole worlds. It is thoughtful as well as practical. It offers a direct connection between our values and our actions.”

Sixty years of scholarships

“This year we celebrate 60 years of The John Storey Junior Memorial Scholarship. It was established from a bequest to Royal Melbourne Technical College – now RMIT – in 1955, on the death of my father, Sir John Storey, to commemorate the life of his son John, a top mechanical engineering student who died aged 22 of leukaemia. The bequest has supported over 600 students – giving them opportunities for educational and personal development overseas. It also funds the final year of a selected mechanical engineering student. The scholarship allows students to explore possibilities and new experiences – when they return they so often report back about making new lifelong friendships and wonderful journeys of self-discovery.”

Judy Cope-Williams, daughter of Sir John Storey, (sister of John Storey).

Image: Artist Linda Tegg in the Lurie Garden in Millennium Park, Chicago, the city where she is currently based.
When alumni Bernard Corser and Jim Fagan acquired the Tolarno Hotel in St Kilda, they decided to honour its colourful history by establishing an art prize at RMIT.

Bernard: “This plastic cup signifies my student days.”

“This cup represents my student days at RMIT. Part of the ritual of getting to night school was trying to find somewhere to park, and then grabbing a plastic cup coffee and a dim sim on the way to class. There was no gourmet dining for dinner, coffee and a dim sim was it!

Both Jim and I started out as real estate agents, we knew each other through the industry. In 1995, we decided to pool our resources to buy the Tolarno Hotel in St Kilda as an investment and to run as a boutique hotel.

At the time we bought it, it was an absolute shocker. The building leaked through two levels of apartments, water would land on your head. We slowly renovated the building to turn it into a hotel.

The building had an amazing history. In the 1880s it was a mansion home called Tolarno, then it was renovated a number of times and turned into a guest house. There was always art in the DNA of the building. [Melbourne artist] Mirka Mora lived and worked here and her art is literally painted on the walls down the front.

Because of that connection, we thought we’d buy some art for the hotel. But then we thought, if you buy a marvellous piece and put it in the foyer it’s the same for the next 40 years. We wanted something different. So we decided to try an art prize at one of the universities, and we chose RMIT as the first cab off the rank.

Each year we pick the best piece of work for the year from the final year student exhibition, with prize money going to the artist. The artwork then goes into the foyer of the hotel for the year, so everyone who comes in will see it. We also usually buy the artwork, so it becomes part of the hotel collection.”

Jim: “This art collection showcases 12 years of art prizes.”

“The prize has been running for 12 years and we’ve got quite an art collection now, in fact, it totals 156 works throughout the building. If you asked me to pick which artwork is my favourite, I can’t do it. The whole collection is my favourite. I have the enormous pleasure of choosing the winner each year and giving them the prize and seeing how thrilled they are. Beyond giving the student a prize, it also helps create a profile for the work.

Now we have artworks in all 37 rooms, plus all common areas throughout the building. People come and stay here just to see the art. People who tour art hotels around the world tell us that there’s nothing like this one. Guests that stay here have their favourite room with their favourite piece of work, and that has an impact on them.

The prize is important because it gives people enthusiasm to try and make a career in art. This is the first chance they’ve got at being judged by the outside world – we represent the outside world! Hopefully it will inspire some of those students to proceed on with their art. Art does wonderful things for people. Art reflects the community, and it can also be a marvellous strength for the community too.”

Encouraging young artists

“As an artist, you are quite isolated – you work quite hard in your own space and in your own head. At uni, it’s a really vulnerable time when you are graduating, because you don’t know where you’re going to go afterwards. Looking back on winning the Tolarno Hotel Art Prize and having my work displayed in the hotel, I can see how significant it was in motivating me for the future. Art prizes are very important for undergraduates to aspire to. A prize can push you that little bit harder and help you believe more in yourself.”


Image: Jim Fagan and Bernard Corser pictured at the Tolarno Hotel in St Kilda, with artworks from the Tolarno Hotel Art Prize in the background.
Technology helps society move forward, says RMIT’s Professor Peter Coloe, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Science, Engineering and Health. That’s why a gift from the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation towards scholarships for young technologists creates so much potential.

