

## AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2001 MURDOCH UNIVERSITY

### DISCIPLINE

Business  
and Economics

### RESEARCH AREAS

Applied Research – media and advertising

► [linkedin.com/in/duane-varan-a40248](https://www.linkedin.com/in/duane-varan-a40248)

### BACKGROUND

Duane Varan graduated from the University of Texas and then graduated with a Masters in Communications at the University of Houston, Texas. He completed his PhD at the University of Texas. He was an Associate Professor at the University of Hawaii between 1993–1996, before taking up a Senior Lecturer position at Murdoch University in 1997. He was promoted to Professor at Murdoch University where he founded the Audience Labs (formerly the Interactive Television Research Institute) in 2001. In 2005, Professor Varan launched the Beyond:30 Project, a consortium exploring the changing media and advertising landscape. In 2008, Professor Varan was approached by Disney Media Networks to set up a dedicated custom research lab to perform the same type of research done for Beyond:30, but on a broader scale, so the MediaScience® Lab was born. Professor Varan officially left Murdoch in 2015 but continues to have some research links with the University of South Australia. Professor Varan has been widely recognised for his innovative contributions to teaching and industry as evidenced by a long list of awards.

### IMPACT ON LEARNING & TEACHING

Initially the Award meant that Professor Varan was invited to speak at academic conferences but his focus was really on developing closer links with industry partners. As he became more involved with the new Centre, his teaching responsibilities were reduced, however he continued to supervise Honours and PhD students mainly from Psychology. His focus in recent years has been on industry; all his research is applied and linked to the needs of industry. He collaborates with researchers at the University of South Australia, including providing placements for students. Through MediaScience®, he has also endowed a \$1.5 million Chair at the University of South Australia.

### IMPACT ON CAREER

Increased recognition, funding and credibility led to international networking opportunities and sponsorship of his applied research. At the time of the Award, he had moved to the Media School, leading to opening up of the Centre where he became the Director. This allowed him to focus more on applied research projects. The higher profile brought in recognition, leading to CRC grants worth \$3 million and ARC grants worth \$1.5 million. Industry sponsorship and partners provided further funding and valuable research knowledge. Over time there was \$14 million in funding for the Centre. The experience of managing creative research staff in the Centre was invaluable to his career.

## PROFESSOR DUANE VARAN



### CURRENT ROLE

Professor Duane Varan is CEO of MediaScience®, Austin, Texas. He is a global pioneer in lab-based research integrating biometrics, facial coding, eye tracking, reaction time testing and other new advanced methods in better understanding the emotional dimensions of people's media encounters. Professor Varan is also Chief Research Officer at the ESPN Lab (formerly the Disney Media & Advertising Lab). He currently splits his time between his office in Texas and his family home in Perth.

### WHAT THE AWARD HAS MEANT

Legitimacy | Pivot to my career | Protection and freedom for applied research focus

### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2013 The Lab is now a large corporation located in a number of US States and is fully independent of the Disney group;
- 2008 Disney offered Professor Varan an opportunity to set up a Lab in Texas for 5 years, fully funded and to become the CEO and Chief Research Officer;
- 2003 United States TV networks' interest in the research being done at the Murdoch Lab led to considerable sponsorship for the Lab;
- 2002 Set up the Audience Lab at Murdoch University, and became Director of the Audience Lab;  
Connections made at industry conferences led to Murdoch student projects.

### NETWORKS

n/a