

## **A Tribute to Andrew Smallridge – An Eminent First Year College and Block Leader at Victoria University**

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In January 2025, Professor Andrew Smallridge, Foundation Dean of the First Year College at Victoria University (VU), celebrated his retirement after what can only be described as an outstanding and illustrious career that spanned 34 years.

Andrew completed his BSc (Hons) at Monash University in 1983 and completed his PhD at Monash University in 1987 under the supervision of Professor W. R. Jackson. In 1991, he returned to Australia from a successful postdoctoral fellowship at Oxford University to take up a position as Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biology at the newly formed Victoria University (VU). Andrew's success led to his being promoted to Lecturer and subsequently Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biology at VU. Andrew was later promoted to Associate Professor in VU's College of Engineering and Science and later to full Professor in the VU First Year College™ (FYC).

During his academic career, Andrew held several senior leadership roles at VU, including Associate Head of the School of Engineering and Science as well as Director of Teaching and Learning in the College of Engineering and Science. His final role at VU was as Foundation and Executive Dean of the First Year College during which he helped establish the College and develop and implement the VU Block Model™ at VU.

As an educator, Andrew was always student-focussed gaining enormous respect and many accolades from both his undergraduate students and the many BSc (Hons), MSc and PhD students he supervised during his career. His outstanding efforts as a research supervisor were formally recognised by his being (jointly) awarded the VU Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Research and Research Training (Research Team Category), 2009.

Andrew's highly successful research career won him international recognition. His work in synthetic organic chemistry and nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy produced an impressive array of peer-reviewed research papers and reviews in journals of international standing, along with numerous competitive research grants. He worked closely with industry throughout his career, co-authoring five international patents. The associated royalties derived from these patents led to further research funding.

Andrew's research and service to his discipline has been widely and comprehensively acknowledged. His joint nomination for the State Victoria Prize in 2009, joint winner of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI) Green Chemistry Challenge Award (Academic/Government Section) in 2009, as well as being awarded the RACI Citation for Services to the RACI and the Profession in 2007 are a testament to the impact of his work.

Andrew's pivotal role in the establishment of the VU First Year College™ and the associated VU Block Model™ deserves special mention. He began as Interim Dean and completed his term at VU and the FYC as an experienced, innovative and extremely well-respected Executive Dean. Andrew built and developed a culture of collegiality in the FYC. His visionary multi-disciplinary approach to learning and teaching and innovative approach to transitioning students successfully into university has been a crucial factor in the ongoing success of the FYC.

The success of the FYC under Andrew's extraordinary leadership, in terms of pass rates, retention and student satisfaction, led to VU rolling out the VU Block Model™ across the entire university, making VU the first fully block model university in Australia. During his tenure the FYC and the VU Block Model™ achieved notable success in the national Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) survey in Australia.

Andrew's leadership empowered those around him. Many staff benefitted from his guidance and kindness as he encouraged them to explore their teaching and learning and their approach to Higher Education. His easy going yet direct leadership style created a vibrant and productive staff culture. Those of us who had the privilege of working with him will remember him as one of the best leaders we have had – someone who always put the welfare and success of students and the academic and professional staff who support them first.

Andrew continues to be associated with VU as an Emeritus Professor where many will undoubtedly continue to benefit from his knowledge, wisdom and experience.



*Professor Andrew Smallridge*