



2010 AUCEA National Conference  
Communities Participation & Partnership

5 – 7 July 2010  
University of Tasmania, Launceston Campus



**CONFERENCE  
PROCEEDINGS**

The 2010 AUCEA Inc National Conference Proceedings is a refereed publication of the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance Inc, a not for profit organisation dedicated to enhancing the engagement capabilities of staff and universities by developing expertise, fostering collaboration and building their communities across Australia.

All papers have been double-blind refereed by a panel of national and international experts in the field of university-community engagement and higher education.

The papers in these Proceedings have been included as provided to the AUCEA organisers. Minimal formatting and editing of grammatical errors has been undertaken but responsibility for the content and style remains with the authors.

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

The 7th Annual Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) National Conference **Communities Participation & Partnerships** was hosted by the University of Tasmania in Launceston, Tasmania July 5-7, 2010. Whilst the AUCEA annual conference has traditionally provided a focus for developing the national university community engagement agenda, this conference was particularly important because it addressed key challenges faced by Australian universities in widening participation and addressing social inequity. University academics were encouraged to co-present with their identified partners from Local Government, Schools, Not for Profit Organisations, Community Groups and Business.

The success of the Conference was due to the support extended by sponsors, the University of Tasmania, NRM North, Launceston City Council and Launceston Chamber of Commerce, and many people including the AUCEA Conference Committee and keynote presenters:

- Professor Scott Bowman, Vice Chancellor of Central Queensland University, **Driving Engagement from the Top: A Vice Chancellor's perspective on what you can actually achieve**
- Senator Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion, **Engaging the Community as Partners in Social Inclusion**
- Professor David Adams, Social Inclusion Commissioner for Tasmania, **What should universities do to increase inclusion?**
- Professor Sarena Seifer, Founding Executive Director, Community Campus Partnerships for Health and Susan Gust, Board Chair-Elect, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health  
Community activist and small business owner, **Advancing Health Equity through Community-University Partnerships**

For the first time preconference workshops were run at the Launceston Campus on Sunday 4, 2010. International keynotes Professor Sarena Seifer and Susan Gust ran workshops on **Community-based participatory research (CBPR)** and **Community-engaged scholarship (CES)** whilst Professor Barbara Holland PVC Engagement, University of Western Sydney ran a workshop on **Enabling Engagement** and Professor Hilary Winchester, Pro Vice Chancellor: Participation and Engagement, University of South Australia; and Associate Professor Anne Langworthy, Academic Director, UTAS College ran a workshop on **Strategies for Increasing Participation through Community Engagement**.

The conference included a regional panel and parallel sessions. All papers included in these proceedings were double blind refereed in a process managed by the Conference organisers, Leishman and Associates and the AUCEA Conference Committee. The international keynote presentation and regional panel notes were not refereed.

These proceedings represent the progress made in the scholarship of engagement and provide a sound foundation for the papers to be presented in at the 2011 AUCEA conference; I trust you find these proceedings both a true representation of the very successful 2010 Conference and a useful ongoing resource.

Yours sincerely  
Associate Professor Anne Langworthy



Conference Convenor

## **Key Note/Plenary Session**

**Driving Engagement from the Top: A Vice Chancellor's perspective on what you can actually achieve**

*Professor Scott Bowman, Vice Chancellor of Central Queensland University*

**Engaging the Community as partners in Social Inclusion**

*Senator Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion*

**What should universities do to increase inclusion?**

*Professor David Adams, Social Inclusion Commissioner for Tasmania*

Papers not provided.

## Advancing Health Equity through Community – University Partnerships

*Susan Gust, Board Chair-Elect, Community-Campus partnerships for Health Community activist and small business owner*

*Professor Sarena Seifer, Founding Executive Director, Community Campus Partnerships for Health*

The first way I have to engage with you is to say, “Good morning”. [and the audience responds, “Good morning.”]

The next item I want to get out of the way before I begin sharing my thoughts with you is when I read that the title for this talk was named “health equity”, I was a bit worried because those are not words that I use to describe the work with which I am most involved. Instead, I want to honestly convey what I want to talk about is the underlying premise to the phrase “health equity”, both personally and as a representative of Community Campus Partnerships for Health.

The word health, it means everything. As a community activist, I can spin it to mean anything I want it to mean. I do really mean that. Health is all the things that affect us in our lives, the lives of our family and the lives of our community. It’s the lighting quality in this room, how it makes us feel and whether or not it’s right for our eyes. It’s the water quality of the water with which we brushed our teeth this morning. It’s how we got here including all the different methods of transportation but also how we got here in our own personal journeys. That is what CCPH and I mean by the word “health”. Equity is just that-equity. How do we really start to build systems that allow us to be together, to not just passively coexist and not just collaborate by travelling back and forth between sectors but how to stay together and build models of shared power. We haven’t yet achieved that in our evolution as human beings. Equity is about exploring our path together to build those shared power models. But, we must not first think about how to achieve health equity or the best practices of working together towards health equity. Instead, we have to pursue the “why”, and not rush to the how.

Sometimes, even in the last few days, we have veered towards what community engagement is. We’re struggling to know the “what” and that propels us to the “how”. Meanwhile, we left the “why” in the dust and never took the time to reflect on it together and figure it out. I’m asking you for this time we have together and maybe for the rest of the day, to consider the “why”. I’m hoping I can provoke you into doing this maybe for the rest of your lives, to stay in touch with the “why”.

I gave a talk recently---- this is a new thing that’s happening to me where I’m being asked to give talks. I think to myself, “Whoa, what is this all about?” Anyway, I was in my home state of Minnesota at a conference about community-based participatory research sponsored by Mayo Clinic, a world-renowned medical and research institution. At Mayo, faculty and staff are struggling in this big, giant, institutional way to have authentic relationships with the geographic community around this dominant institution. This conference was the first time they were setting out to take stalk in these growing partnerships that seemed to have been operating somewhat under the radar for the last several years. I gave a talk with my university research partner. Afterwards, a conference participant approached me and said. “You have to read this book because you sound just like the

author.” I thought to myself, “This is scary if I’m starting to sound like an author of a book.” That has not been part of my career path.

But, as I discovered, there’s this wonderful way that words can help all of us, including me, a community activist. I’m just going to read a couple of passages of this book by Peter Block, The Answer to How is Yes:

“There is something in the persistent question How? that expresses each person’s struggle between having confidence in their capacity to live a life of purpose and yielding to the daily demands of being practical. It is entirely possible to spend our days engaged in activities that work well for us and achieve our objectives and still wonder whether we are really making a difference in the world. My premise is that this culture, and we as members of it, have yielded too easily to what is doable and practical and popular. In the process we have sacrificed the pursuit of what is in our hearts.”

That is my greatest fear as I take my community activism, my community partner role and community partner research role and engage with all of you and with all of my academic partners--- we will start doing what is doable, practical and popular and forget where we started. We will get separated from the “why” and from the purpose.

Another quick passage from Peter Block’s book: “If we could agree that for six months we would not ask How, something in our lives, our institutions and our culture might shift for the better. It would force us to engage in conversations about why we do what we do as individuals and as institutions. It would create the space for longer discussions about the purpose, about what is worth doing.”

So that’s what I want to provoke you to think about today. Pretend there’s a tack on your chairs because that’s what community activists do, we agitate. As I have grown older and gotten these grey hairs and had children and grandchildren,- as I realise I’m coming to those later years and I’m not ramping up any longer but starting to slide down, -as I consider that the time is running out and it doesn’t feel as good to do this. [I put my fists together to symbolize opposing forces, conflict.] I have to figure out for our sake, for the sake of your children, our children, how to do this. [I put the palms of my hands together to symbolize compassion, peace.] That’s what I think our purpose is together and it’s very, very powerful.

And why do this or talk about this “why” with academics, or people in academic institutions? It’s because you promised to serve the public good. Academic institutions promised to build democracies and help us all build democracies. They promised academic freedom- [and I quipped] which I still don’t entirely understand because you all sometimes talk about each other behind each other’s back. And they think community people are difficult with which to get along!

That is what you promised. You promised to help us level the playing field and for us to figure out how to do that together. I think that every single one of you individually entered an academic career because you wanted to leave the world a little bit better place than you found it through your teaching, research or service to the institution. You’re not just working in a store or for a corporation. Instead, you said you wanted to do this work of making the world a bit of a better place. That’s the piece with which I want to engage with each of you. And then I want us to consider the institution itself. I want to take us back, I want to go back and talk about the “why”.

To understand a bit about my personal relationship with higher education I will share a bit of my own story. It is somewhat awkward and clumsy and sometimes painful but a great story nonetheless. I grew up in a small, steel mill town named Ambridge in the state of Pennsylvania. It's an industrial town named after the American Bridge Steel Company, now defunct and completely closed up. This closing happened about two years after I graduated from high school. My parents were both firstborn Americans. My maternal and paternal grandparents were from Transylvania, a country that no longer exists. My father was educated in Transylvania as a metal worker. My mother grew up working really hard, cleaning for wealthier people in a suburb of Pittsburgh. She saved money under a mattress in order to run away from home and go to college. She got her second to the last beating from her father once he found out that she had done this but she left anyhow. She ran away from home, graduated with a two-year teaching degree and was teaching in Indiana, several states away. But, as the eldest girl of six children, she was called home to raise her younger siblings when her mother became ill.

I grew up knowing that I had to go to college because that's part of the immigrant continuum and my mother was the living example of just what I would be expected to do. I grew up with that notion but I also grew up in the 1960's. There were a lot of other things going on in America. My parents were happy to be called part of the silent majority in the United States at that time. I wasn't happy being part of their silent majority so I decided, yes, I would go to college but for all the wrong reasons. It was to get as far away from home as possible and from where I had grown up. I wanted to be as far away from that steel mill town as possible. When I got to college, it was a profound experience, but again, in the context of the 1960's in America. I attended Boston University for a very short time. It was during the Vietnam War and towards the end of the civil rights marches on Washington DC. I spent as much time outside of the college classroom as I did inside. When I was inside of the college walls though, there were incredible people teaching, often in non-traditional ways. For example, some of my professors were leading anti-war demonstrations within the university system, talking about building and rebuilding our democracy. In some ways, that particular university experience was a big part of why I'm standing in front of you today.

But, I realised I was wasting my parent's hard-earned money and my own that I had saved while working in a public library since I was 14-years-old. It was a waste of money all around. Plus, in my experience at the time, the world was going-to-heck-in-a-hand-basket, so why attend college?

After I quit school, I drifted around a bit and ended up in Minnesota to visit a high school friend. I lived in a commune, did some feminist theatre, waitressing, became a nursing assistant for a short time, and eventually started a construction company. That was 34 years ago and I still own the construction company. Things have gotten difficult financially so I also work part time in a retail hardware store. During all of this, I was living in an inner city community where things are always happening. There's always work to be done, in our urban, inner city and ethnic communities, to claim our space, to claim our voice.

The work to claim our space led me to help my neighbourhood prevent a garbage transfer garbage station from being built in its midst. This particular neighbourhood is one of the poorest in the state of Minnesota and is also the most ethnically diverse. The neighbourhood population of about 20,000 people is comprised of the second largest, urban, Native American population in the United States and now, one the largest Ethiopian and Somalian populations. For 150 years or since Minneapolis

became a city, it's always been a neighbourhood of immigrants, but the faces of those immigrants have changed.

We prevented this garbage transfer station from being built and we felt "pretty hot to trot". This was the wealthiest county in Minnesota. The county system is in charge of waste management. What should we do next? We looked for the next institutional enemy. I had no children then and less grey hairs so I was into this "power-over dynamic thing". It feels good to win, be able to get your way with people. It feels really good. We were looking for the next way to do that and eventually we picked on the University of Minnesota because we were tired of them "doing research on us" and "being canaries in their coalmine." We perceived them to receive millions of dollars in federal grants based upon our "needs" as identified by the researchers. It felt like university folks were like any other outsiders to our community who assumed that if we were poor, we must be stupid. So we thought we'd take on the University of Minnesota.

We ended up successfully completing, and I'll fast forward through this description for the sake of time, two federally funded projects on reducing childhood lead poisoning. The relationships between community and the University folks started out like this [I put my fists together to symbolize opposing forces, conflict.] and eventually ended up like this. [I put the palms of my hands together to symbolize compassion, peace.] Our collaboration lasted ten years. Why the collaboration sustained itself is not just about the research we were conducting, not just because the community cared about curing childhood lead poisoning, though we certainly did. Instead, we found one thing we could put at the centre of our circle, our collaboration. This was the love of our children and love of each other's children. Whether we were moms or dads or aunties or uncles, whether we were the "good parents" or "not so good parents", we wanted our kids to grow up and thrive because we knew that without that happening, our world would come to a quicker end.

Something that Scott Bowman quipped in his remarks a couple of days ago that really struck me, yet I believe he also really meant it was, "Engage or die". I think the context that he stated this phrase, "engage or die" was made from an economic perspective. In other words, if we don't have a workforce, an educated workforce, universities won't be able to continue to bring in students. They will not survive. But, because he also had pictures of his family, his blue collar, working class family portrayed on the screen during his power-point presentation, I also know that he also understands the importance of this engagement in a very visceral, personal sense. I'm picking on you Scott; - I know you're out there so you can tell me afterwards if I got this right. There's another place from which he spoke the words "engage or die" because he knows the potential impact on his family and his loved ones if universities are unable to truly engage with communities.

I believe we've got to find a way of engaging with each other's knowledge systems or we will die. It's about sharing those knowledge systems that was our real work my community's collaborative efforts to learn how to prevent childhood lead poisoning. The community's knowledge system was understood to be equally valuable, equally necessary, equally respected as the University of Minnesota's knowledge system. It's a different way of learning, a different way of knowing. Universities don't create knowledge. Universities think they hold knowledge and they might but they only hold knowledge of a certain kind.

On a simplistic basis, all of you knew how to wake up this morning. Nobody taught you that. You knew how to wake up and you have learned how to get through the day. People who are struggling,

people in America that I know, who I live down the block from me are struggling amidst incredible strife: addiction, unstable housing situations, physical abuse, joblessness, health issues, and incredible poverty and all the stress poverty brings, etc. How do they wake up each morning and get through the day? That is a way of knowing, knowing how to get through any day is profound, especially compared to how much easier it is for us to get through our days.

Think about your tough days, the tough days that maybe you had to travel over the years to get to this place, to find your place in this theatre today. But somewhere inside of you, you know the “why”. And you know the how and that’s where you need to engage with the community and with those shared knowledge systems. The goal is not to blend those knowledge systems. We have to value and know and trust those ways of knowing and bring them together for the common good.

So how did this collaboration that I talked about a minute ago bring together those knowledge systems? One way was by learning to respect and trust each other’s knowledge systems and value them equally. But, the essential element was building a governance model that allowed those knowledge systems to be shared. That’s the key with this community engagement work: it is as much about the sharing of the knowledge and, perhaps, more importantly, it is about the governance structures that will hold those shared knowledge systems. As we create structures where knowledge systems can be shared and figure out how to do that, we are building models of shared power.

