



Making an Impact out in the World

Advisian Professor for Transport Innovation
Chair, Research Management Committee
Director of the Research Centre for Integrated Transport Innovation

Your position is part-funded by Advisian (formerly Evans and Peck) how did this come about?

UNSW has historically been very strong in the transport space and in 2011 formed a joint initiative with NICTA, the national ICT lab, as well as Evans & Peck to establish initial funding for staffing at the Centre. Subsequent funding followed quickly from the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW).

As an infrastructure-based advisory firm, Evans & Peck wanted to support thought leadership and academic insight into transport issues so they established the Evans & Peck Professor for Transport Innovation Chair at UNSW in 2011. This basically means they provided funding to create a position that otherwise wouldn't exist.

It was really an alignment of these four strategic initiatives (ARC, NICTA, TfNSW and Evans & Peck) that enabled rCITI to be established and grow rapidly. Since then Evans & Peck has transformed into Advisian a new global advisory firm. In November 2015, they formally expressed their high level of satisfaction with our team at rCITI by signing up to support the Advisian Professor for Transport Innovation Chair into the future.

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How has the Centre grown?

Before I relocated from the States to take up the position in 2011 the transport program had one academic, one PhD student and no external funding whatsoever. In the past four years we've grown to 10 teaching and research staff, 23 PhD students, and we've brought in more than \$5 million in external funding.

What types of industry projects do you typically work on?

We have formed partnerships with companies in industry, government agencies and non-profits. Our largest sponsor has been Transport for NSW and we have developed a series of analytical tools to help them predict travel time in real-time. Our plan is for our tools to help them anticipate and deal with disruptions and make realtime decisions, like when to change the lanes on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We're also developing tools so they can better manage special events or unexpected disruptions.

At the beginning, we spent a lot of time going out into industry to build our profile and form new relationships, but more recently people have been coming in to chat with us. That's part of the importance of having a Centre. As you begin doing things out in the real world then people start to realise you have the capability and then...success begets success.

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What are the benefits of connecting academia with industry?

The chief benefit for industry partners is that they get the best, most cutting-edge solution to their problem that will enable them to conduct their business and operations in a more efficient, or potentially, in a greatly transformed way.

What would you say to a potential industry partner who is considering connecting with the School?

What I would say is...We have a passion for solving your problems. We're not great at marketing, that's not what we do. We're not extroverts by our nature and we like to spend a lot of time thinking and building practical solutions. However, although we can be a bit introverted, we've chosen our profession because of our sincere drive to make a difference in the world and if you engage with us we'll apply that passion to solving your problems. I'm of the opinion that engineering research is only engineering research if it makes an impact out in the world. If it doesn't, then it's not engineering research. We need to be solving a problem, we need to be tackling some issue. Otherwise what are we really doing it for?

Advisian Principal, Ian McIntyre says the decision to continue to support the position was easy. "In just four short years, Travis and his team have managed to successfully establish a thriving research group from scratch – that's no mean feat!" Transportation is as critical today as it ever has been and Advisian is looking forward to leveraging the

research being done by the team on projects ranging from the impact of autonomous vehicles and road pricing structures, through to the development of analytical tools that can help shape future thinking in this area.

“We’re also looking forward to working with Travis on co-authoring thought leadership pieces in the ‘new energy and transport’ area,” McIntyre says. Advisian is the independent consulting business of the Worley Parsons Group. It is a practical, innovative, results driven organisation with a singular focus on the success of its clients from strategy through to implementation by unlocking value.

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