Forget study: O-Week a lesson in unique campus life

Festival of fun charms newbies

By MICHELLE NOCTOR

SOCIAL and cultural options of life at the University of Wollongong were showcased yesterday as part of the annual O-Week orientation festival.

UOW's Duck Pond Lane was a spectacle of stalls, signs, music and street performances as various campus groups encouraged students to make the most of their experience.

Cultural organisations included the Muslim Association, Turkish Society and African Students' Association, while Toastmasters and Bushcare volunteers were also on hand.

The newly formed UOW Home Brewing Society was doing steady business, doubling its membership in a matter of hours.

Tom Forghani, who is studying a double major in engineering and journalism, described the society as a "support group".

"It's not so much about the drinking but the crafting process," he said.

Officer Gonzo Suero, a psychology major, provided an intellectual argument for pursuing the enjoyment of beer drinking.

"If you went in a state where you recognised that beer is a factor in the social get-together of people around the world," he said. "We've had a lot of German students come around and say, 'this is really cool.'"

One stall was giving away a condom, while the Wollongong Ultimate Frisbee club offered "a non-contact team sport".

A Made for Life: With Jesus Christ stall was prominent, as was a rainbow-coloured Equal Rights March sign nearby.

Four students from the United States - Brad Muller, Emily Constantine, Kellie Hruse and Julianne Burt - earned their first day of uni life.

Mr Hruse, 20, said he was studying business with a view to becoming a teacher back home.

Ms Constantine, 21, who will study environmental science, said she had always wanted to visit Australia and UOW offered her the best opportunity.

"It's been good so far - I'm learning a lot. Enjoing the beach ииally. The people are so friendly," she said.

Ms Hruse, 21, and Ms Brown, 20, who are studying psychology, formed a new friendship after meeting in the same room at Woonona House.

About 2000 first-years were given this year in the University Admissions Centre into more than 350 UOW programs.

Uni staff, students leave cars at home

A STUDY of University of Wollongong transport habits has revealed commuters are ditching their cars in favour of "green" transportation.

A 2011 survey of more than 2000 students and staff showed the proportion of people arriving by car had been reduced by 10 per cent compared with 2000 figures.

Tom Hunt, from UOW's facilities management division, said this was a "great result" for the UOW community.

Mr Hunt said the free bus initiatives implemented by the New South Wales (Gong Shuttle) and the university (North Gong Shuttle and Waterline) had been highly successful, with 28 per cent of the daily 14,000 UOW commuters using one of these three services.

There was still room for improvement, with the survey revealing that, with more than half of all Wollongong campus commuters living within two km, it was possible to walk or cycle as it was to drive.

Mr Hunt said cycling was also encouraged, with free parking provided for commuters who brought three or more passengers.

UOW diary app woos new fans

A NEW University of Wollongong mobile phone application created a buzz at yesterday's O-Week activities.

The Student Diary App, which will be officially launched today at the UniCentre, will provide online access to events listed in the UniCentre Student Diary and through the UOW Student Life program.

UniCentre general manager Mike Gilmore said the app gave students a rare opportunity to manage all their daily events and activities, social and academic, online in one location.

Matt Melendez, a Bachelor of Communication student, helped develop the promotional strategy and digital communications plan.

Mr Melendez, 21, said response to the app was enthusiastic and the students are really excited about it. "The UniCentre is also impressed that it has taken the next step towards a digital platform."