That shared power, in my opinion, is what’s going to save this planet and save the lives of many around us, allowing there to be many children and grandchildren for ages to come. I think that this is the work that belongs to us [meaning community and university partners] to do. One idea, I think, that’s important for us to continue to think about is the idea of “sharing” rather than “blending”. I heard in the last couple of days about the kinds of projects that are happening between universities and communities in Australia. But, it still seems to me that we’re talking about an academic knowledge system setting out to accomplish something with a community group, to get something done. What if, again, like I was saying before, that at least some of the work was just getting to the “why”? The work is not just about “the doing” or getting it done, it’s also about the process and being totally conscious every step along the way of what it feels like to do the work. What’s hard, what hurts- and there better be some pain or else it’s not effective. What feels glorious, what does success feel like? On one level, it needs to be personal. It needs to be all of us taking this in and at the same time not just an assembly of individuals doing so.

One of the things about the analysis of health status, at least in the US and often throughout western society, is that it considers only the health of an individual or an accumulation of individuals. Not very often do we look at health of the community, which is really a key thing. We are only beginning to examine what the social and environmental determinants are that impact the health of a community. However, many indigenous cultures and indigenous people primarily view health as a collective condition that considers the people collectively or the health of the community. It’s a very powerful understanding. Thinking about health this way gets us to the “why” a whole lot faster than through considering only the health of the individual.

I’m a participant or member of an organization in Minnesota called the Cultural Wellness Centre whose purpose is to explore and improve health through first studying and learning about cultural identity. It’s an African-American centric organisation where one really has to work on

understanding one's own culture in order to be in a relationship with other people from the Cultural Wellness Centre. Under the leadership of Elder Atum Azzahir, Executive Director of the Cultural Wellness Center and board member of Community Campus Partnerships for Health, there is a group of people developing a Cultural Community Review Board. We're evaluating specific research projects that are brought before us and are deciding about whether or not the research is culturally appropriate to the community. We are also studying and learning together about what the very idea of research is or isn't. Research to us is a way of knowing, a way of understanding ourselves within a community.

I was at a meeting of the Cultural Community Review Board recently before coming to Australia. We were discussing how the cultural way of understanding is different from western culture's knowledge system or science. Evidence based research and that way of knowing dominates our understanding of what science is, what research is, and certainly what knowledge is considered to be. We're looking at other ways of knowing and learning especially from those in indigenous communities. Cultural wisdom or ways of knowing include topics like: living in harmony, living with mythology and stories, having an understanding of the cosmos. I'm not a religious person but I want to be living a life which integrates my emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health. That is the work of the Cultural Wellness Centre.

As we were talking about the evolution over the last several years of this Cultural Review Board, one of the elders posed a question to us out of the blue. This apparently random query sometimes happens when you work in cultural communities whose scholars come from traditions that highly value storytelling. Anyway, he said, "I wonder if we had been truly living with these shared knowledge systems and not just where these different bodies of knowledge coexist in parallel places, but where we had a deep and integrated understanding of each other's ways of knowing, if perhaps the Gulf oil spill would never have occurred. I was like, huh? I had to think about this. As an activist, it's easier to just hate BP Oil. It's just easier to be mad and angry at oil corporations. It's easier to be angry at all corporations. It's just easier to not have to think about it at all. This is hard to do with the Gulf oil spill because every time you turn on your computer, there is the latest news flash about it.

It really made me think, whatever did he mean? I went home to my family and my Friday afternoon but the question really stuck with me and I kept turning it over and over in my mind. I think I'm beginning to understand what the meaning might be. The BP Oil guys had never had conversations with the fishermen in that area who know the wind, the waves, the intricacies and mysteries of the sea. There was no opportunity for the fisherman to offer, "You guys are crazy for trying to drill this deep because it won't work." It's not just sharing knowledge systems but living an integrated life as a society. It is living by these ways of knowing, not just the scientific way of knowing but this way of knowing what is right for us as a people and integrating that with where we need to get to together and why. We have lights and electricity and all those kinds of things but let's take those knowledge systems and really get inside of us as a people and work from what we know and the why. The Cultural Wellness Center's elder really inspired me to think about how important it is to keep learning about this concept of "other ways of knowing" and to consider these ideas along side of more traditional systems of knowledge to solve real-world issues.

I can be a community activist and I have a good deal of power because you [this audience] want to know what people like me are really like, what makes us tick. It helps me to even feel exotic sometimes, especially to be invited to another country! How do I take that thrill, that charge to my ego, that “power thing” I talked about before and not go on a “power-trip”? How do I not become this egotistical individual that starts to assimilate all these experiences and grow bigger and stronger and more ferocious? How do I take these experiences, thoughts and feelings into myself, balance it all with humility and have it reflect back out to her, my daughter, [who was sitting in the audience] and all of you?

That’s our job, to figure that out. Again, why am I choosing to do this work with you or wanting, hoping to, is because you promised that universities and colleges, higher education institutions, are about serving the common good. It is the place from which we can get back to levelling the playing field by participating equally, fully, ---not to become grey matter, but to say who we are and engage with each other. Not to become each other but to engage with each other around the “why”, to leave the world a better place than what we found it.

Thank you.

I want to introduce Sarena Seifer, Executive Director of Community Campus Partnerships for Health. I’m a board member of Community Partnerships for Health. As an activist, one often begins working in one’s own community and then, okay, one wants to work in even a bigger way, so I considered, “How about doing something on the national level”? That is more or less why I came to be on the board of CCPH. Now it’s becoming an international organization. Being a board member of this vital organization is so exciting. I want to say again, the “why” of doing this work must be considered. Community Campus Partnerships for Health has and continues to strongly consider and pursue the “why”. The work of CCPH is not to just improve health in the traditional meaning. Its mission is to seek social change. Community Campus Partnerships for Health lives by the why.

## **Advancing Health Equity through Community – University Partnerships**

### ***CCPH Executive Director Sarena Seifer***

Good morning, it is really great to be here. We’ve been obsessing about this trip for months now. I would like to begin by describing Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) because I think the way we think about our mission, our purpose, our values, and the work we do is not only central to the organisation but also has parallels in how you might think about your own work at institutional and community levels, and the partnerships you’re involved with.

CCPH promotes health through authentic partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions. We view health broadly as physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and emphasise partnership approaches to health that focus on changing the conditions and environments in which people live, work and play. We envision an equitable society in which all can participate and prosper. We’re actually having a discussion on our board right about possibly changing our name because health often connotes a more narrow focus than the social justice and institutional change we’re actually trying to achieve through the work that we do.

We are a non-profit organisation. We got started in 1997 and our history grew out of the service-learning movement in the United States. In the mid 90s, many government and foundation reports continually pointed out that universities were not producing the health professionals needed in communities. They were not producing the doctors, nurses, dentists, social workers and others who were prepared to work in inter-disciplinary teams, to work with culturally diverse communities and to help people improve their own health. Many of the recommendations in these reports centred on changing the way health professionals are educated.

In response, we ran a program that preceded CCPH that was called the Health Professional Schools in Service to the Nation Program.<sup>1,2</sup> The idea behind the HPSISN program was that if we changed the curriculum so that students spent more of their time serving and learning in communities and outside of hospital and classroom settings, we would produce health professionals committed to making change in communities. The initiative funded 17 institutions in the US and their community partners to develop service-learning partnerships. During our annual meetings, the idea for starting CCPH got hatched. The group who came together to form the organisation could have decided on a very narrow mission around promoting service learning in the health professions, but they wisely observed that universities and colleges have many assets and we needed to think more broadly than just about the curriculum or just health professional schools. Thus, CCPH is about promoting health through community-campus partnerships that include service-learning, but also include community-based participatory research and broader community and economic development partnerships. And about promoting health by mobilising all the assets of universities, not only those that reside in health professional schools.

We have a 15 member board and in our governance structure we are trying to model the very partnerships we espouse. We have individuals on the board who are community activists, government employees, students, faculty, academic administrators and so forth. We made the decision early on not to construct a board that specifies a particular number of people in different categories. Rather, we wanted a board that could speak broadly and deeply about the notion of partnerships.

Over the years, we have had a number of Australian connections. Universities in Australia have joined CCPH and presented at our conferences. I was here a few years ago as a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney's School of Indigenous Health Studies. We've also hosted visitors from Australia, most recently Rae Walker from La Trobe University, who presented on her model of trust between organisations. Ella Greene-Moton on our board just came back from Melbourne from the Australian Health Promotion Association meeting and similar to what you're all talking about in universities, hospitals and public health departments are having very similar conversations about community engagement and partnership. There are many opportunities to forge connections across sectors.

Every word in our name and mission statement is critical and as you can imagine we spent a lot of time thinking through these. The first word in our name is **community**. We decided right off the bat, we're not going to adopt a particular definition of community. We believe that defining community is more about asking questions about who's at the table and who needs to be there, then it is about a precise definition. Are those most affected by the issue or problem being addressed at the table and in decision making roles? We have to continually ask ourselves this question and be sure we are engaging the individuals who are most affected on a day to day basis. Many community

engagement efforts stop with the positional leaders and organisational leaders but do not involve as decision makers those who are most affected by the issue or problem.

The next word in our name is **campus** and we made the decision early on not to call ourselves Community-University Partnerships for Health because there's a very strong system of community and technical colleges in the U.S. that we wanted to be sure to include. We also chose the term campus to connote all the assets that colleges and universities can bring to communities. At our first conference, John McKnight who pioneered Asset-Based Community Development led a session in which participants were asked to respond to the question, "What assets do higher educational institutions have that could be of value in building stronger communities?" The list generated covered a lot of ground, from human resources that include students, faculty and staff to educational and cultural resources like libraries, sports facilities and the beautiful art gallery we visited last night. For us, campus denotes the broad range of assets that higher educational institutions have to offer.

The final word in our name is **partnership** and we spent a significant portion of time early on developing principles of partnership. We didn't just huddle in a room of fifteen board members to come up with a set of principles. We engaged our members and the broader community of people interested and involved in community partnership work through forums, focus groups, discussion sessions at our conferences, and online. We asked, "What does it mean to be in a partnership? What are the values that underlie this kind of work? What are the essential ingredients for success?" The first set of principles were adopted by our board in 1998, and we revisited them in 2006 and made a few changes. We encourage emerging and established partnerships to develop their own principles, using these as a starting point or guide. Hundreds of partnerships across North America have done just that. We don't argue for simply adopting the CCPH principles of partnership because the process of discussing them is as important as the words that end up on the page. The last principle – that partnerships can dissolve and need to have a plan for closure – was added in 2006. When the principles were first developed in 1998, many community-campus partnerships were new and this didn't seem to be an issue. But as partnerships have some history, they begin to face questions about their sustainability. For example, if core funding for a partnership is cut, partners have to consider: Are we staying together in the absence of funding, are we more than just the money and if we are going to be dissolving, let's not just say "the grant's over, see you later," but let's plan a process for closure.

### **CCPH Principles of Partnership**

From: <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/principles.html#principles>

1. Partnerships form to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.
2. Partners have agreed upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and accountability for the partnership.
3. The relationship between partners is characterised by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
4. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.

5. The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
7. Principles and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
8. There is feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
9. Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments.
10. Partnerships can dissolve and need to plan a process for closure.

Also in 2006, we brought together a group of 23 community leaders from around the United States for a Community Partner Summit (see: <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cps-summit.html>). The Summit convened individuals who were active in their communities and had years of experience working in university partnerships. We wanted to understand the perspectives of communities involved in these relationships with no academics or university administrators in the room - what they thought about working with universities, why they did this work and how these partnerships could be improved. One of the pioneering pieces of work that came out of that conversation was a framework for authentic partnerships.<sup>3</sup> There are three components to it: One is that **the process of partnership** is critical and it has to be a quality process. This quote on our board is from Ella Greene-Moton, and her quote at the summit was “we are not just talking about a process that involves partners, there needs to be a process of shared decision making.” The partners at this meeting spent a lot of time talking about how they were often asked to be on advisory committees but they wanted to be involved as decision makers. So now we’re starting to see models of shared power in which community and academic partners are making decisions together.

The second part of the framework is that the **outcomes of partnerships** have to be meaningful and tangible to communities. A quote from Vickie Ybarra who worked for a migrant health centre in Washington state at the time of the Summit, helps to make this point. She said, “OK, we can work together on community-based participatory research, but only if you support our kids in the pipeline. Bring them to campus for programs, teach them skills they use to be more marketable, give them academic credit.” When university researchers want to study the Latino population, they come to the health centre because it's a trusted organisation and an access point into the community. The health centre takes its position seriously and wants to ensure that research is going to lead to tangible community benefits. They are involved a lot of community collaborative research that is very important. What’s interesting about this quote is that while the research is important, what's most important and meaningful to the community is having more Latino children graduate from school and go onto higher education. There's a significant educational achievement gap between Latino and non-Latino whites in this part of Washington State and many other areas across the US. For Vickie, negotiating any research relationship with a university must include programs and policies that address this point.

The third and final part of the framework for community-campus partnerships is that **transformation** has to occur at every level when you do this kind of work. It's not just about change in the community but about change in the institution. Do we have the mission, values, promotion and tenure policies, and so forth in our institutions to support authentic partnerships with communities? Do we have the policies and systems in place that are going to allow us to be transparent in our partnerships with communities?

The last word in our name is **health** and what we mean by health isn't only medical care and your ability to see a doctor but all the environmental, social and economic factors that contribute to health. For most of us working in this area, it has been a real struggle to get researchers and policy makers looking in the places that determine health. There's a story of a man who lost his keys right next to his car in a parking lot, but where does he look for the keys? Where the light is across the lot, not where he actually dropped them. The same is true for health. For too long, we've been focusing on where the light is, individual health risks and behaviours, and not broader factors that are the predominant contributors to health. For example, focusing on getting people to eat healthy foods but paying insufficient attention to access to affordable food in grocery stores and in schools and to federal agricultural policy that encourages farmers to grow corn that becomes high fructose corn syrup used to make the high-calories drinks that contribute to obesity.

When you look at what we're trying to do at CCPH, we strive to leverage the assets, the knowledge systems and the resources in communities and institutions – not to blend them, but to bring them together in a way that values and honours each in order to advance social justice.

Another important framework for us is that of the **engaged campus** – a campus that is not just located within a community, but is intimately connected to the community. Engaged institutions see the future of the community and their own future as inextricably linked. To be an engaged campus is an evolutionary process – it doesn't happen overnight. We're trying to help institutions to move along a continuum: from models of outreach, charity, volunteerism and community service and individual disconnected projects to strategic models that link them towards social change; from being community-placed to community-partnered; from service and outreach to models that link the effort to the academic missions of teaching and research. We talk a lot about community-engaged scholarship, linking the community work that faculties and students do to the core business of universities as a way of making change and validating that work. We also talk about expanding the three traditional missions of universities: research, teaching and service to include a fourth mission of institutional citizen – being a civic actor, convener and advocate. Universities are often major employers and real estate developers. How can they advance community and economic development through these roles?

So how do we operationalise all this? I talked about our mission, our name, the words we use and what we mean. So what are we trying to do? Our work is centred on these strategic goals:

We're trying to **leverage the knowledge, wisdom and experience** in communities and academic institutions to actually make a difference. For example, we just concluded a national initiative called the Health Disparities Service-Learning Collaborative that involved schools of public health across the United States and their community partners, working to address health disparities. One of the outcomes of the Collaborative was reforming public health curricula to include longitudinal service-

learning experiences in the community that would have more substantial impacts than episodic short-term community service projects.

