

Appointments

29 September 2011

University of British Columbia

Sarah Otto

When Sarah Otto, a professor in the department of zoology at the University of British Columbia, received an email telling her that she had won a "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation, she almost overlooked its significance.

"I was just about to delete it when I noticed the email address," she recalled. Realising that it was a funding notification from the foundation, she rang the number given. She said her first question was a simple one: "Is this what I think it's about?" It was, and Professor Otto now has a \$500,000 (£324,300) MacArthur Fellowship, no strings attached. The only rule the foundation imposed was that she keep it a secret until it was officially announced, although the funder allowed her to tell one person of her choice. She chose to share the news with her partner and their young son. Professor Otto received her undergraduate and doctoral education at Stanford University before moving to British Columbia in 1995 as assistant professor of zoology. She said that she was planning to use her grant wisely. "The MacArthur Fellowship gives people the freedom to be creative, giving them room to focus on what they do well," she said. "I am going to take that to heart and carve out more time for the maths and science that I love doing."

Erasmus University

Steef van de Velde

The new dean of the Rotterdam School of Management at Erasmus University is hoping to use his position to shape "leaders in thought, action and engagement" at a time when the business world is going through unprecedented turmoil. Steef van de Velde, who was previously interim dean and professor of operations management and technology at the school, said he felt the best thing about business education was the ability to develop the capabilities of individuals for "effective and conscious leadership" in international business. "We want our students to be integrated, participatory and open-minded," he said, "people who can generate prosperity and who will take up their roles in the building of a more sustainable future." Professor van de Velde studied for a master's degree in econometrics at the Erasmus School of Economics and went on to do a doctorate in mathematics and computer science at Eindhoven University of Technology. Before joining Erasmus, he held positions at the University of Twente, the University of Toronto and the Centre for Mathematics and Computer Science in Amsterdam. In addition to his academic life, Professor van de Velde has worked in business; between 1999 and 2001 he was a consultant at Ortec, a provider of planning and optimisation software and consulting services.

University of Glamorgan

David Pontin

David Pontin, who has been appointed to the Aneurin Bevan chair of community health at the University of Glamorgan, is looking forward to returning to his home country. "I'm really excited by the opportunity to work in Wales once again and to make a contribution to developing community health in my home patch," he said. Professor Pontin grew up in Cwmbran before moving to Bath to train as a nurse.

He joined academia nearly a decade and a half ago and, although he admitted it is a "challenging time" for healthcare and higher education, he said that he relished the opportunities present in both sectors. "I'm looking forward to working with community health staff and developing research projects that will provide evidence to support health care practice that makes a real difference to people's everyday lives," he said. In addition to his permanent role, Professor Pontin is also a visiting professor at the University of New England in New South Wales, Australia and at the University of Jaen in Spain. He said he was attracted to the role at Glamorgan because of the "can-do energy" he felt around campus.

Newbold College of Higher Education

Philip Brown

Philip Brown has taken up his post as the 31st principal of Newbold College of Higher Education, an institution in Berkshire affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Dr Brown gained his undergraduate degree in education from Avondale College of Higher Education in Australia and went on to the University of New South Wales to complete master's degrees in commerce and educational administration. He received a further master's degree in tertiary education management from the LH Martin Institute at the University of Melbourne before studying for a doctorate in education at La Sierra University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution in California. Prior to joining Newbold College, Dr Brown served as vice-president at his alma mater, Avondale College, with particular responsibility for learning and teaching, and as executive principal at the University of Western Sydney College. He said that he would strive to further Newbold's contribution to "the Adventist identity in the modern world". "I have a strong commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, coupled with knowledge of and sensitivity to the unique needs of higher education in Europe," he said. Dr Brown started his tenure at Newbold by leading staff on a prayer walk around campus.