

THE SLEEPING GIANT HAS AWOKEN. THE STAFF & ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ARE MAKING THEMSELVES HEARD (OR RATHER, SEEN) IN GYMNASIUMS, SPORTS FIELDS AND IN OTHER RECREATION ACTIVITIES ALL ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY.

• *By Stephen King*

Active

No longer are University sport and recreation activities dominated by students, who now rub shoulders with enthusiastic Executives & Deans in the gym, and find more than worthy adversaries in the form of lecturers and administrators in the social sport competitions.

The University of Sydney has 3,067 academic staff (as at 31 Mar 2010). Add to that administrative staff, and all of a sudden there is a huge range of staff members willing to get out of their offices and cubicles and get the most out of their workplace environment.

When you break it down, each staff member at The University of Sydney shares an office the size of two Sydney suburbs. They have three company gyms and 45 sporting clubs. They can play social sport every day of the week, and even have their own home teams to support on weekends. Is there another employer that could lay claim to this sort of health and fitness offering?

Yet, these opportunities are still unknown to the many staff of the University. Let them be unknown no longer!

All University staff receive a 20% discount on all SUSF gym passes – something many have taken advantage of. Others have chosen to join in group sporting activities, spearheaded by enthusiastic staff members from the many departments on campus. Information and Communications

Technology (ICT) is one such department, with Chief Information Officer, Bruce Meikle and his team leading the charge.

ICT is responsible for the development, implementation and support of technology-based services that support the core functions of the University.

In 2010, the ICT department was at the forefront in utilising sport and recreation on campus to foster a positive workplace environment for their staff, while promoting healthy living and team building. They provided opportunities for their staff to take part in a ballroom dance short course run by Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness in semester 1, and followed this up with latin dance and then salsa. The ICT department has blazed the way in being the first to enquire about the possibility of running a course just for their staff.

The ICT department has also joined many other student groups, faculty members and local businesses in submitting a team in the Lunchtime Social Sport Competitions, which run each semester at the Sports & Aquatic Centre. Fielding two indoor soccer teams, of which Bruce is a member, and one mixed netball team, the department had 30 players competing once a week each semester, making at least the semi finals on each occasion. With other faculties such as Law joining them, a healthy rivalry has emerged between



the teams, proving that the staff teams can more than match their student counterparts.

Perhaps the greatest endorsement received of the initiatives employed by ICT was in an email received from one of their staff members – “it’s great working in ICT where people want to get out and compete as a group. Great for the morale here”.

Social Sport hasn’t been the only place where we have seen University of Sydney staff members mixing it with the students. Interfaculty Sport is almost as old as the University itself, with Interfaculty football matches played between the Arts & Medicine faculties as early as 1887.

Interfaculty Sport is a FREE competition where students & staff can compete for their faculty to help win the Emily Small Shield by accumulating points across a series of sporting competitions during the year. In 2010,

the importance of University staff was realised when the Education faculty welcomed their Dean, Professor Robert J. Tierney and other staff members to participate in the final event of the year, the 5km Run. Education had started the day in 4th place, but through weight of numbers, had enough participation points to tie with Health Sciences for the overall title.

The participation from one University of Sydney staff member had made all the difference.

So the message is clear – watch out students, because there is another sporting powerhouse at the University of Sydney – over 6,000 staff.

If you would like some more information about social sport competitions or short course opportunities for your staff please contact the Participation & Programs Department on 1300 068 922.