“Technology is the advancement of everything we do. I like to tell the business academics when I’m chiding them over a cup of coffee that if it wasn’t for science and engineers, they’d have nothing to sell.

This tablet was cast in the old foundry for the University’s centenary celebrations. RMIT has had a long history in technology, since way back in the days that it was the Working Men’s College – back when technology meant metalwork and toolmaking.

Now when you look at RMIT’s Advanced Manufacturing Precinct, you can see so much potential. The technology created there can have applications in everything from aircraft repair, all the way through to the health care sector, fabrication of bone replacement materials, biomedical devices and more.

Many of our students study science and engineering because they want to make a difference in society, not just because they see it as a job. If they’re an engineer and they build a bridge, that creates better transport systems, or a researcher who creates technology that can be applied to cancer detection – these are innovations that can help society in the long term.

There’s only a certain amount universities can do with funding from government and from student fees. Much of those funds support the infrastructure and staffing to be able to deliver the educational activities across the whole, broad range of programs that we offer.

Philanthropy enables us to then support more people to come in and utilise that infrastructure and gain their education. That’s why RMIT is matching gifts to the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund – to create more opportunities for students.

Corporate gifts aren’t given on a whim: they are given to institutions where the corporation thinks they will be valued, where they’ll make a difference, where the gift will be transformative for the recipients.

The gift from the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation towards technology scholarships means that we can create more opportunities for young people who may not have the ability to come to university and study technology. For those who are the first in their family to go to university, that opportunity becomes life changing for them and future generations within that family. And the technology they will create has the potential to help move our society forward."

Investing in young technologists

“This initiative is an investment in the innovation and technology skills of our young people today that will pay dividends for years and decades to come. Together, we are helping more young people to gain the education and experience to pursue their passion for technology and to contribute to Australia’s future growth and prosperity. The Westpac Bicentennial Foundation partnership with RMIT will leave a lasting legacy of which we all should be very proud.”

Susan Bannigan, CEO, Westpac Bicentennial Foundation

Image: Professor Peter Coloe, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President of the College of Science, Engineering and Health, pictured on Swanston Street.
Student Kim Lovegrove is on a mission to succeed: she’s got a 20-year plan to make it to the top – and is getting there with a kick-start from a scholarship supported through RMIT’s Annual Appeal.

“I overcame many challenges when I moved here from Adelaide to study public relations at RMIT. There was the financial hardship I faced trying to save as much money as I could, the challenges of finding and moving into my new place, plus getting all of my textbooks and making sure I had the right programs on my laptop. I moved by myself, so I didn’t really have anyone I could talk to, just a cousin who lives four hours away from Melbourne.

I received a scholarship to support my studies and it definitely motivates me to work harder. I think that’s what most people who get scholarships are like, they are people who are determined and have that persistence to work their hardest.

My cousin was the one who gave me this inspirational quote to put on my wall. Last year I was finding it difficult to keep concentrating. I had my family telling me, “You can do it! We believe in you!” but they live so far away.

I’m a motivated person and I don’t want anything to push my plans backwards, so this quote is very inspirational. When it gets a little hectic or when I have assignments to do, it’s a physical reminder for me to stay motivated.

It also reminds me to think of my 20-year plan for what I want to do after university. Within the first five years, I want to get my degree done, then do some employment experience around the city of Melbourne and eventually move over to Sydney to work at a major record label in music public relations. My end goal is to be CEO of a record label in either Australia or in America.

I am very much into giving back into the community because they’ve helped me so much, so that’s what I want to do for RMIT. I work with the Ngarara Willim Centre and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research Advisory Group. At the moment I’m speaking to the student union about creating an Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Club, because there’s not really a lot of clubs where the Indigenous students can go and feel welcome.

I was also approached to be a student representative of RMIT, because I went to a small career expo and I spoke about how awesome RMIT is. I told the students, “You may not feel like university is for you, because you may think it’s all for high achievers, but RMIT can build you up to be a high achiever.” That’s actually what RMIT has done for me in the last year.