We aim to **build capacity** and much of our work is about helping to ensure people have the skills, knowledge and competency to effectively engage with communities. We have an online curriculum about how to develop sustain community-based participatory research partnerships, for example.

We **support communities** in their relationships and work with academic partners. I mentioned the Summit that brought community partners together to perform a network and achieve change collectively. We do a lot of work with community organisations on how to effectively partner with academics. For example, we just recently finished an initiative in New Hampshire, where a coalition of community groups there that are working to improve minority health. They had been approached by universities frequently to conduct studies together but they wanted to be proactive. They wanted to identify up-front what are our priorities, what do we want to do research on, what are we trying to understand in our own community? They didn't want to sit and wait for academics to approach them with their research ideas. They wanted to answer these questions before they started engaging with academics and they took a year and a half to do just that.

We're also doing a lot of work on **recognising and rewarding faculty** for the work they do in communities. Much of this is around changing the promotion and tenure system, which is a big nut to crack but we're working on it. There are examples now of universities that have started to change their policies and of course it's not just about the policies, it's about changing institutional culture. One of our approaches has been to create collaboratives of universities that want to work together and make that change and support each other.<sup>4</sup> One of the big issues for community-engaged faculty is that while journals are great, there are so many other products that come from this work that are valuable and valued by communities and policy makers – technical reports, policy briefs, training manuals, educational videos, etc. – but these aren't peer reviewed and don't usually "count" for promotion and tenure. So we launched CES4Health.info, an online system for publishing products of community-engaged scholarship that are in forms other than journal articles.<sup>5</sup> Community and academic peer reviewers assess each product and an accompanying application that describes the scholarship and community engagement underlying it. Over 20 products have been peer-reviewed and published so far. We're surveying authors, reviewers and users for their feedback, and have received enthusiastic responses so far, including from a dean who wrote that "CES4Health.info is a godsend" for community-engaged faculty who are being considered for promotion or tenure.

We are working to **balance power and share resources** in these partnerships. We talk a lot about CCPH on our board as trying to serve as a moral compass. I think a lot of times we're in the position of asking questions about why are you doing what you're doing? You talk about it being a partnership, are you balancing power? Are you sharing resources to try and get at the underlying contributors in the partnership? Are you working to address underlying issues of inequity?

And ultimately, we are working to ensure that **community-driven social change** is central to community-campus partnerships. We're not about "partnerships for partnership's sake" or only devising short-term band-aid solutions to community concerns.

**What is the current reality of community-campus partnerships?** From where we sit in the US and Canadian context, there's certainly a lot of buzz about community engagement and partnerships in higher education circles. Universities are talking about it, they're trying to move in this direction. One Community Partner Summit participant, who works in a bank on economic development initiatives with her local university, made this observation about the current reality: "There's a lack of understanding within universities about what they're doing and why. This one office in our university has changed its name three times since 1995. First it was community service, then it was service learning, now civic engagement. It's a pretty word and concept but now there's a disconnect. The university thinks that anything outside the walls is engagement." What we find is there institutional bridging structures and positions being established and while these are important, from a community standpoint it is unclear how to engage with them and how to be involved with them in a decision making role. It can feel like it's more being done "to them" than done "with them" and this is something we need to work on changing. There is a tremendous amount of passion and commitment among community partners who have been at this for some time, but for many communities, the benefits of engaging with academic institutions aren't that clear.

The relationship between community and campus partners is largely based on individuals and even in partnerships that have been around 10 or 15 years. they're still often dependent on one or two people at the helm and thus vulnerable if those individuals leave. Community groups sometime lose their community ties when they get involved with universities. There is a growing group of community leaders that universities are hiring to be liaisons and work in communities, and as they move more into the institution, although they view themselves as the community voice within, they can become suspect in the communities that they've worked in for many years.

Is the predominant model a partnership in the principle-centred way I've described? Partnerships are often framed by the campus in the academic and teaching mission of the university and not around community issues and priorities. They are often driven by grant and program requirements. Over and over again we hear stories of universities obtaining funding to do work in the community but the community hasn't been consulted and involved in the design. The disconnects and contradictions can be quite dramatic. You can have one part of a university doing exemplary community-engaged research and teaching but at the same time, bulldozing a low-income neighbourhood to build a new building that the community hasn't had any genuine involvement in. We see significant infrastructure for community-academic partnerships being built on campus – offices of community engagement, vice provost positions, and so forth – with little investment in the infrastructure needed in communities to engage with campuses. Often communities serve only in an advisory role. There's also frequently an assumption that academic knowledge has greater value than community knowledge and those are obviously sentiments we need to work on.

I've been focusing here on what's not working, but of course there are models for what's working that we need to learn from and build upon. What is working is when there are strong relationships of trust, honesty, transparency and respect. When partners are viewed as equals in the relationship and when there are mutual benefits. When there's shared ownership. When there are clear definitions and roles and responsibilities. When partners are valued and compensated for their expertise. For most of the community groups involved in these relationships, this isn't their full time job. They're not being paid to take students or do research. They may have it as part of their job

description but most of the time it's not. Are we compensating them for their time and valuing their expertise in a tangible way?

These partnerships are working when partners gain skills that are transferable, when we're bringing communities together to learn from each other. Often these relationships can be very dyadic: an individual faculty working with an individual community partner. But when we bring the partners together to foster community and networking among them, we can have much more of an impact.

Partnerships are working when they have structures and processes that encourage sharing and control. We're seeing a lot more of these now. Boards that have equal representation or perhaps "50% plus one" in terms of the community composition around the table in a partnership. An example from the 2010 winner of our annual CCPH award is a partnership in Boston called CCHERS (pronounced "cheers"), the Centre for Community Health, Education, Research and Service (see: <http://www.cchers.org>). The partnership involves multiple universities, community health centres, public schools and the health commission. They've evolved a bridging structure that has a board of directors with representation of the partners on it and they are the decision making body for the collaborative research and teaching that occurs through CCHERS. These sorts of models help to ensure that communities are involved as decision makers and not just as advisors.

Of course the leadership of these partnerships is really critical and in the case of CCHERS, the director is a boundary spanner who worked previously for years as a community health centre executive director and public health advocate before taking. Partnership leaders who can span the worlds of community and academe is really critical. Indeed, they must span multiple worlds because it isn't just community and campus but the many sectors that need to be mobilised to make change.

Finally, I'll touch upon the **characteristics of vibrant community-university partnerships** which is what we're really talking about here. The WK Kellogg Foundation in the US has been investing in these partnerships for over twenty years now and they have observed that in vibrant community-university partnerships, partners are working towards the same goals, trying to improve the health and well-being of communities. They collaboratively plan and design mutually beneficial programs and outcomes. They engage in reciprocal learning. You can't tell who's the faculty, who's the student, who's the community leader – because all are learning and teaching together and benefiting from each other's knowledge. They usually involve some kind of bridging structure. Vibrant community-university partnerships respect the history, culture and knowledge of each partner. Partners have expectations of each other and value and promote diversity. They continually assess what they're doing and report back and celebrate their successes.

So how do we apply what we're talking about in a university setting? How can we incorporate the the principles and best practices of community-campus partnerships? this? I have tried to break it down into different components of the university:

*Governance:* Who sits on the board and the decision making bodies of your university? Are they reflective of the diverse communities you serve?

*Mission and strategic plan:* How are they determined? How is community engaged and involved in these decisions? Was there a draft you already prepared internally or did communities shape it from the start?

*Faculty and student recruitment and orientation:* How do you recruit faculty and students and how do you orient them once they are on your campus? Is there an opportunity to learn about the community and engage with community partners from day one? For example, new faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill go on what's called the Tar Heel Bus Tour, named after their sports team (see: <http://www.unc.edu/bustour/>). They travel the state and it's not about sitting in the bus and looking out the window, but stopping and visiting the communities across the state where university partnerships are already in place and where are opportunities for student and faculty engagement. They've actually tracked the outcomes and have documented faculty community-engaged scholarship that began with the community relationships begun on the tour.

*Faculty roles and rewards:* How do you engage communities in the review and development of faculty? Susan Gust and two other community leaders have co-authored a paper on why community partners should care about promotion and tenure.<sup>6</sup> It makes important recommendations about involving community partners in the process, serving as members of promotion and tenure committees, serving as external referees of work that faculty do because in this sort of work, the peers aren't just academic peers, but community peers as well.

*Research ethics review policies and practices:* How do you assess the ethics of community-engaged research? Do you only examine the risks and benefits to the individuals that are involved in the research or are you also looking at community-level risks and benefits?<sup>7</sup> Are there community members serving on your ethics review committees? In some communities in the US and Canada, particularly indigenous communities, there's a very strong community-driven model of research research. For example, the Navajo community has its own research ethics board that must approve all research conducted in and with the Navajo community.<sup>8</sup> In Canada, the major health research funder has adopted an ethics policy for conducting research with Aboriginal communities that must be addressed in order to receive funding (see: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29134.html>).

*Fiscal policies and practices:* What are you university's fiscal policies and procedures? Is there a possibility for resources and grants to be shared with the community? Can the community get the grant and subcontract with you?

*Business policies and practices:* Where do you buy university supplies, food, equipment? Do you explicitly invest in local businesses? What considerations enter into the construction and renovation of buildings? For example, when the University of Michigan built a new building for their school of public health, they involved their community partners in its design and included space for community groups to meet in the building at no charge. They incorporated a community-engaged approach to the design of the building and aimed to ensure that communities would benefit from the building.

In closing, let me invite you to get involved in CCPH. Our next conference is in Canada and it's a Canadian-led conference called CU Expo, Community-University Partnerships: From Global Perspectives to Local Action, May 10-14, 2011 in the Waterloo Region of Ontario, not far from Toronto. The deadline for proposals is September 10, 2010 so you have time to submit one if you want to present. We'd love to have you come. CCPH isn't having our own meeting in 2011; we've decided to fully support CU Expo because it's synergistic with what we're about and we didn't want to compete with it (see: <http://www.cuexpo2011.ca>)

I hope between my presentation and CCPH board chair-elect Susan Gust's presentation we've been able to give you a flavour of how we think about community, how we think about community-campus partnerships and health and how we work together to leverage our collective knowledge to work for social justice. Thank you.

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## Paper Sessions

### Two Knowledge's Working Together – Dr John Guenther, Vanessa Davis, Denise Foster, Dr Allan Arnott

#### Abstract

Tangentyere Aboriginal researchers and Charles Darwin University (CDU) evaluators, have been working together to evaluate Akeyulerre, an Aboriginal healing centre in Alice Springs.

The healing centre offers traditional healing and cultural support for local Arrernte families in and around Alice Springs. The healing centre was established in the late 1990s. It was set up as a place for Arrernte families in Alice Springs and surrounding communities to come for a range of support services.

The CDU research team is well experienced in conducting evaluations across the Northern Territory. The Tangentyere researchers were asked to work alongside the CDU team who have the knowledge in western academic ways. The Tangentyere researchers have their own style of conducting research among their people. They recognise the need to be patient, building the trust and the respect for each other before any work can be done. The Aboriginal researchers play a vital role when conducting research within an Aboriginal environment.

Members of both teams recognised that to carry out the evaluation they must work closely with Arrernte language speakers who will be able to get the right and true information. The researchers found that by working together and understanding each other the respect was shown to each other and the outcome out of the respect for the two working parties was an evaluation report that effectively blends together the western knowledges of the University researchers and the cultural knowledges of the Aboriginal researchers.

Many individuals and/or institutions contact Tangentyere in order to carry out research on Aboriginal people on the Town Camps. Naturally, the Council has developed a set of research principles to ensure that research is of benefit to the residents involved and is conducted in a culturally protected manner.

The presentation is based on research that Tangentyere and CDU have been involved in and the principles behind the Tangentyere Council Research Program. These principles are included as “two knowledges, working together”. Presenters from the CDU and Tangentyere research and evaluation teams will offer insights they have learned from working together. Their learnings are discussed in terms of a) the time required for partnerships to develop; b) community ownership of research; c) what partnership means; d) the dilemma of living with uncertainty; e) trust and respect; and f) the importance of sharing tasks equitably.

**Key words:** evaluation, partnerships, Aboriginal research, engagement

## **Introduction**

In 2009 the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (DHF) contracted Charles Darwin University's (CDU) Social Partnerships in Learning (SPiL) consortium to conduct an evaluation of the Akeyulerre Healing Centre in Alice Springs. Akeyulerre is a healing place designed for Arrernte families. Most of the families come from the Alice Springs region. The Centre is a place to learn, teach and reflect on culture, knowledge, language, health and well-being. Akeyulerre is characterised by its use of traditional healing and cultural knowledge and is led by Arrernte Elders.

The CDU team has considerable experience conducting evaluations and research projects in a range of diverse contexts. The team is made up of experienced academics, professionals and research practitioners, most of whom have degree qualifications. It is made up of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. This particular evaluation project however, required a set of skills and knowledge that the team did not have. This set of skills and knowledge relates to a) an understanding of the local Aboriginal context including family structures; b) local language proficiency; and c) knowledge of local Aboriginal cultural practices.

### **Developing a partnership for evaluation**

With these limitations in mind, the CDU team began negotiations with Tangentyere Council in late 2008 with a view to forming a partnership for the evaluation project. The Tangentyere Research Group have significant experience working with Arrernte families and have developed culturally appropriate research methodologies for data gathering purposes. The researchers are Arrernte speakers and are familiar with the local context in Alice Springs. Agreement about the partnership was achieved in mid 2009 and an initial exploratory workshop was conducted in August 2009, to establish responsibilities and evaluation tasks for CDU and Tangentyere evaluators.

The CDU team was to focus on mainstream stakeholders and the Tangentyere team was to focus on participants and committee members. Data collection commenced in September 2009 and continued through to February 2010. The final report submitted to DHF in April 2010 was written jointly by both the CDU team and the Tangentyere team.

This paper draws on the learnings that have emerged from the partnership between CDU and Tangentyere. It is written from the perspectives of both partners. The voices of both groups should be self-evident to the reader.

What the three CDU researchers have is the knowledge of the western academic ways of researching. The Aboriginal Tangentyere researchers have the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and the respect. Months passed with the researchers and the evaluation steering committee meeting up to work out how the research should be done, when the right time to do it was, and why the research had to be done for the Healing Centre. Research plays a big part in our lives. The issues we study Tare the real life issues that we need to deal with at any time of the day.

In the past all research was used for the western academics and Aboriginal people were not involved like today. That is why we have Aboriginal people who are now being involved with research. But we're out there to improve our day-to-day lives that involve health, alcohol, domestic violence, environment, government changes and the living standards for Aboriginal people and worthwhile policy for our people. Government needs to take a look and see what we are doing. Listening to us

(Aboriginal people) has the most effect. Let us be involved with discussions and have an input for our people. We want more recognition for who we are (local Aboriginal people) and how we do it our way and our values.

