

Te Waha Nui, September 6, 2004

Research aims to make maths more appealing

by Tina Gray

While maths is loathed by many students, a research team at Auckland University is conducting the most comprehensive project yet to encourage students to study the subject.

The aim of the mathematics enhancement project is to promote maths in low decile schools so students will study it at senior levels.

The project was implemented in seven Manukau schools this year.

A three-year pilot project found only 6% of students in low decile schools progressed to bur-
sary maths.

Only half of those students

were eligible to study maths at university.

According to a Manukau City Council future skills study, Manukau businesses are having difficulties finding skilled workers.

However over 14,000 Manukau residents are seeking employment.

The study shows the problem is most job seekers don't have the necessary skills or qualifications to meet the needs of businesses.

Schemes such as the mathematics enhancement project can help alleviate such problems for the future.

Bill Barton, an Auckland University associate mathemat-

ics professor, is coordinating the project.

He says Manukau students have huge potential in the subject.

The university's mathematics enhancement project team will be in Manukau schools for four to six years.

They will provide teacher professional development, student support, community promotion, and research and monitoring.

Barton says the project aims to promote maths as a valuable, interesting and productive subject for everyone in the community.

The Manukau region is largely made up of Maori and Pacific Islanders, so it's important to

encourage the academic achievements of these students.

Each project team member works closely with teachers and students on their own specific area.

Team member Viliami Latu is focusing his research on how cultural aspects affect motivation and language.

This year he has started looking at the language barrier, particularly for Samoan and Tongan students studying mathematics.

Latu says there are simply not enough words in the Samoan or Tongan language to describe a complicated word used in mathematics.

He says after primary school, learning mathematics in these

languages is very difficult.

Latu recently initiated a home school project where he personally works with students, attempting to describe mathematics words in their native tongue.

He teaches from personal experience, having had to face these difficulties himself.

Latu arrived in New Zealand from Tonga after he completed high school.

Students will also get the opportunity to visit Auckland University and get a feel for what university life is like.

Barton says: "Most year 13 students have never been to a university before, so we are making it possible."



STATIC: Some of the team from Static FM. Back (from left) Cara Birch, Tim Burnell, Tamara Stewart, Mike Smith. Front (from left) Katherine Northover, Maire Setters, Harriet Looi.

STATIC FM re-launches for 2004 under a new team of radio students

by Jo Lewis

Static FM has been re-launched by a team of AUT radio students who will run the station until the end of the year.

The class is made up of 16 Bachelor of Communication Studies students.

They will each fulfil a role at the station as well as have regular time slots to present their own magazine-style shows.

Although based at AUT, Static FM targets listeners beyond the student market. It broadcasts on 88.1 FM in a two-kilometre radius from AUT.

Programmes run from 8am to 6pm weekdays and are aimed at inner city apartment dwellers.

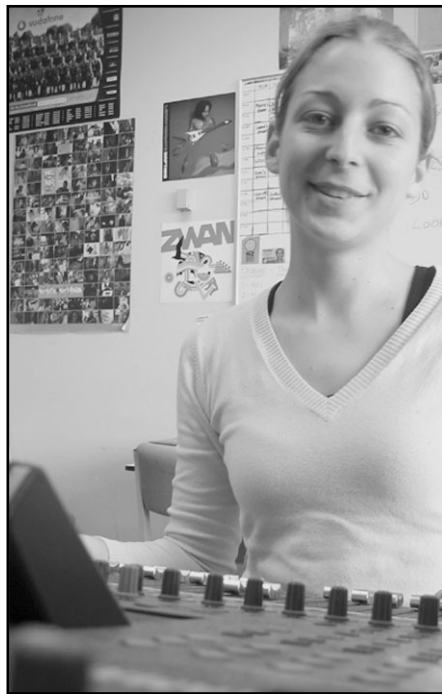
"We're a student run-station, but not a station for students," says appointed station manager Cara Birch.

She says each student has their own style and will put their own personal spin on the shows.

The students write and present the shows themselves.

Birch describes the music as "laid back funky lounge café music".

"We play as much New Zealand



STATION MANAGER: Cara Birch.

music as we can," she says.

AUT radio curriculum leader Andrew Dubber says the purpose of the station is to let students get

hands-on experience as well as let them get a feel for how a station works.

"You can teach them stuff in a safe environment," says Dubber. "It's stressful, but fun."

The students learn a broad range of skills they will need in the workplace.

The core of the station changes every year with each new radio class to come through AUT, making it different to other radio stations.

The station started in 1999 as Fox FM and changed to Static in 2000. In 2001, a new format was introduced which is still in place.

Birch says the class works together to learn from each other along the way.

"We want to do the best kind of broadcasting possible and have fun."

They will also try to increase awareness of Static this semester by selling Static merchandise, handing out flyers, and possibly doing leaflet drops.

Dubber says he's really enjoying this year's group and they are sounding good on-air.

As a tutor, he can now "sit back and watch it happen".

"Barista? No, there's nobody working here by that name"

-Clueless Dan's Coffee Caravan

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