Citation for Laureate Professor John Ralston AO
Friday 30 March 2012 at 10.30 am

Officiator: Dr Ian Gould AM
Award recipient: Laureate Professor John Ralston AO, BSc(Hons), MSc, DipEd, DIC, PhD, Dr.h.c. Abo Akademi Finland, FAA, FTSE
Award being conferred: Emeritus Laureate Professor Award
Citation delivered by: Professor Andrew Parfitt BE(Hons) PhD FIEAust

Chancellor, the University of South Australia has established the honorary title of Emeritus Laureate Professor to be conferred upon retired academic staff holding the title of Laureate Professor, in recognition of their outstanding service to this institution. It is my pleasure to present to you Laureate Professor John Ralston who, having been chosen as the first to be conferred with the title of Laureate Professor at the University of South Australia, is now the inaugural recipient of the title of Emeritus Laureate Professor in recognition of such service.

John Ralston’s contribution to Australia’s, indeed the world’s scientific community is as profound as it is distinguished. The breakthroughs that have emanated from his research have led to significant, tangible improvements in the practice of minerals processing and particle and surface technology, delivering benefits for industry worldwide.

In addition to more than 30 years of cutting-edge research in particle technology, interfacial science and engineering, John’s work has attracted substantial industry sponsorship and led to the establishment of the internationally-recognised Ian Wark Research Institute in 1994. His vision for The Wark was to create a specialist entity that brought together interdisciplinary research in physical chemistry, physics and engineering, and that was renowned for its research expertise, the quality of its publications, and the strength of its staff and PhD students. The fact that the Australian Academy of Science has described the Wark Institute as a “national treasure” underscores the success he has achieved in realising that vision.

In 2006, John led a successful bid to establish the Australian Minerals Science Research Institute, located at The Wark, which comprises a consortium of high-quality Australian university research centres, and a global network of 24 collaborators. At the time of its establishment, the Institute was supported by the largest linkage grant ever awarded by the Australian Research Council. The Wark now has formal partnerships and agreements with institutions in 12 countries to promote international cooperation in research and research education, and more than 150 of its graduates are employed in senior positions throughout the world.

During his esteemed career, John has been bestowed with an array of richly-deserved personal and professional honours. Among them are invited professorships or honorary doctorates from institutions in Sweden, South Africa, Finland, England, the United States, China and Japan and, in 2008, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia.
He has been awarded a senior Fulbright Scholarship, the Australian Government Centenary Medal, the Chemeca Medal for Outstanding Contribution to Chemical Engineering, the Premier’s Science and Excellence Award, and he was named Australian Mining magazine’s inaugural recipient of the Most Outstanding Contribution to Mining award. He is a Fellow of both the Australian Academy of Science, and the Australian Academy of Technological Science and Engineering.

In 2007, John was honoured as South Australian of the Year and also South Australian Scientist of the Year, and in 2009 he received the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering Council’s prestigious Clunies Ross Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognises not only a career of pure research, but also its capacity to make a practical difference to the world.

As shown by the fact that he has supervised more than 80 PhD research students, John is a teacher as well as a leader. His commitment to scientific excellence, and to ensuring that the outcomes of his work deliver meaningful benefits for science, for industry and for communities means his legacy will continue to inspire and inform those who follow, long into the future.

Chancellor, on behalf of the University of South Australia, I am pleased to present Laureate Professor John Ralston to you for the honorary title of Emeritus Laureate Professor in recognition of his distinguished service to this institution, and to the wider world.