### **The context of our work together: Akeyulerre Healing Centre**

Akeyulerre is a cultural healing centre for all Arrernte families, based in Alice Springs. It's about acknowledging traditional storytelling, songs and dance. For many of our people the traditional language and culture from generations to generations are slowly fading away but the healing centre is a place where they still have ties to all of those traditional knowledges. Among all of the social events happening in and around town with alcohol issues, drugs and other social issues the healing centre is the only place for all Arrernte people trying to make family strong in culture. The only way the healing centre could make things work is to work inside families and across all generations and across different families too. Akeyulerre is not a 'service'—it doesn't provide services but it helps people connect to language, culture and country and that is what makes the healing centre so powerful and strong. The healing centre is really important because unless we protect and support those systems of knowledge many young Aboriginal people won't grow up to be proud and strong.

## **Background**

### **Tangentyere Research**

The Tangentyere Researchers are made up of town camp residents that live on the town camps of Alice Springs, but we do not have any academic qualifications like any western academic researchers. The only qualifications that we have are our knowledge and understanding of our people, language and culture. For many research projects that we have done with Aboriginal people on town camps our local knowledge plays a big part for us and for them because what we have earned from our people is the trust and respect and we have our ethics and rules. Confidentiality is understood. The way that Tangentyere Research conduct their research is as follows. Before we go out we have a workshop and in that workshop we design our own information and consent form, we design the survey tools, we analyse and enter the data. In that way we have ownership of the data.

For any research that others want us to do that is related to Aboriginal people living on town camps this process must be followed to ensure that we are involved with the decision-making. The idea for project is written to us from non-government and government agencies. We then refer to the Tangentyere Research Hub or the Research Advisory Committee. The Research Advisory Committee can approve projects or they can refer to the full Tangentyere Executive for full support of a project.

Once a project is referred to the full Executive committee they can approve the project to commence by the Tangentyere Researchers. If a project is not approved they invite the representatives to attend the next Executive meeting to present the project. That way the Executive can ask the representatives any questions they like. These steps are taken to make sure that appropriate research is done to benefit Aboriginal people on town camps.

### **Charles Darwin University**

Charles Darwin University is a dual sector university (including higher education and vocational training), which specialises in producing graduates suited for the Northern Territory context. Located as it is, in a context where 30 per cent of the population is Indigenous, SPIIL is particularly cognisant of the importance of engaging appropriately with those who have a different cultural frame of

reference—many of who speak languages other than English as their first and second language (Campbell and Christie 2009). Appropriate engagement in this context means respecting culture and language and providing a way for the local community to participate as partners in the evaluation process.

### **The purpose of evaluation**

Before we go on to discuss the outcomes of the CDU-Tangentyere partnership, it may be important for the reader to understand what we understand evaluation to be. While this review of relevant literature is presented from an academic western frame of reference it demonstrates that evaluation is not as simple as it is perhaps perceived to be. Nor, for that matter are the concepts of collaboration and partnership, which are also discussed.

At one level evaluations are used for assessing program outcomes, typically using program logic models to determine: success of interventions (Patton 2002; W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2004); ‘effectiveness and efficiency’ (Stevens 2005); and what works and why, to inform the formative development of policy and practice (Dawe 2003). While the evaluators themselves may have a role in designing the method of an evaluation, to a large degree the purpose of any evaluation is determined more by the commissioning organisation than by any single methodological approach (Chelimsky 2007). In the case of internal evaluations, where the purpose of evaluation may be driven by an organisation’s need to improve professional practice or quality a ‘community of practice’ approach may be warranted (Wenger 1998). In the case of this latter purpose, the ‘community’ itself determines the purpose. Such evaluations could also be described as participatory, where ‘diverse stakeholders—most importantly, stakeholders from the least powerful groups—collaborate as co-evaluators in evaluation, often as members of an evaluation team’ (Greene 2006:125). Proponents of ‘empowerment evaluations’ (e.g. Fetterman and Wandersman 2005; 2007) take this a step further, arguing that such evaluations are not just participatory but can be used to ‘foster improvement and self-determination’ (Fetterman 2005:10).

### **Evaluation approaches**

Evaluations can be seen to be either formative or summative. Formative evaluations tend to work alongside a program without necessarily having specific outcomes in mind. They can be used to help an organisation to determine the kind of outcomes that may be desirable. Summative evaluations on the other hand, tend to be backward looking reflecting on what has taken place, reporting on outcomes and results of the program without necessarily having input into the future direction of the program (see Mark et al. 2006; Stufflebeam and Shinkfield 2007). The evaluation that formed the basis of this paper was largely—though not exclusively—formative. Questions posed by the evaluation were directed toward learning and improvement (W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2004). The evaluation questions posed in the evaluation plan reflected a predominantly formative agenda.

### **The need for collaborative partnerships in evaluation**

Collaboration is the act of working jointly—a joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a task or project (Guenther and Millar 2007). The term is often associated with ‘alliances’ and ‘coalitions’ (Huxham and Vangen 2000; Foster-Fishman et al. 2001). In human services it is the effort made together by two or more agencies or service providers in order to better serve their

participants and achieve results they cannot achieve working alone. A useful definition draws together the ideas of mutual benefit, relationship and shared goals:

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organisations to achieve common goals. (Mattessich et al. 2004:4)

There are multiple reasons for collaboration in evaluation. They include: increasing acceptance of evaluation findings and increasing participation in and ownership of the evaluation; improving communication and problem solving; and increasing capacity among stakeholders (Harper et al. 2003; Cousins and Shulha 2006). Further, in 'the process of participating in an evaluation, participants are exposed to and have the opportunity to learn the logic of evaluation and the discipline of evaluation reasoning' (Patton 2008:172).

In terms of benefits of collaboration to research in Indigenous contexts a number of points are raised. For example, such research builds capacity to provide stronger, more effective research in such contexts. It builds the capacity of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers. In a relationship such as that developed for the Akeyulerre evaluation there was a range of learnings that took place. The non-Aboriginal researchers were continually reminded of/taught cultural aspects of the healing centre's operation, they were supported to better engage with the healing centre, and they had Indigenous team members to ask questions of and so ensure better understanding and fewer mistakes in the data gathering and analysis phases. On the other hand the Aboriginal researchers were supported in their approach to the western aspects of the project. As there was to be both a community report and a report for Government the development of the latter relied to some degree initially on the non-Aboriginal researchers.

## **What brought us together?**

### **Charles Darwin University**

Initial discussions regarding the Akeyulerre healing centre evaluation alerted the CDU team to the fact that joining with the Tangentyere Research Group was a possibility. This was viewed as a very positive aspect of the project. SPiL has a policy of engagement and partnership development with its clients and where possible the participants of research. As many of the researchers within SPiL are either Indigenous or have extensive experience working alongside Indigenous people they are aware of the need to work closely and in a participative way with Indigenous communities of interest. With the Akeyulerre project one of the first reasons that prompted us to ask Tangentyere Research to join with us was because we felt that we were unable to effectively bring together the evidence required to reflect the Arrernte perspective. We did not have the local and cultural knowledge or language skills that were required.

### **Tangentyere Research**

We the Tangentyere researchers were approached by the CDU academic researchers to evaluate the Akeyulerre Healing Centre. Tangentyere Research has been operating since 2002 and has been doing various research projects for government departments. Through our knowledge and expertise they were seeking to work with Aboriginal researchers. First we met up with each other and to introduce and get to know each other. We worked out what role the Aboriginal researchers had to play alongside the CDU researchers. We worked out what research had to be done and how the research

had to be conducted in an appropriate manner within our environment and how to respect the language and culture of the Arrernte people.

### **Why was there a need to have local Aboriginal Input?**

While the CDU team included a respected Aboriginal researcher it is a mistake to believe that an Aboriginal person can necessarily understand and speak for other Aboriginal groups. At best, such an approach may reach some way to better data. At worst it can be tokenistic and place a great deal of stress on that researcher. Local people with understanding of the cultural, language, political and social contexts are far better situated to gather more informed data.

There is a need for Aboriginal researchers because they have the knowledge and understanding of their people's language and cultures. They can speak and understand many languages, but the main language spoken in Alice Springs is Arrernte. For many Aboriginal people that come in from the different communities the first language they speak in Alice Springs is Arrernte and then their own and then English. Why? Because Alice Springs is Arrernte Country. So when conducting research on Aboriginal country it is vital to have respect for language speakers who are there to translate and to interpret for any western researchers and to capture the true stories from Aboriginal people. Because too many times Aboriginal people have been researched on and too many times it did not benefit the Aboriginal people's living conditions. All research was used for the benefit of academics and Aboriginal people were not involved like they are today. There has been a lot of research that's been done on Aboriginal people in the past and their knowledge was taken away to be used for people to get qualifications, not for the benefit of Aboriginal people themselves.

And they are riding high on Aboriginal knowledge. But when our people see one of their own kind doing research they are happy because they know that they will be acknowledged and their voices will be heard and Aboriginal people will benefit from it. What the Tangentyere Researchers have learned while doing research is that to do research with Aboriginal people is to a) respect them before they respect you; and b) trust them before they trust you.

It is important that we conduct our own research because:

- It's asking the right question to the right person by the right person;
- When it is OK to ask, information can be kept safe and used properly;
- We learn new skills, provide information, and become strong with knowledge; and
- It is a process for us; it was finding answers to questions.

We are using our own research to provide a better understanding for non-government and government agencies about why it is appropriate for us to do our own research. We have the language skills, the respect and knowledge of interpretation. We know our social issues, our people, our culture, and our language. We are not just interpreters, we have strong rules (ethics). Consent and confidentiality is understood.

When doing research in or on Aboriginal land you have to find out when it is appropriate to go and do the research with Aboriginal people. Time is a really big factor because Aboriginal people don't always meet you on time. They're always mobile. Mobility plays a big part too whether it be

ceremonial business or sorry business or other issues, Aboriginal people are always moving from place to place.

### **Partnership relationship**

The partnership relationship was beneficial to both CDU and Tangentyere Research. Over time we learned how to work together.

### **Benefits to CDU**

From the CDU perspective, the benefits of this partnership relationship are multiple. Firstly and primarily, the relationship allowed for the evaluation to proceed with greater integrity than it otherwise would have. The existing relationships that Tangentyere has with the local community—in particular the Arrernte community—was critical to effective data collection from a service use perspective. The depth and quality of data that the Tangentyere team members were able to collect was invaluable. Further, the perspectives brought to the evaluation by the Tangentyere team added significantly to the analysis and synthesis of the data collected by both teams.

One of the other benefits for CDU arises from the potential of being able to work together on new projects in the future. The partnership—now that there is trust between the teams—offers new ways of working effectively on projects that connect with the local Aboriginal community.

### **Benefits to Tangentyere**

We as Tangentyere researchers have the benefit of gaining experience and knowledge from the western academic side and to speak up for Aboriginal people. The benefits for our researchers are the opportunity of working in partnership alongside qualified western academic researchers, and the results we get out of the research. The benefit for the Tangentyere Aboriginal researchers is by working with other academic researchers we can get more recognition for who we are (local Aboriginal people); and how we do it (our way, our values)—they work with us not against us. We can make changes and help make better policies for our people. In this way the research benefits the community as well. Trust and respect are important in this process.

### **How we learned to work together**

From the CDU perspective, there was a considerable gestation period in the relationship. That is, before we felt comfortable working with the Tangentyere team there needed to be opportunities for relationship building, learning from each other, trust building, and developing a shared understanding of the purpose that brought us together. This process took several months to go through and from a practical point of view, involved joining together in several workshops and meetings to share ideas about data collection, methodologies, report writing, and understanding the local context. The time required to nurture this relationship was relatively costly—in the sense that it may have delayed commencement of data collection—but we recognised that without the mutual trust and a shared sense of ownership in this project the data collection process could have been jeopardised. There was simply no point in ploughing ahead with data collection without a vehicle for meaningful participation and engagement.

For CDU, working together means a number of things. It firstly means accepting the values and cultural norms of our partners without prejudice. While we bring our own academic ways of doing things, it sometimes means letting go of those ways—along with the constraints imposed by

academia—in such a way as to allow for a full and free exchange of ideas. It means valuing the knowledge, skills and experience of our partners and being prepared to learn from that. It also means being prepared to bring our own sets of knowledge and skills to the partnership in such a way that builds our partner’s capacity. In practical terms it means being willing to share the responsibilities and tasks associated with a project from planning, evaluation design, data collection, analysis, reporting through to dissemination.

From the Tangentyere researchers point of view we were shocked to see people waiting to meet us. We did not know who they were and where they were from. We did not know if we could trust them and we were wary to give out our information. For as researchers we wanted to protect our evidence of information because a lot of research has been misinterpreted and was used the wrong way. It was confusing at first and a bit scary but we kept on having meetings and workshops and meeting up as often as we could to build our confidence and slowly the process of learning from each other and building our trust and respect was taking place. It took us the Tangentyere researchers and the CDU researchers a while before our confidence of working together with each other built up and it took us a while to get to know each other but it was worth it.

### **Pulling the threads together**

There are a number of learnings that arose for us as we reflected on our work together. These are summarised briefly in the sections that follow.

#### **Relationship development takes time**

Relationship development cannot be rushed. It takes time and one of the issues is the need for project funders to recognise this. Every new project requires a different approach. It requires time for preparation. You can’t compare the new research with the old research. Nor can it be assumed that the way it worked before will be the way it works next time.

You have to start by telling who you are and where you are from. You can’t expect to ride on our backs. You have to teach those coming in what the process is for the research or evaluation. You can’t take shortcuts. Information gathered has to be shared. This takes time.

Western academic researchers often develop an agenda that is built around western ways of working and western time frames. These timeframes usually do not fit Aboriginal ways. Therefore when an evaluation is being planned, at the outset it is almost necessary for western evaluators to double the amount of time required for what they want to achieve or alternatively (and perhaps better still) listen to what Aboriginal researchers and local stakeholders say is achievable in a given timeframe.

#### **Community ownership of research**

It is important for local researchers to maintain control. It is also important to make sure that research is given back to the community. Knowledge shouldn’t be taken away (in order to write a report)—then it just feels like you have been ripped off. Permission for the use of material is important. There must be a point where the report goes back to the community to benefit the community.

### **Partnership means**

A partnership means several things in this context. It means sharing power, listening, giving way, listening, sharing the ups and downs, validating ideas, listening, seeking not assuming, finding humour instead of embarrassment or blame, listening, moving at the pace of the group, and providing ideas and direction (Yes, that's listening four times!). It means sharing knowledge, learning processes, getting to know the person who comes in to the project. A partnership is a reciprocal relationship where both sides get something from the relationship, not just one. There has to be a level of agreement between the two groups.

### **Living with uncertainty**

For western researchers and evaluators living with uncertainties can create a degree of anxiety, particularly as deadlines loom close and resources disappear. There is a sense in which the unexpected is to be expected. This takes some getting used to for westerners who like to plan everything. However, once this uncertainty is taken as a given and accepted it is possible to enjoy the process and learn from it. The focus changes from meeting deadlines to enjoying getting to know one another.

### **Trust and respect**

It can be scary at the start getting to know each other. We ask ourselves: will it fit with how we work and what our expectations are? But as we get to know each other we can then see how our work can come together. Trust and respect for each other build up over time. As part of this process it is important to acknowledge the work that we all contribute to the project.

