media release

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Sydney, Australia - The University of New South Wales (UNSW) will provide $300,000 in post graduate scholarships to students from the earthquake devastated Sichuan region of China, it was announced today.

The scholarships are in areas vital to the rebuilding effort. They will compliment other current assistance, such as the provision of data by UNSW satellite imaging experts to the Chinese Earthquake Authority.

UNSW Vice-Chancellor Professor Fred Hilmer made the announcement at a media conference in Sydney attended by Counsellor Bai Gang from the Sydney Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China.

UNSW will provide ten Masters by Coursework full tuition scholarships for a range of one year programs, to be undertaken in 2009. They will include Urban Planning and Design, Engineering Science, Construction Management, Health Management and Master of Science and Technology in Environmental Science.

UNSW Global, which runs Foundation Studies for the University, will provide additional scholarships to any of the students who need pre-course intensive language tuition to meet the University English entry standards.

The University will also launch a campaign through the UNSW Foundation to raise funds for a stipend of $20,000 for each student. The campaign will be seeking the support of UNSW staff, students, alumni and emeriti, as well as the wider community.

In making the announcement, Professor Hilmer pointed to the close links between UNSW and China.

We have a long history of academic collaboration with Chinese universities and other institutions. “We currently have more than 2,300 students from mainland China, which represents about a quarter of all international students studying at UNSW,” Professor Hilmer said. “Hundreds more of our students are first generation Australian Chinese, many with family still in China.

“News of the devastation wrought by the earthquake shocked all of us, and members of the UNSW community have been anxious to know how to best support those affected.
"A team of researchers from our engineering faculty has been providing satellite images directly to the Chinese earthquake authorities, and has played a vital role in assessing the damage from the earthquake and identifying possible aftershock danger areas.

"We now want to help with the rebuilding effort. These scholarships will develop expertise in the fields most vital to that effort," Professor Hilmer said.

Counsellor Bai said: "The Chinese people are grateful to the University for this initiative, which reflects many years of collaboration and friendship.

"It is a far sighted initiative, which is significant on three levels. One is humanitarian: the scholarships will help to reconstruct education in the region and help reconstruct the region as a whole.

"Secondly, I believe the scholarships are strategically important, because they will help to bring the relationship between Australia and China even closer.

"And finally, on the academic level, it continues our long tradition of collaboration in teaching and research, by providing graduates who will be able to contribute to the rebuilding of the Province," Counsellor Bai said.

Applicants for the scholarships must be residents of, or be a graduate from, one of the following regions: Sichuan Province, Shaanxi Province, Gansu Province and the Chongqing Municipality. Sichuan University has graciously agreed to accept the scholarship applications on behalf of the Chinese Consulate and UNSW. Selection will be based on academic merit with a deadline for applications of 30 September 2008.

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