I want to say thank you to all of the donors who have donated to RMIT. Without your support we would find it harder to get to classes and be fully prepared. Scholarships also help us to stay motivated – and that’s the biggest thing that you can ever do to make yourself succeed.”

RMIT UNIVERSITY | SUPPORTING OUR FUTURE 2014
From attending the haute couture shows of Paris in the 1950s to designing for Australia’s elite, Neil McGrath and his late partner Ron Elms enjoyed a lifetime at the centre of Melbourne’s fashion world – and now they’re supporting the next generation to do the same.

“From attending the haute couture shows of Paris in the 1950s to designing for Australia’s elite, Neil McGrath and his late partner Ron Elms enjoyed a lifetime at the centre of Melbourne’s fashion world – and now they’re supporting the next generation to do the same."

“In 2014, we have now inaugurated the first Grathelms Prize to the top student of the Bachelor of Design (Fashion) (Honours) at RMIT. We have also established the Grathelms Scholarship for a graduating third year student, which was matched by RMIT through the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund.

In our opinion this is proper and correct teaching, and that was very important to us. You can call yourself a designer if you can sketch, but that’s not quite the same as knowing where every stitch belongs and why each stitch is there, exactly. You also need to have a true love of the cloth. We hope this prize will reward, foster and encourage oncoming talent, to help someone achieve their dreams and goals in the fashion world – just as we did.”

Supporting design careers

“Receiving the Grathelms Prize meant a lot to me: it encouraged me and gave me more confidence in my intuition. The prize will greatly help my exploration of fashion culture, companies, processes and perspectives abroad, as I hope to intern and further develop my industry knowledge. I want to continue building my understanding of fashion as an industry, while also growing in my ability to articulate a powerful design perspective through fashion objects.”

Alexander Kelvy, awarded the Grathelms Prize during his final year of a Bachelor of Design (Fashion) (Honours)
Following a long connection to RMIT, Yvonne Sartori found a special way to honour her late husband, Mario.

“This model cannon represents the memory of my husband, Mario. He made it himself, it is the first of a series of little models he made. It reminds me of the things he used to like doing just for the fun of it.

My husband migrated here in 1952 from Italy having grown up in Croatia. He worked as a fitter and turner in various manufacturing shops, graduating to toolmaking. Later he completed a Die Design course at RMIT to improve his qualifications. He enjoyed toolmaking; as recreation he spent much time on a small hobby farm in South Gippsland.

I worked in libraries both here and in the United Kingdom, and needed qualifications to continue in the work, so I studied librarianship at RMIT in the 1960s. I took a lot of pleasure from learning, and I enjoyed the variety of avenues that open up when one uses one’s brains. The lecturers at the time were very supportive of us – many of us were mature age students who needed qualifications to continue our careers.

After graduating I worked in municipal libraries and later when I retired I worked as a volunteer with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

My family was connected to RMIT in many different ways. My brother Maxwell Eagle also did a course at RMIT. When he died, the Maxwell Eagle Award was donated from his estate, which goes to support cancer researchers at RMIT.

When my husband died I wanted a suitable memorial for him. We both believed in higher education so I felt a scholarship in engineering would be the most appropriate.

RMIT matched the gift as part of the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund, which doubled the endowment. This means there are twice the number of scholarships available from our donation.

The first Sartori Memorial Scholarships will be awarded to engineering students in 2015. Two scholarships will be given to students that demonstrate high academic achievement or potential and experience financial or economic disadvantage.

Philanthropy is really just common sense. If one can help another and thus broaden their outlook, it will hopefully encourage people to work together to create something better.

The hope for these scholarships is to encourage students who are finding it hard to keep going to stay with it. That’s something both my husband and I believe is important.”

Engineering a better future

“Engineering is a creative technical profession that underpins our society. It is oriented towards solving real-world problems through innovative design and development of hardware, software, systems and processes. It supports our health, our personal and environmental security, and many other things we collectively hold dear. The engineering community includes many people with talent and motivation to make a practical difference.