### **Sharing tasks**

We have learned that not everyone has to do everything. It is, at best, a merging of skills and knowledge. We recognise our collective strengths and accept that tasks can be shared. Not everyone has to do writing for example but you use the skills you have for the benefit of the project. In this way the evaluation becomes a rewarding project. The skills and knowledge that are shared are beneficial to all involved, and in turn benefit the program being evaluated.

### **Conclusions**

The evaluation on which this paper was based was a collaborative exercise that drew on the shared knowledge and skills of both the Charles Darwin University and Tangentyere Research teams. The outcomes of the evaluation are not important for the purposes of this paper. However, the outcomes of the partnership are very important, particularly in terms of the learnings they bring to universities wanting to engage with local Aboriginal organisations in research and evaluation projects. These outcomes could be expressed in terms of shared understandings, increased research capacity, community benefit and improved data quality.

While the outcomes may have been worthwhile to both CDU and Tangentyere Research, the process of working together was perhaps even more valuable than the outcomes. We were able to work together constructively and productively. The CDU team were able to put aside their anxieties about time and both groups learned to trust and respect each other—we were able to achieve the required outputs on time. We drew on each others' strengths, skills and knowledges—western and Aboriginal.

We decided to write this paper together so that we could share some of our learnings with others who may want to work in partnership with Aboriginal people on research and evaluation projects. We have seen others try to do research with Aboriginal people and fall into the trap of assuming that their knowledge is better than the others and their way of doing things is better. While not wanting to suggest that this has been easy, our work together has been a richly rewarding process as we have brought two knowledges together.

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## **Growing Community Partnerships Through Shared Success – *Dr Christian M Jones***

### **Abstract**

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) have seeded, secured and cemented a strong collaborative partnership through development and dissemination of successful community-focused projects. With a shared vision, USC and QPS have developed educational resources aimed at reducing significant social issues by using innovative technologies such as film making, computer games and online community networking.

The case study examines three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects. The paper uses lessons learned together with evidence of the impact of the projects to recommend principles for successful project-led community engagement. Challenges include differing visions for accessibility, content and design, management of expectations of ownership, competing needs between industry and State Government Departments on marketing and promotional activities, value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information, and maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities. The paper demonstrates how small community-focused projects undertaken by small teams can strengthen collaborations through success, building to larger partnerships between government, industry, commerce and community.

**Keywords:** Community partnerships, Regional engagement, Recommendations for success Social issues and change, Education and intervention, Serious games

### **Introduction**

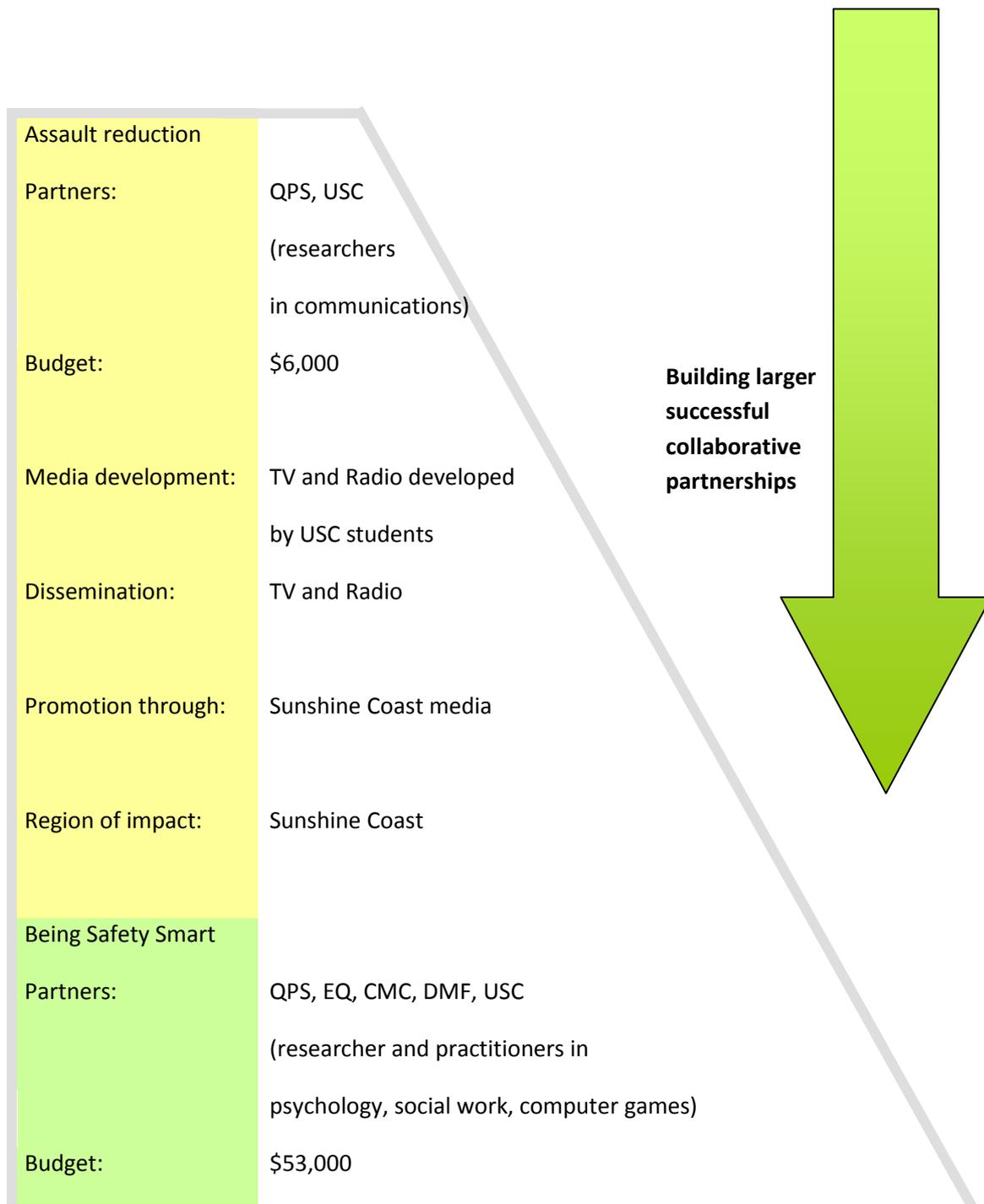
Regional engagement at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) extends beyond the more traditional concepts of knowledge creation through partnerships and the application of learning. At USC regional engagement involves using the full resources of the University to catalyse sustainable regional development.

Regional engagement is integral to the USC mission. The University aims to be the major catalyst for the innovative and sustainable economic, cultural and educational advancement of the region, through the pursuit of international standards in teaching, research and engagement. The University has been successful in partnering with government at local, state and national levels, commerce and community, and the region has become one of the newest and fastest growing in Australia.

USC actively seeds and supports regional engagement partnerships. This paper presents the story behind the formation and strengthening of a USC and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) collaborative partnership through development and dissemination of successful community-focused projects. With a shared vision, USC and QPS have developed educational resources aimed at reducing significant social issues by using innovative technologies such as film making, computer games and online community networking. The case study examines three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects.

Focussing in-depth on one project, the paper uses lessons learned together with evidence of the impact of the project to recommend principles for successful project-led community engagement.

Growth in the number of collaborating partners, available budget, scope of message, complexity of technical developments, dissemination channels, promotion and market channels, and region of impact has been significant from the initial Assault Reduction Campaign, through to the recently released Being Safety Smart resource, and on to the current project, the Feeling Safe game, as shown in Figure 1.



Media development:	Computer game designed and built by USC with additional third party software development
Dissemination:	Online and CDROM
Promotion through:	National media (eg ABC channels, The Independent), EQ (within QLD and to other states), QPS (within QLD and to other states), DMF (national)
Region of impact:	National access through schools
<b>Feeling Safe</b>	
Partners:	Telstra Foundation, QPS, DMF, EQ, Department of Communities (Child Safety), Laurel House (LH), Sunshine Cooloola Services Against Sexual Violence, USC (researchers and practitioners in psychology, social work, child development, early education, computer game design)
Budget:	\$583,000
Media development:	Computer game design by USC and developed by third party professional games development company
Dissemination:	Online
Promotion through:	National and international media, EQ (within QLD and to other states), QPS (within QLD and to other states), DMF (national)
Region of impact:	International access through schools

Figure 1: Growth of collaborative partnerships through successful projects.

## 2. Summary of projects

### 2.1 Assault Reduction Campaign

# Just let it go

USC and QPS have a successful ongoing collaborative relationship and shared vision for developing Crime and Violence Prevention programs. In 2005/6, QPS and USC developed the Assault Reduction Campaign, aimed at reducing the incidence of assault by changing the community view of unlawful assault as an acceptable option to resolve disagreement. The theme of the resulting multi-media campaign was “Just let it go, you could lose more than your temper”. The campaign was aired as community service announcements on television (see Figure 2) and radio, and newspaper advertisements and posters/stickers (see Figure 3), and was nominated for the Australia Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2006.





Figure 2. Screenshot from 'TV campaign



Figure 3. Example poster and sticker from campaign

Joint recommendations by USC and QPS in relation to the completed Assault Reduction Campaign, included (Matheson et al., 2006):

1. the success of this initial campaign be capitalised on, with continuation of efforts to reduce assault crimes on the Sunshine Coast
2. the success of the partnership of the Queensland Police Service with the University of the Sunshine Coast be continued for any future assault reduction campaigns and be broadened to include industry and other relevant sectors.

Additionally the USC research recommended that all future community campaigns:

- be developed in consultation with several focus group meetings at the strategic planning stage

- be tailored to specific target groups across community announcements and print materials
- provide alternative non-violent scenario outcomes, other than the present violent ones, as a tool to present options for community behavioural choice and to educate the wider community in non-violent approaches to problems
- present diverse gender roles within any future community announcements
- formulate the campaign in such a way that it is effective across the broad spectrum of available media and other sources.



## **2.2 *Being Safety Smart* (Child Safety Awareness Project)**

In 2007/8 USC and QPS partnered on a Child Safety Awareness project, called Being Safety Smart. Being Safety Smart is a free-to-use educational game providing safety strategies to children between 6 and 8 years of age. The program is designed to increase the awareness of children to situations within the community which might impact upon their personal safety and to empower them with the ability to act appropriately and with confidence. Data has suggested that children in regional and remote areas may be at greater risk than children in other areas (Neame and Heenan, 2004). In response, Being Safety Smart is an internet delivered resource that can enable children in regional and remote areas to have access to the safety awareness messages.

The game married the University's academic evidenced-based research into best practice in child safety programs with practitioner experience from the Police Service, Education, Psychology, Social Science, and Child Safety. The larger collaborative partnership included USC, QPS, Education Queensland (EQ), the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC), and the Daniel Morcombe Foundation (DMF). Collaboration on the Assault Reduction Campaign built a shared history, a shared vision of positive social and community change and trust between USC and QPS. This provided a basis for strong communication, governance and a development environment where knowledge was freely shared and exchanged for the benefit of the project and all stakeholders.

Being Safety Smart is a fun-to-play cartoon world with interactive stories and mini games as illustrated in Figure 4. Children learn key safety strategies through solving puzzles and completing activities online (See Figure 5). Children are protected whilst playing Being Safety Smart as there are no opportunities within the game for children to chat with, or share information with others (Jones, 2008).



Figure 4. Instruction section of game (left) and choice from multiple items activity (right)



Figure 5. Drag and drop Police Car game (left) and Photo fit game to recognise faces (right)

Being Safety Smart has:

- 8 levels of personal safety messages and strategies each with interactive games,
- Safety messages spoken by children for children,
- Cartoon animations of real life personal safety scenarios,
- Rehearsal of personal safety skills using role-play in the safe and secure gaming environment,
- Child award certificates and parent and carer information for each level as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Child award certificate for level 1 (left) and Parent information sheet for level 1 (right)

The game has been extensively and successfully evaluated in schools and was released across Australia in 2010 (Jones and Pozzebun, 2010). Being Safety Smart won the 2009 QPS Gold State award for excellence in crime prevention. An analysis by the USC marketing and communications division determined that the second-biggest news story for USC in 2009 (in terms of total number of news clips generated) was the launch of Being Safety Smart game and the subsequent QPS Gold award the game received. Being Safety Smart finished only behind the publicity generated by USC news stories on the annual Graduation ceremony.

### 2.3 Feeling Safe (Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Learning Environment)

Feeling Safe is a free-to-use, online, fun and engaging, games-based educational resource for children to learn strategies to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Currently in development, the Feeling Safe project was conceived by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) due to the increasing risk of child sexual abuse in Australia and brought to public attention with the disappearance of Daniel Morcombe in 2003.

Leveraging on the success and strength of Being Safety Smart, USC, QPS, EQ, CMC, and DMF partnered in 2008/9 with Department of Child Safety (Communities), and Laurel House (counselling practice for sexual assault support) to research, design, develop, deploy and maintain an online gaming environment to provide sexual abuse prevention skills and strategies training for children aged 8-10, and training around recognition of child sexual abuse and supporting a child disclosure for teachers and parents.

The Feeling Safe project will be developed around the key features associated with improved child learning and retention of prevention knowledge and skills (Sanderson, 2004). These include:

1. Active participation. Programs that encourage active participation of children (eg through role-play) are more effective than those that use either passive methods (eg traditional teaching, classroom discussions) or no participation (e.g. videos, written materials, self study) (Davis and Gidycz, 2000; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; Rispens et al., 1997).
2. Explicit training. Allowing children to rehearse appropriate behaviours is associated with greater gains in skills and knowledge over non-behaviour techniques (eg lectures, videos, puppet shows) (Davis and Gidycz, 2000; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; McCurdy and Daro, 1994; Rispens et al., 1997; Wurtele, Marrs and Miller-Perrin, 1987).
3. Standardised materials. Programs are more effective if they involve standardised materials and are taught by trained instructors (Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000).
4. Integrated into school's curriculum. Programs are more effective if they are integrated into the school curriculum with designated times for delivery and support (McCurdy and Daro, 1994).
5. Longer programs. Longer programs involving repeated presentations and followed by summaries to reinforce training are more effective than shorter programs (Daro, 1991; Finkelhor et al., 1995; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; Hazzard et al., 1991; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000; Whetsell-Mitchell, 1995; Rispens et al., 1997; Wurtele, 1998).
6. Parental involvement. Children benefit more from prevention training if their parents are also included in the program (Conte and Fogarty, 1989, Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatherman, 1995; Finkelhor et al., 1995; Wurtele, 1993, 1998; Wurtele et al., 1991; Wurtele, Kast and Melzer, 1992).
7. Teacher education. Programs that include teacher education are more effective in helping children to retain their prevention training (Finkelhor, 1984, 1994; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000).

The project is funded through the Social Innovation Grant from the Telstra Foundation, who commented on the strength of the team and previous successful collaborations as one of the reasons for their financial support of \$483k. Both QPS and DMF have committed \$50k each to the project.

### **3. Lessons learned**

These projects have all benefited from highly motivated champions and visionaries from each partner, who are able to take leadership within each partner for the common good of the project. Additionally, success has been achieved through close and open relationships within (inter) and between (intra) partners that have grown stronger through each successful project and weathered changes in staffing roles and responsibilities. However these projects have also profited from honest and negotiated settlements when differences have occurred. Here challenges of differing visions for accessibility content and design, management of expectations of ownership, competing needs between industry and State departments on marketing and promotional activities, value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information, and maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities, are discussed with practical recommendations drawn from the team's experiences. For consistency, the challenges and recommendations are presented in relation to the Being Safety Smart project.

