



COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT OF EDUCATION.

CASE Asia-Pacific Chief Executive Leadership Award

*Professor Paul Thomas AM
University of the Sunshine Coast*

ON RARE OCCASION, a person's name becomes synonymous with the organisation that he or she leads. Such is the case with Professor Paul Thomas and the University of the Sunshine Coast.

He is described by his peers as a passionate visionary, a leader of the highest integrity and a skilled pioneer in regional higher education.

With an impressive background of senior academic posts in the UK and Australia, he was elected in 1994 to champion the development of the first greenfield university in Australia for a quarter of a century.

Sir Clem Renouf, a Sunshine Coast local and major USC donor, remembers how Professor Thomas “came to our district as a stranger, at a time when the establishment of a university was just a dream—for most, a seemingly impossible dream. He demonstrated a capacity to inspire and persuade others to share his vision.”

Today the University of the Sunshine Coast is a dynamic and much-lauded centre of learning with over 150 degree programs and one of the steepest student growth trajectories in Australia.

Professor Thomas' passion and instinct for regional engagement progressed him naturally into the field of advancement. He made it an immediate priority, investing in a strong alumni and donor relations program for the university.

As an inspired first step, he recruited Tim Fairfax AM—a philanthropist of national recognition and esteem—to serve as the USC Foundation Board's inaugural chair. From there, an active board and experienced staff were put in place.

In nominating him for this award, Mr Fairfax wrote, “Professor Thomas' leadership and unique focus on regional relevance has been the motivating factor in my steadily increasing involvement with the university over the last decade—both as a volunteer and as a major donor.”

Under Professor Thomas' leadership and through his commitment to advancement initiatives, USC has achieved an enviable culture of philanthropy on campus and within its region.

The university has already run two major fundraising efforts, including the recent \$5 million Building Excellence campaign. This campaign represented the largest fundraising result ever to be achieved by a Sunshine Coast organisation. With an alumni base of only ten years, this success was particularly remarkable.

Professor Thomas' 16-year tenure at USC demonstrates that great leadership is performed on a human scale. He is well known for his tireless devotion and genuine interest in the people within the USC community. Tristan Kurz, a 2004 graduate and board member, noted his unique ability to connect with students as effectively and authentically as he does with major donors.

In recognition of his pioneering leadership developing a culture of philanthropy through exemplary regional engagement, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education proudly presents Professor Paul Thomas AM with the CASE Asia-Pacific Chief Executive Leadership Award.

John Lippincott
President

*March 25, 2010
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*