

higher education 2022

YOUR GUIDE TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HIGHER EDUCATION

Reach for the stars with STEM subjects at Curtin



Nyungar Professor Christopher Lawrence is hoping to establish an Indigenous space academy and is also developing a wellbeing app for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

An accomplished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing researcher, Professor Lawrence has been appointed the first dean of Indigenous Engagement at Curtin University's Faculty of Science and Engineering, where he will help extend cultural understanding and open up exciting new career pathways for Indigenous students.

A proud Nyungar (Whadjuk and Ballardong) person, Professor Lawrence was the 2008 Australian-American Fulbright Indigenous Scholarship recipient, studied at Harvard University in the US and most recently was the head of the Centre for Indigenous Technology Research and Development at the University of Technology Sydney.

Curtin pro vice-chancellor Science and Engineering Professor Mark Ogden welcomed Professor Lawrence to the faculty, where he has also taken on the role of teaching and research academic in the School of Electrical Engineering Computing and Mathematical Sciences.

"Professor Lawrence has had tremendous success in developing programs that embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge into the teaching of

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subjects across engineering and information technology, and we look forward to seeing that success continue at Curtin," Professor Ogden said. "As dean, Professor Lawrence will expand Indigenous education and awareness initiatives, while promoting community engagement, through establishing programs such as a Curtin node of the National Indigenous Space Academy (NISA) in partnership with NASA/JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory) in the United States.

"The NISA initiative, created

and led by Professor Lawrence, is a pathway for Indigenous students studying STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) to participate in programs at NASA and will provide Curtin students with outstanding learning and research opportunities in space and space robotics.

"Professor Lawrence will also develop a First Nations focused micro-credential looking at how STEM disciplines can help close the gap through building design, transformation of health systems, climate and environmental issues

and land management."

Head of Curtin's School of Electrical Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences, John Curtin Distinguished Professor Andrew Rohl said Professor Lawrence's role as teaching and research academic in the school would see him continue his research into how information and communication technologies can benefit Indigenous people.

"An early focus of this research will be the further development of the #thismymob app, aimed at connecting communities and

enhancing social and health outcomes for First Nation's People," Professor Rohl said.

"Professor Lawrence is currently collaborating with the South West Aboriginal Medical Service in the development of the app for communities in that area and he proposes to expand this work to other communities across WA, including the Pilbara.

"There is a huge potential for the data collected by the app to have a significant impact on health research in WA and provides exciting opportunities for collaboration with colleagues in our Faculty of Health Sciences."

Professor Lawrence said he was excited to bring his work, connections and collaborations to Curtin.

"During my career, I have forged strong state, national and global health and education partnerships, campaigns and programs, as well as deep community bonds across Western Australia and I look forward to bringing these connections and relationships to my work at Curtin," Professor Lawrence said.

"I am particularly thrilled to have Curtin's support in extending the reach of our #thismymob app, as the South West Aboriginal Medical Service works to roll it out to the wider Nyungar population and other mobs across WA."

Professor Lawrence's appointment sees him come full circle, having begun his learning journey at Curtin in 1993 through the Centre for Aboriginal Studies.



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