### **3.1 Differing visions for accessibility content and design**

All partners had a shared vision to empower children with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves. Additionally, all partners had a shared vision that the messages and skills training should be available to all for free. However the vision differed on how, and to whom, the educational resources would be made available.

In the case of Being Safety Smart, most would agreed with the need to protect children from those that may wish them harm, and that all children should have equal access to the protection education and training through the online computer game. Initially the funding partners for the project wished to have the game freely accessible to all, via internet delivery or on a CDROM. This would allow children to engage with the messages and skills training in the games without any guarantee of adult support. The social worker practitioners at USC, LH, DCS preferred more controlled access where children would only play the game within a supported setting so that If the child were to experience any confusion, distress or anxiety with the messages and skills training adult support would be available. The supported environments would be clubs (eg scouts), churches, community groups, but most often schools (eg classroom activities and before/after school care).

Abduction is a sensitive subject. A risk of protective behaviour and skills training delivered using animated stories and computer games as novel media is that children may learn inappropriate behaviours. Therefore, the Being Safety Smart resource is mostly used within the school environment (controlled access to the resource) so that teachers can monitor learning and behaviour changes (Jones and Pozzebon, 2010).

Before releasing the resource widely, Being Safety Smart was trialled in 6 schools. A range of proven psychological measures were used to measure the child's pre- and post- understanding of abduction situations. These measures included adaptations of the Kraizer Children's Safety Knowledge and Skills Questionnaire (Kraizer 1986) and Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle 1981) to measure child self-esteem and confidence. In addition, questionnaires were developed for the project that were specifically related to the goals of Being Safety Smart. This included a Parents (and Teachers) Knowledge and Attitudes questionnaire that was designed to evaluate changes in parents/teachers knowledge, and a Parents (and Teachers) Project Evaluation questionnaire that was designed to evaluate the impact of the project on child self-protection skills and self-confidence. The formal trial and evaluation indicated that the game was providing skills training and building self esteem therefore, the game was released to all schools (Jones, 2010). However, a successful evaluation of the game with trial schools only suggests that the game is suitable for use in other schools and other controlled environments with adult supervision. The next step of Being Safety Smart will be assessing the risk of providing access directly to all children over the internet where their learning may not be easily supported or monitored by adults, where children may have experienced abusive events in their own lives (without receiving appropriate counselling), and where children may use the training game within a home where abuse continues to occur.

#### **Recommendation:**

With projects affecting social issues and promoting social change, care should be taken to balance the desires of all to develop potential solutions quickly and release widely, with the recommendations of a discipline experts on type, range, and evidenced quality of the required

messages and to whom these messages should be targeted. Too frequently resource are developed without consultation or collaboration with discipline and content experts and in most cases no evaluation is undertaken to assess the success, or not, of the resource in promoting social changes. Any education, training or intervention should be formally trialled and evaluated with each target audience before a wide scale release, and that success within one population, environment and messages does not guarantee similar social change within other settings.

### **3.2 Management of expectations of ownership**

#### **3.2.1 Issues around management of ongoing quality**

Within Being Safety Smart and Feeling Safe, collaboration partners were concerned with any one partner having the ability to adapt and/or modify the Intellectual Property (resource) without permission and agreement from the other partners. On completion and launch of the resource it could be assumed (under the contract) that all parties would agree to the content presented (educational messages and skills training) and the delivery of the content (characters, animations, games, via online and CDROM, for use in schools only, with teacher support). However the ongoing use of the Intellectual Property (resource) beyond the term of the project also needed to be considered. If one party were to own the Intellectual Property (resource) it would be possible for that partner to

- I. adapt and/or modify the content in a way that compromised the quality and effectiveness of the Intellectual Property (resource);
- II. and/or use the Intellectual Property (resource) outside of the environment and audience for which it was developed and evaluated.

Founding partners of the project may consider any changes create risk that the Intellectual Property (resource)

- I. will not effectively deliver its original objectives (in the case of *Being Safety Smart* - protection education and behaviour training for children);
- II. may adversely affect the target audience (in the case of *Being Safety Smart* - teaching inappropriate protection messages, confuse children through inappropriate teaching, cause unwarranted anxiety and fear in children, and/or promote incorrect behaviours and strategies which could put children at great risk);
- III. will be used in a way, environment and with an audience not originally intended, and without the support and evaluation framework to manage and respond to potential risks (in the case of *Being Safety Smart* - using the game with younger children, children with specific learning needs, or directly into homes where children do not have adult support).

#### **Recommendation:**

The primary concern for partners is the ongoing quality of the resource. This was addressed with an understanding in the contracts that 'USC grants to QPS and DMF respectively a non-exclusive perpetual worldwide irrevocable royalty free licence to use, reproduce and communicate that material with a right of sub licence, for non commercial purposes. Should either QPS or DMF require a licence to adapt and/or modify the material, the request shall be made in writing to USC detailing

the adaptations or modifications required. The consent of USC shall not be unreasonably withheld'. There would also be the option for partners to withhold use of their name, logo and acknowledged support on all media and materials if they were unable to agree to modifications to the Intellectual Property (resource).

### **3.2.2 Issues around ongoing and future use of content (for competitive advantage and revenue generating)**

An extension to a partner modifying the content which may compromise quality and/or use of the resource beyond its original intention, is that the use, adaptation or modification of the resource is for competitive advantage and/or generation of revenues.

Again the partners may consider a clause in the contract allowing one or more partners to use, adapt and/or modify the Intellectual Property (resource) to seek a competitive advantage and/or income from the Intellectual Property (resource). In the case of Being Safety Smart all partners agreed that the resource should be free-to-use and freely available, with the potential that

- I. charity partners could use the resource to promote their work and to seek donations, and that;
- II. educational partners may develop chargeable training resources (eg paper-based, workshops, university short courses) for trainers (eg train the trainers), educators, schools, parents etc.

#### **Recommendation:**

The primary concern of partners is that the educational messages are freely and equally accessible. This can be addressed with an understanding in the contract that 'No party will commercialise the Project Intellectual Property without the written consent of all parties'. Additionally, if any partner attempted to profit from an unaltered version of the Intellectual Property (resource), they would be competing in the market against the original free version thus making the creation of revenues difficult. Any significant alterations made to the Intellectual Property (resource) with agreement between the partners, may create a version with new content and/or for a different environment and target audience, therefore not competing directly with the original free version. This new Intellectual Property (resource) may find a chargeable market.

Partners should agree rights to use, adapt and/or modify the Intellectual Property (resource) in the contract and should agree Intellectual Property ownership beyond the term of the project. Additionally, agreement should be reached on the order (and wording) of acknowledgements, use of logos (size and order), and description of funding arrangements within contracts or terms of reference.

It is also necessary to grant to partner education providers licence to use, reproduce and communicate the resource, for example 'USC will grant to each applying Australian Independent Schools and State or Territory Education Departments (or their equivalent) a non-exclusive royalty free, fee-free licence to enable all Australian schools to reproduce and communicate the computer games and supporting documentation, through online internet delivery mechanisms, and/or CD-ROMs, mobile downloads, or other gaming platforms and to create local internet links to the online resource for non-commercial purposes'.

### **3.3 Competing needs between industry and State Government Departments on marketing and promotional activities**

#### **3.3.1 Where to market and promote activities**

What is the best way to get a project, resource or message being seen and used by the target population? Is a top down (eg get buy-in at senior management level first), or bottom up (eg get ground swell of support first) best? How do organisations and institutes filter what they will support?

In developing educational resources for social change, there is no single solution which is suitable for all partners. The marketing and promotional activities that were ultimately more successful in getting the educational resource into schools are presented below.

#### **Education Queensland**

There is little room within the education curriculum for teachers to assist in the design, development and trialling of new resources, and often teachers are time poor to take on such voluntary supporting roles in partnership projects. Educational regional managers responsible for behavioural support within schools can provide local access into multiple schools through student support staff and student guidance officers (GOs). These student support staff and GOs can find teachers to champion the project within each school, can share any additional workload with the teachers, can provide quick feedback to the project team from within the school classroom as to student and teacher needs, and can organise and deliver the formal evaluation of the resource on completion. Additionally, it was easier to get initial emails read by principals and teachers if the sender had an Education Queensland email address.

#### **Queensland Police Service**

Within QPS success was reached using both top down and bottom up approaches. Initially working at a regional level, contacts from within QPS provide access to key units, colleagues and data (e.g. child safety coordination unit, inspectors, and perpetrator and victim reports). The team was also invited to present at community focused police events (eg neighbourhood watch conferences, Surf Life Savers, crime prevention conferences) which provided opportunities for new community partners to promote the projects into schools and clubs. The success of projects leads to further interest and support at the senior executive level. At the Commissioner's request the team presented to the Police Commission, all Queensland Regional Assistance Commissioners, and the Minister for Police Neil Roberts. QPS project reports were circulated to other state Police Services which lead to national interest in our projects and delivery of the educational game in schools across Australia.

#### **Daniel Morcombe Foundation**

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation (DMF) is well known across Queensland and Australia for its work in educating children about personal safety and for raising awareness of the dangers of predatory criminals. DMF has considerable community support from within the Sunshine Coast region. The foundation regularly holds community events and distributes newsletters that have promoted Being Safety Smart and Feeling Safe. DMF also has close links with local and national media channels and

are regularly asked to comment on child safety issues. Partnering with DMF has produced favourable responses from the media for TV and radio time, and page space in the promotion of the projects.

### **Recommendation**

Understanding communication processes within partner organisations can contribute to the success of a project. Within each partner organisation, champions should be supported to find and work with colleagues delivering education. Within Education Queensland, support from regional managers, student support staff and guidance officers has provided access into schools and built strong relationships with principals and teachers, and has removed much of the burden of time for teachers participating in the design and delivery of programs. Seeking support from other community groups has also been successful in promoting the resources. In particular community-police events such as neighbourhood watch have greatly increased knowledge of the projects within the community. Existing relationships between QPS and EQ, such as the 'adopt a cop' program, have benefited from Being Safety Smart and Feeling Safe. However the most significant promotional activities within schools have been through teachers and parents. Word of mouth has been the largest contributing factor in the uptake of the projects across Australia.

### **3.3.2 When to market and promote activities**

It is important to plan when to publicise news of social change projects. It can be counter-productive to release information about a resource 'in development' if the lead time to delivery of the resource is too long for media interest, or the community demand immediate access to the resource. Differing opinions and different needs of partners impact on when each partner wants to promote the project activities. Partners may need to report on project progress to stakeholders. For charities and government funded organisation these reports may be available in the public domain and it is normal for the media to use these reports to generate news stories. Additionally, charities and government organisation may wish to use the success of past projects and the existence of ongoing projects as a means of securing continuing funding.

### **Recommendations**

Media releases about our projects have led to considerable community interest in the form of requests to use the resources and offers to support and promote the project within organisations and groups. It can be both time consuming and frustrating to delay this support until resources are available for release. We recommend that partners agree on milestones for media releases and define within media releases how and when the community can become involved and use the products.

### **3.3.3 Competing needs of partners**

There are additional agendas within partners that can lead to further successful promotion of the project and consortium. It is important to understand all reasons for which the partners are involved in the project and how the needs of all partner organisations can be met.

DMF are building a national and international identity and reputation for child protection education and support. They support both local and national projects and through the free-to-use online access both Being Safety Smart and Feeling Safe can help promote the Foundation's work. It is

hoped that greater national and international presence will lead to greater donations to the charity, which in turn can continue and grow their child protection work. Symbiotically, the project and all other partners gain from the growing DMF brand and world image.

Education Queensland works within Essential Learnings frameworks, and it is necessary for each school to evidence learning competencies. Being Safety Smart has been designed to link closely with the curriculum and using Being Safety Smart within a school allows the school to evidence Year Three Essential Learnings of Health and Physical Education, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Schools benefit from having a ready to use resource which satisfy some educational reporting requirements and require minimal teacher training and changes to classroom activities and planning. As teachers become more familiar with Being Safety Smart they use it as a tool for addressing more Essential Learnings. This embeds the resource further into the curriculum and the school develops additional evidence of learning competencies.

### **3.4 Value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information**

#### **3.4.1 Value of Intellectual Property**

The Assault Reduction Campaign, Being Safety Smart and Feeling Safe are free-to-use resources and therefore don't offer typical returns on investment for partners. However the business model for games developers is often royalties per unit. Working with games developers on fixed priced developments can increase the overall build cost and does not encourage the developer to extend their involvement in the project beyond the agreed scope. However in the case of Being Safety Smart, any possible cost increases have been minimised with an altruistic desire on the part of the developers to be involved in social issues and change.

Possible funding streams could exist from charging registration for schools and/or individuals and charging schools for teacher training to deliver the resources. However, these do not support the vision of freely accessible protective behaviours training and would hinder acceptance into the curriculum. In addition, it does not support the vision of having a resource that requires minimum training for teachers.

#### **Recommendations**

If the value of the Intellectual Property within the project is in the knowledge and assets rather than in generating income, it is important that the contracts allow for project Intellectual Property gained in developing the game, the digital assets, the school trials and partnerships be transferred to the research team (in our cases to USC) for each subsequent project that builds on the previous projects.

### 3.4.2 Sharing information

Sharing information between a large number of partners requires effective reporting, document versioning and file sharing solutions and management. However issues of information sharing goes beyond physical exchange of data and storage.

To achieve outcomes based on best practise, sharing of best practise theory and know-how between partners is imperative. Parties can be fearful of freely exchanging background Intellectual Property for fear of misuse.

Findings from USC projects are that,

- I. Academic partners are fearful of inappropriate publication of shared materials without suitable acknowledgement;
- II. Government partners are fearful that sensitive information may become available beyond the partnership;
- III. Charities are fearful of sharing information about programs from which they generate income and hold a competitive advantage, and;
- IV. Partners providing educational training are fearful that by providing the Intellectual Property for integration into a free resource will then render themselves unable to charge for the educational training. However we could expect that educational training providers continue to work with their existing clients to provide differing levels of depth of knowledge and application of messages, and work with other target groups.

In the case of Feeling Safe, Laurel House provides chargeable train the trainer courses. Laurel House shared their train the trainer courses freely with all partners and the final Feeling Safe game will be based on its key messages and scenarios. However Laurel House can continue to charge for their trainer courses as they provide a more comprehensive educational experience for social workers and counsellors through face to face workshops. Additionally, Laurel House can use Feeling Safe to promote its courses and the Feeling Safe training materials as case study examples. Furthermore, new research and knowledge gains achieved during Feeling Safe are shared equally amongst partners and Laurel House can integrate these learnings into their training.

### Recommendations

The sharing of information and use thereof should be agreed by all parties during the contracting stage. Example clauses could include:

The Participant will:

- a) Use the Confidential Information only for the purposes of carrying out his/her work in the Project and will not access, use, modify, disclose or retain any Confidential Information that he or she has acquired in participating in the Project, except for the purpose for which it was acquired; and
- b) In addition to any direction as to particular measures specified by USC, will take all reasonable measures to ensure that any Confidential Information held in connection with

the Project is protected against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure and against other misuse.