The Sartori Memorial Scholarship will provide valuable support for young Australians who have talent and interest in engineering, but who might be prevented from following this path because of financial circumstances. This should provide encouragement for such budding engineers to lift their aspirations and direct their energies towards higher goals. The generosity of the Sartori family in creating this scholarship is a legacy to Mario Sartori’s enjoyment of engineering.”

Associate Professor Tom Steiner, Deputy Dean (Engineering Operations) College of Science, Engineering and Health

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Image: Yvonne Sartori, pictured in Bowen Street, City Campus, is honouring her late husband’s memory with a gift to the Scholarship Philanthropy Fund, which was matched by RMIT.
It was a hard road to university for Adrian Spagnuolo, but after taking a vocational education course, he landed a place in RMIT’s Bachelor of Industrial Design and is now well on his way to realising his dream of becoming a toy designer.

“I had a tough time in year 12. My school was shutting down that year and I was confused about what to do. The school was low on resources, especially in the careers department, and I thought there was no chance that I would be accepted into any universities. I started a full-time job in a cabinet-making factory in Melbourne’s north. It was tough hearing people say, ‘What are you doing here, you’re so young!’ Meanwhile my friends were power through university, on their way to big careers.

I was hungry for bigger and better things, and while I had no idea what I would do, I knew it would involve making things. I applied and interviewed for RMIT’s Industrial Design course, but didn’t get accepted. I was disappointed, but it was a strong reminder to put my ego aside and keep trying anyway. I accepted a place in RMIT’s Product Design VET course as a second preference and it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. From day one I loved it. It more than prepared me for the degree course, where I will be commencing my honours year in 2015.

Receiving the scholarship was a reminder that I had made the right choice to leave my job and enter higher education. I travel three hours a day to be at RMIT, and receiving the grant felt like a pat on the back for staying determined and not quitting when the pressure was high. With the scholarship money I was able to purchase a 3D printer, which has enabled me to become an integral part of the Maker Movement, which is an in-home manufacturing industry. It allows me to express myself on paper, on computer and then finally in 3D. It is awesome to see my creations come to life. I have gained a greater knowledge on working with plastic parts and prototyping, which is an essential skill within the world of product and industrial design.

I hope to become an integral part of the toy design industry. As a child I had no siblings my age so I spent a lot of time playing with my toys, particularly LEGO. All that time spent playing was teaching me valuable lessons about problem solving and how things are made. I would love to pay that forward by designing toys whereby children can experience empowerment and fun education through play.

My LEGO bag tag is something I carry with me almost everywhere and has been with me every day at RMIT. It is representative of who I am and my journey: going through life constantly trying to build a better self, sometimes breaking, then realising you can put yourself back together. Every small block in a LEGO set is a part of something bigger and one day I’d like to be part of something big too. It’s a constant reminder to stay focused and to not forget my inner child.

I am extremely grateful to the George Alexander Foundation and RMIT for giving me the scholarship and recognising my endeavour for success, even though the odds were stacked against me. I would also like to thank Colorific Australia, who is a pioneer in the toy and craft industry, for accepting me as a product design intern. It’s an opportunity of a lifetime and I appreciate every minute there.”

Building dreams

“The key lesson about scholarships, especially those targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds, is that scholarships change lives. At graduations and events where I have met recipients, this comes through time after time. When students see that someone thinks they can make a difference to the world by giving them a scholarship, it’s so empowering. The financial assistance often means that the recipient has to spend less time at part-time work, and this helps their studies. It also reduces the financial burden on families. Scholarships change lives, and for the better.”

Professor Owen Hughes, Dean of Students

Image: RMIT student Adrian Spagnuolo, pictured in the Advanced Manufacturing Precinct, is building his way to a dream career thanks to a George Alexander scholarship.
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Image: Alexander Kelvy, who was awarded the GrathEms Prize during his final year of a Bachelor of Design (Fashion) (Honours), pictured in the Design Hub with one of his pieces, After That, Chance. The piece was inspired by the work of painter Francis Bacon and was created using 3D modelling and milling technologies.