The Participant will not publish any material arising out of his/her participation in the Project without the prior written approval of USC.

This Deed will survive the termination or expiry of the Participant's engagement in the Project.

In the event that the Participant ceases to participate in the Project he/she will return immediately all Confidential Information in his/her possession, power or control to USC.

### **3.5 Maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities**

With large scale projects it can be more challenging to maintain ownership in the future direction of the project. A team should consider that partners may plan and organise events (such as presentations, media publicity, institute-wide reports) without prior discussion with all other partners. Often opportunities arise which demand a quick response, limiting attempts to seek permissions from all other parties. It is difficult to scope terms of reference around such events to provide flexibility for partners to react with ingenuity for the common good of the project whilst managing and monitoring the direction of the project within the agreed vision of all parties. In practice, trust and prior experience of working together allows for individuals within organisations to make decisions without the prior consent of all others. Within the USC projects, partners take reasonable objection to not being consulting in all decision making, and feel 'out of the loop'. However through maintaining open communications at all other times, and full access to all progress reports and resources, our teams have built an understanding of the visions of each other, can understand why quick reactive decisions may be required in their organisation, and a trust of each other that any decisions will be in the best interest of all parties involved.

### **4. Concluding remarks**

The paper demonstrates how small community-focused projects undertaken by small teams can strengthen collaborations through success, building to larger partnerships between government, industry, commerce and community. The case study examines three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects. Practical recommendations drawn from the team's experiences are presented around the challenges of differing visions for accessibility, content and design, management of expectations of ownership, competing needs between industry and State departments on marketing and promotional activities, value and protection of IP whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information, and maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities.

### **5. Acknowledgements**

The University of the Sunshine Coast wishes to sincerely thank all of the collaborating partners involved in the Assault Reduction Campaign, Being Safety Smart, and Feeling Safe for their continued guidance and support in the design, development and deployment of educational resources to promote and encourage social change.

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## **Building Learning Through Football - Victoria University and Western Bulldogs Football Club in a Collaborative Community Partnership with Primary Schools in Melbourne's West - *Natalie Vernuccio, Trevor Robertson***

### **Abstract**

Australian Football has been described as a significant common denominator within Melbourne communities. Recognition of the community commitment to the game, combined with the local nature of club loyalties, underpinned the rationale for an innovative partnership between Victoria University, AFL, AFL Victoria and the Western Bulldogs.

Victoria University is located in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, where school students are documented as having the lowest aspirations, school attendance and school completion rates of all regions in metropolitan Melbourne. Its Mission Statement commits the institution to the transformation of young people's lives in Melbourne's Western Region by increasing both access to and success in schooling and post compulsory pathways to afford greater choices about their future.

The Access and Success project at Victoria University spearheads this objective, working collaboratively with schools to develop partnership based projects on school identified issues to enhance the learning of both school and university students. Some projects, such as the one that is the focus of this case study, leverage the productive energy generated by a three way partnership between strong community organisations, an engagement focussed university and schools.

The revised 'Bulldog Friendly Schools Program' (BFSP) sought to extend the earlier program by providing a more sustained and organised connection with schools by utilizing programs and resources provided by the AFL and AFL Victoria and through the Access and Success unit at Victoria University, make more explicit links to student learning, ensuring a stronger alignment of university, school and club needs.

Pivotal to the BFSP is the relationship that Victoria University, School of Education preservice teachers have with their partnership schools. The preservice teachers are in their school for at least one day a week for the full academic year, enabling them to build richer connections to their school communities and develop links between the BFSP and the core teaching and learning objectives of the curriculum.

This case study draws on data derived from research meetings, site documentation and student surveys which highlight positive responses from all stakeholders in the program and provide new knowledge about how university-community partnerships can contribute to the educational and social capacity of a region with mutually beneficial outcomes for all involved.

## **Introduction**

This article outlines the development and outcomes of a community partnership between the Access and Success Unit at Victoria University, the Western Bulldogs, Australian Football League (AFL), AFL Victoria and forty primary schools.

The partnership supports the 'Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program' (BFSP) and seeks to provide a professional and sustained connection with schools. Explicit links to student learning ensures a stronger alignment of university, school and club needs. Through the association, mutual benefits are afforded to each partner which also contributes to the social capital of young people in the Western Region.

## **Background**

Victoria University is located in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. Given its long standing history, it is one of the region's two most recognisable icons. The other icon is the Western Bulldogs. Australians are passionate about football, and western suburbs people are passionate about the 'son of the west' celebrated in the first line of the WB theme song. Recognition of the community commitment to the game, combined with the local nature of club loyalties, underpin the rationale for an innovative partnership between Victoria University, Western Bulldogs, Australian Football League (AFL) and AFL Victoria to enhance primary school students' learning experience through authentic learning programs designed around football.

Schools in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne have been described as having the lowest aspirations, attendance and academic completion rates in the metropolitan region (Teese 2003). Victoria University has a Mission Statement to transform young people's lives in the Western Metropolitan Region. It aims to do this by increasing academic access and success so that education can create the opportunities to enhance young people's lives and give them greater choices about their future.

One way that Victoria University will develop the capabilities of young people, is to work with schools where locally identified concerns can be raised and the solutions can be worked on, in collaboration, by both the school community and Victoria University. The Access and Success (A&S) project, within Victoria University, was created for the purpose of meeting the Mission Statement by growing capacity and enhancing educational opportunities for school children in the Western suburbs. A&S work with schools to engage school children in richer, deeper, stronger and long term partnerships with projects that last between three to five years.

Capacity in this instance can be defined as building capital, that is, making the most of available resources, and social capital as networks of relationships and skills which results from community and civic activities (Allison, 2006).

This definition is central to programs in the 'Schools Plus' category of the Access and Success project, where the development of productive links between schools and community organisations serves to grow educational and social capacity by optimizing student engagement. The partnership between Victoria University, the Western Bulldogs, AFL, AFL Victoria and upwards of 40 primary schools in the region is undertaken within this category. Its emphasis on building student engagement in primary schools allows a dual focus -- firstly, the academic perspective (transmitting formal knowledge for academic gain) and secondly, engagement for school life and how this effects school children's

outlook on schooling in the future. It draws on research indicating the powerful role of Extra Curricular Activities in

helping school children to develop psychologically, socially and physically (Thomson, 2005). Schools need to address all types of engagement and can be assisted in this through Extra Curricular Activities like the Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program.

### **The Partnership**

In 2007, AFL approached the Western Bulldogs about the possibility of upgrading and changing a football program that they were delivering in schools. As a result the Western Bulldogs undertook an evaluation of their current Bulldogs program, which included elite football players visiting schools to encourage school children to get involved with football and follow the club. Western Bulldogs regarded the program as significant to their role as a corporate citizen with a strong commitment to their community; the schools program reinforced their reputation as ‘the community club’.

The evaluation consultants however suggested that the Bulldogs Program in schools had proved to be less effective than the club had anticipated. School children were not identifying with the club and links back to the community were not clear. In the analysis, consultants found that the elite players’ visits did indeed engage and excite the school children but there were no lasting impressions and some schools were withdrawing from the program. A new format was needed.

Before the start of this new Bulldogs Friendly Schools project, a number of meetings were initiated by the Western Bulldogs (WB) with potential partner institutions including Victoria University’s Access and Success project, the AFL and AFL Victoria. School principals and teachers were invited to meetings to get their input and ideas as to what they hoped a football program should involve. From this diverse group an Advisory group was formed. The group felt it essential that the new program should include life skills that could be directly connected to football. Information on healthy eating and wellness and the development of leadership skills were established as critical parts to the program to form connections between football, school curriculum and community life. The AFL gave this part of the program strong direction in the development of two AFL programs connected to the Victorian schools curriculum. The ‘You Can Kick Goals’ program focussed on leadership elements and the One Seven program gave information about healthy eating and well being. These resources now play a key part in the new Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program (BFSP). A diagram outlining the nature and spread of the new programs is provided in Figure 1.

Because of the huge difference in Australian Rules football skills, between individuals, evident across schools in the region, it was decided to run two programs under the BFSP and offer schools a choice of two programs. Firstly the Multicultural Schools program (MSP), places a stronger emphasis on beginner skills and is geared to school communities unfamiliar with the code. Schools that choose MSP generally have a higher intake of refugee background or new migrants to the school. This program is supported by the AFL in that it deploys a staff member (MSP Officer) to the WB to supervise this program.

The second program is the Footy in School program (FIS) that works with primary school students who have more advanced skills. Schools that choose FIS are familiar with and follow the game. AFL Victoria supports this program by employing a former primary school principal as a part time staff member (FIS officer) to supervise this program. Both programs are delivered in schools by

preservice teachers (psts) from Victoria University and supervised by the MSP or FIS officers who in themselves are highly skilled in football and community issues.

The BFSP (MSP and FIS) are basically year long programs, which have four components:

Eight week program in schools. Psts plan and deliver a lesson a week for eight weeks to all Grade 4 students in the school. Each lesson has a football skill, leadership and healthy eating component. For example, a lesson on kicking and marking skills will include content on the leadership skills of 'teamwork' required to be successful. Follow up lessons and discussions ensure the connection from the field to the classroom.

Two Player Visits – club players are the 'hook' into the program. School students (and teachers) are absolutely enthralled by the players. Players visit the same school for two years to ensure that a bond with their school is formed. Brad Johnson, captain of the WB, is the ambassador of the program, and is part of the team that visits schools. Pre service teachers support the player visit by creating a learning plan for each two hour visit. It is suggested that the first visit has a literacy theme and the second a numeracy theme. The player assists in the delivery of this program.

Free Game – both the AFL and the WB provide free tickets for school students and their parents to visit a game in the city. The AFL also provides free buses to MSP schools. FIS schools use this event as an opportunity to plan numeracy and logistics lessons related to the activity, such as, how to calculate the costs of getting to the ground by public transport. Again, the pre service teacher leads these activities in the classroom.

#### **Resources:**

The AFL provides a teachers manual to schools, and booklet to all school students from the 'You Can Kick Goals' program. Thousands of booklets have been distributed giving school students something to take home to share with their families and supporting parents' connections with their children's schooling..

Local football teams associated with the Club, such as Williamstown (reserve team of WB) and the Western Jets (under 16 and 18 squads of the WB) have provided hundreds of footballs and equipment to supplement schools' resources and allow the program to work.

WB provide joint branded VU and WB T-shirts for psts to wear when they run the program. School students recognise the T-shirts and know that it's 'footy time' when they appear.

The success of this program has resulted in many new schools expressing interest in the program. As a result, the 'K9' program has been created. This is a five week mini version of the FIS program. 20 schools are participating in this program in 2010 and 200 VU psts in their first year deliver this program. These psts are all Physical Education majors.

All programs could not be run without the full cooperation from all stakeholders ensuring that the program is professional and meets school needs. The stakeholders are committed, to the growing of social and educational capital and school student learning by capturing their excitement and engagement in the program.

Figure 1: BULLDOGS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS PROGRAM (BFSP):

**ADVISORY GROUP**

Access and Success, School of Education - Victoria University, Western Bulldogs, AFL, AFL Victoria, School Principals and Teachers

**Coordinators**

Access and Success, Victoria University – Western Bulldogs

<b>Multicultural Schools Program (MSP)</b>	<b>Footy in Schools Program (FIS)</b>
AFL – pays for a MSP officer	AFL – Victoria – pays for a FIS officer
20 schools	20 schools
25 preservice teachers VU, School of Education	25 preservice teachers VU, School of Education
6 week program Football skills. Leadership, Healthy Eating	8 week program Football skills. Leadership, Healthy Eating
<b>Provides</b> 2 Player visits Free Game tickets Free transport to game Week 7 - Participation in the MSP Cup Week 8 - tickets to the MCG museum	<b>Provides</b> 2 Player visits Free Game tickets

## K9

Taster into BFSP

15 schools

4 week program emphasising football skills and incidental leadership skills and healthy eating discussions

Delivered by 200 first year psts who are majoring in PE in the B Ed program from the School of Education

### **Role of the Pre Service Teacher**

The pre service teachers attached to the program in each school are pivotal to its effective implementation. To ensure that school partners can support this role VU and WB representatives visit schools before the start of the school year to confirm the value of the relationship between the school, VU and the WB. Once schools are confirmed as participants in the program, WB, AFL and AFL Victoria assist the University with the recruitment of preservice teachers into the program. A diagram of the annual cycle of this partnership effort is provided in Figure 2.

The pre service teachers themselves make a significant contribution to the program. In their own time, for example, they attend three personal development sessions, to develop the skills needed to run the program. In the first session they are trained in a two day student leadership program where they connect student leadership skills into the 'You Can Kick Goals' and One/Seven programs. In the second session, AFL Victoria and Western Jets run a full day Level One Football coaching accreditation at the Whitten Oval (home of the WB) for all participating psts. The third session, presented by School of Education academics at VU, covers the research component of the project and its connection to curriculum.

Psts attain two accreditations from these sessions and are appropriately prepared to create the link from the field to the classroom at their school. The Program's close fit with the school's curriculum leads to more effective learning opportunities and allows classroom teachers to build on program content where school students are able to associate school life with the wider community.

A major strength of the BFSP is that it is inclusive for all school students. They require no prerequisites to learn the skills and the language of football, wellbeing and leadership. It also supports interest in and connections to social, recreational and sporting activities outside the school. Since their involvement in the program, for example, a number of schools get 'The Age' every Thursday to read Robert Murphy's articles on life and football in class. Robert Murphy is a key player for the WB and writer for 'The Age'. The practice has fed into literacy development strategies within the classrooms.

A&S and the WB jointly facilitate this program on an ongoing basis. Both organisations have made provision for their Community Managers to work together to develop and sustain this project.

The BFSP is based on the engagement of school children through the model of football, where they can take the skills of the field, to the classroom and into their lives. They are undoubtedly having a good time in this Extra Curriculum Activity; however they are also extending their vocabularies, building new skills, connecting their Extra Curricular Activity with classroom learning and participating in an activity that engages families more fully in the life of the school. According to Thomson (2005), they will view school in a positive manner and seek to stay at school and in time they will turn into adults who engage in voluntary community activities thereby growing community capacity.

Figure 2: Yearly Plan for Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program

Date	Function	Purpose and task
2009 – August	A&S and WB visit schools for both BFSP and K9	Maintain working relationships. Confirm schools for 2010.  Convert K9 into BFSP.  Create new K9 schools.
2009 - September	A&S and WB visit Year 2 and 4 psts in common lecture times.	Recruit new psts for the 2010 program.
2009 - October	A&S connect psts to schools	Organise and attend introductory schools visit to with psts.
2010 – February	2 day leadership skills workshop  1 day Level 1 Football accreditation  Half day research skills	Conducted by A&S & AFL  Conducted by Western Jets, AFL Victoria, WB  Conducted by A&S, WB, AFL Victoria
2010 - March	Psts begin in schools	Coordinated by A&S
2010 – terms 2 and 3	MSP and FIS 8 week program	MSP and FIS officers supervise psts
2010 – May/June	Free tickets to a game for school students	Supplied by WB and AFL  Organised by MSP and FIS officers and supported by the pst.
2010 – June/July	WB Player visits – providing role models to schools.	School students recognise their player. They make a connection and follow him throughout the year. WB organise.
2010 - August	A&S and WB visit schools for Both BFSP and KP for 2011	Start the program for the new year.

Essentially BFSP seeks to provide a sustained and organised connection with schools by utilizing programs and resources provided by the AFL and AFL Victoria, delivered by VU and the WB to make more explicit links to student learning, ensuring a stronger alignment of university, school and club needs. It is a fundamental premise of sustainable partnerships that there be a mutual benefit afforded through the association. Figure 3 outlines the parties involved in this large scale partnership program and the benefits afforded stakeholders through their participation in the program.

Figure 3: **Table to outline stakeholders interests**

Community	Interests
Schools	Create an environment that engages and encourages school student learning and develops a feeling of belonging to the wider community
Victoria University - Access and Success (School of Education)	Psts to experience authentic pedagogy, create a unit of work to enhances their teaching and learning, grow their social capacity and for them to feel connect to wider community
Western Bulldogs	Brand to be easily recognised, increase fan development and membership and to be part of the local community, which they recognise as the 'Bulldogs Back Yard'.
AFL	Grow the game of football to the public and to be part of the local community.
AFL Victoria, Williamstown and Western Jets	Grow local football and to be part of the local community.

## Methodology

The purpose of the case study and research was to analyse the impact of the BFSP in the ability to grow social and educational capacity through schools students' engagement in the program and for each stakeholder to meet their own particular interests.

This case study used a mixed method approach combining both qualitative (participating focus groups with narrative notes and site documentation) and quantitative (school student survey) data collection and analysis. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) indicate that a combination of methods is appropriate (and often preferable) in evaluation studies, as it gives different perspectives to the research.

The survey of school students provided information about the leadership, health and well being effects of the program and the qualitative research, undertaken with the focus groups, gave deeper reflections about the program and its contribution to social and education capacity at the schools.

## **Survey**

The student survey was conducted in two parts at the commencement and conclusion of the 2008 program and provided a 'benchmark' as to what our school children thought about leadership values, healthy eating, fitness, football and the WB club.

The survey was divided into 6 areas: introductory demographics (area, gender and age), leadership skills (respect, fairness, teamwork, leadership and harmony), Healthy Eating, Fitness, AFL and WB.

Surveys were undertaken in 14 schools of all municipalities in the West. For this case study, four schools were chosen to create a sample, two schools in MSP and two in the FIS program. All schools are in the state system. Both Pre and Post surveys were analysed with boys and girls treated separately.

While the 'before' survey showed that school children had a good understanding of leadership values these were slightly improved in the after survey. School students recognized leadership skills as being part of their lives. In more specific questions about fairness, where students were given an example of 'Sid the snake' cheating while playing but winning, 95 per cent of boys and 93 per cent of girls indicated that they would not want Sid on their team and gave good understandings for the decision. Questions on teamwork gave similar results with students identifying listening and taking turns as being key components of teamwork.

The majority of students in all schools understood the importance of fruit and vegetables and were able to name 3 fruits and 3 vegetables from the outset. In the after survey however there was a huge variety of different fruit and vegetables as compared to the before survey. With current statistics of school children being diagnosed as obese, reinforcement of healthy eating and fitness will remain as a strong component in the program.

In the fitness component of the survey, the boys went from 56 to 78 percent in their self reported activity in their spare time. Girls however remained stable on this measure at 66 percent. All students reported being more active at lunchtime, in the after survey.

It was no surprise that the school children's knowledge of the WB increased to a high capacity in the after survey. Approximately 80 percent of school children, in the before survey, knew that 'red white and blue' were the colours of the WB and in the after survey this improved by 15 percent.

Part of this success (as indicated by the focus groups) stems from the Player visit. This is a good result not just for the WB but for the school children who now feel a greater connection to club and community.

## **Focus Groups And Documentation**

Focus groups were conducted with school principals and teachers, University Colleagues (whose role was to visit and support pre service teachers in their school placements) and pre service teachers. All groups indicated by their observations and documentation that school students had been engaged in the program. Several key themes emerged across all groups.

## **Engagement**

The player visit gave school students, new and different experiences. With a literacy theme for the first player visit, school students had to work out what questions to ask and what activities were to be done on the day. For example, some schools created scenarios based on shows like 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' where players had to 'phone a friend' within the school to seek expert advice about answers. Another example is the learning involved in school students doing planning to go to the game - costs for the activity, and what change was needed for the train fare.

Because of the year long commitment to the program, schools reported that the excitement has been sustained. One feature of the program, from the focus groups was that all school students participated and everyone turned up on footy day. 'School students love it', and 'always asking is it footy today' were common.

Player visits play an important part in the BFSP. They are the hook that connects all experiences. A&S run other projects but the BFSP stands out because the players have such high profiles in the community as they are easily identified on both the television and in the newspapers. When they come into the schools, they are heroes, but they understand their role as role models and that school students want to be like them. Focus groups noted that they are respectful, thoughtful and considerate to the school students. On the visit day, psts greet them at the school and take them through the program that has been arranged. Focus groups recognised that players were amazingly comfortable and giving in their school visit. One activity that is popular with school students is when players tell their own stories, some having come from the local schools. This is where school students can identify with some aspects of the story. Players also say positive things about school, education, learning and that barracking for the WB are amongst the best things in life.

Other activities for the visit are vast – generally there is football skill component, leadership activity or talk, literacy/maths component, some players read to school students, others assist in measuring how far they can kick a ball and autographs can be given. Focus groups indicate that school students recognise their player, see that he is human and in that way make a connection to the wider community and of course school students follow the player throughout the year.

## **Pre Service Teachers**

Schools recognised the contribution from the psts from VU. They felt that the students brought expertise, enthusiasm and had the skills to connect football to the classroom. They assisted with the free game logistics, attending the game in their own time and organised the player visit. The main theme that emerged was that psts brought youth and enthusiasm, and that staff 'don't want to do footy things nor do they want to kick a footy at lunchtime'.

It was noted that the psts were well trained and brought the expertise and taking a leadership role with the program. Comments like 'Psts ran the whole show, they put a lot of preparation into the program including organizing and attending the game on the weekend' were noted. Importantly they were able to make the connections to their school community and develop links between the program and the core teaching and learning objectives of the curriculum within the framework of the Physical, Personal and Social Learning strand of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

In the psts Focus Group , students agreed that their teaching and learning skills had been enhanced by the BFSP and added value and understanding in their own teaching pedagogy. Having to teach the program to several grades gave them confidence in teaching and developed real footy skills. They were able to teach in other classrooms, getting to know more school students outside their own classroom and therefore building networks of different teachers, experiencing firsthand how different the school student population can be in different classes. It grew the school experience for them.

The University Colleague Focus Group (lecturers who visit the psts) observed that the psts developed teacher ready skills and 'value added' experiences which are vital for future employment.

## **Discussion**

### **Raising social and educational capital.**

In raising social and educational capital for schools and school students through engagement in the BFSP, all focus groups viewed this as positive. The program was popular, engaged the children and gave them experiences that introduced them to a wider community. School students were able to include their families in their learning, by taking the 'You Can Kick Goals' booklet home to share and by attending the free game with a parent.

One of the themes from the focus groups was that the BFSP opens school student's world. Disadvantaged families live in small worlds. (Black, 2008)

Parents and school students get to see a game, often a first time experience for families. Some families have followed this up with closer connections to local clubs or the WB.

Several schools have said that because of new interest they have bought new footballs and that they are being used at lunchtime. Some schools have said that no one was interested six months ago: 'they would not cross the street for football'.

A surprise, from the survey and focus groups, was that girls have become interested in the game and they attain skills and play just as well as the boys, thereby creating a more inclusive classroom.

## **Conclusion**

The Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program has brought together a large network of community partnerships Victoria University, Western Bulldogs, AFL, AFL Victoria, Williamstown and Western Jets for the benefit of schools and school students and mutual beneficial outcomes for all involved.

From the Focus Groups data, social capital has been raised because of this program. In particular schools with new arrivals or refugee background students gained an experience that allowed them to feel included in school and community culture. Monday morning conversations about who won and who lost on the weekend, creates common language and inclusiveness.

Through the model of Football, with a leadership and wellbeing overlay, the research indicates that school children's social and educational capacity is enhanced as they become engaged and excited about the learning in the program.

School effectiveness and connectedness is more than academic achievement. The school children need to gain skills in learning and the love of learning. They also need to grow in their self esteem,

personal development, life skills and problem solving to become independent thinkers. Thomson (2005) states that all these outcomes can be achieved through Extra Curricular Activities. This case study indicates that the Extra Curricular Activity of the Bulldogs Friendly Schools program raises social and educational capacity through school students engagement in the program.

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## **The Partnership Between the Traditional Custodians of the Land (Kombumerri People) and Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus - *Professor Max Standage, Dr Graham Dillon***

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Cultural, Community, Partnership, Custodians, Education, Kombumerri, Reconciliation

### **Abstract**

The traditional custodians, the Kombumerri People and Griffith University entered into an agreement in 1998 which is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia.

Under the agreement, Griffith University made a number of commitments including incorporating indigenous culture into its curriculum, and where appropriate, working with the Kombumerri People to ensure that their cultural heritage is preserved, promote awareness of their values and traditions, and name University facilities in the Kombumerri language. In exchange, the Kombumerri People agreed not to oppose the compulsory acquisition of a 43 hectare parcel of land (required for the expansion of the Gold Coast campus) by the State of Queensland.

In this paper, the implementation of the deed of agreement is examined as the basis for a discussion of strategies that universities can use to enhance indigenous community participation and partnership. Outcomes of the agreement include the establishment of a Kombumerri Elder-in-Residence position, an educational cultural display detailing the history of the Kombumerri People, naming of campus facilities and precincts, inclusion of indigenous culture in the University's academic offerings and the development of initiatives to lift indigenous student numbers.

### **Introduction**

The traditional custodians, the Kombumerri People and Griffith University entered into an agreement in 1998 which is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia.

Under the agreement, Griffith University made a number of commitments including incorporating Indigenous culture into its curriculum, and where appropriate, working with the Kombumerri People to ensure that easier access/entry into the University was possible, that their cultural heritage is preserved, promote awareness of their values and traditions, and name University facilities in the Kombumerri language. In exchange, the Kombumerri People agreed not to oppose the compulsory acquisition of a 43 hectare parcel of land (required for the expansion of the Gold Coast campus) by the State of Queensland.

In this paper, the implementation of the Deed of Agreement is examined as the basis for a discussion of strategies that other universities may wish to use to enhance Indigenous community participation and partnership. Outcomes of the Agreement include an educational cultural display detailing the history of the Kombumerri People, naming of campus facilities and precincts, inclusion of Indigenous culture in the University's academic offerings and the development of initiatives to lift Indigenous student numbers – with regard to the Kombumerri who aspire to better their lives. As well, a Kombumerri Elder-in-Residence position has been established under the auspices of the Agreement.

The Agreement has contributed to the University meeting the Indigenous policy goals contained in its Equity and Diversity Plan in areas such as reconciliation, Indigenous community engagement, improving Indigenous student participation and providing better support of Indigenous students.

### **Kombumerri Agreement**

The traditional homelands of the Kombumerri People are generally considered to comprise the land between the Coomera and Tweed rivers and inland from the sea to the Eastern side of Tamborine Mountain (Gumai Bireen). Around 1890, Gindan (also known as Keendahn or Billy Galeen), a Kombumerri Elder related the extent of the Kombumerri territory to his friend, a young European settler named William Hanlon. Many years later, Hanlon recalled the occasion:

“Resting ourselves on a log that commanded an extensive panorama terrain beneath us ... Billy, with a comprehensive sweep of his arm that embraced the Valley of Coomera and the more distant Nerang territory, informed me that “father belongin’ to me bin king all over there...” (W.E. Hanlon 1940, p.125).

When the European surveyor Robert Dixon produced the first maps of the Gold Coast region in 1842, he failed to acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples, the Kombumerri, who lived in the region, instead giving European names to rivers and landscape in the process. Dixon’s failure to use local Aboriginal names was against the instructions of the Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell, who advocated their usage in such circumstances. While later cartographers reverted to using Aboriginal names (e.g. Dixon’s Barrow River appears on maps as the Nerang Creek by the 1860s), more than fifty years passed before the traditional Kombumerri homelands feature distinctly on a map.

Jenny Graham, the matriarch of the Kombumerri People was born in about 1860. Her mother Warru/Warrie (also known as Sarah Clark), met her father (John McGusty/McGussie), a non Indigenous man associated with the timber-getting industries in the 1850s, during the early contact period between the Kombumerri and European.

Throughout the first two decades of her life, Jenny Graham witnessed the increasing appropriation of her traditional homelands by Europeans. From 1897, she was exposed to the constant threat of removal to either a reserve or a mission under the oppressive The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld). Despite that, Jenny Graham maintained connection to Kombumerri country throughout her lifetime, living at Southport, where she raised the large family she had with Andrew Hamilton Graham, the son of immigrants, whom she married in 1898. She died at Southport in 1943.

Present-day descendants of Jenny Graham are able to trace their family tree back to the early 1800s, thus showing the unbroken connection that current generations of the Kombumerri have to their country, the land of their birthright. Griffith University’s Gold Coast campus is located within Kombumerri country, in the North West part of Southport (referred to as Gurang in the Kombumerri language).

Post World War II produced an explosion in the population of the Gold Coast City, formerly known as the South Coast and it became a Mecca for Victorian and New South Wales holidaymakers given its mean temperature and environment. This ushered in enormous development of the low lying swampy areas from Bundall, Nerang South to Coolangatta.

This was the era of canal developments and the development of major high rise buildings along the coastal strip. Population increased dramatically as families moved to the Gold Coast. Although during the period up to 1990, public and private school education expanded dramatically, no local university education was available, with the nearest universities located in Brisbane, around 100km away.

The Gold Coast College of Advanced Education was established in 1987, and was initially located in the heart of Surfers Paradise, but by 1990 all facilities were relocated to the present Southport site. In 1990, under the Dawkins educational reforms the College of Advanced Education was merged with Griffith University and the campus has since become one of the fastest growing campuses in Australia with a current population of over 15,000 students and an anticipated growth to around 30,000 students by 2030.

To accommodate the ongoing growth of the campus, in 1997 the University began negotiations with a number of local Kombumerri Elders regarding the expansion of its current site of 26.5 hectares to an additional 43 hectares of land bounded by the Smith Street Motorway, Olsen Avenue, Everest and Edmund Rice Drives, commonly referred to as the 'Smith Street land'. Griffith's interest in expanding its current campus was timely given that The Native Title Act 1993 was already well established and they had previously made overtures to the Queensland Government about acquiring the land.

Following the landmark Mabo decision and The Native Title Act 1993 introduced by the Keating Government, David Dillon, the direct descendant of Jenny Graham represented the Kombumerri as the Native Title applicant and made a claim over the entire precinct and over the Gold Coast region. The (then) Minister of Education, Robert Quinn, MLA met with David and Uncle Graham Dillon (David's father) and asked David not to oppose the compulsory acquisition of the Smith Street land.

A number of discussions took place with representatives from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), the National Native Title Tribunal, representatives from the Gold Coast City Council, and the Kombumerri Elders who indicated that they would support the process of acquisition of native title rights and interests pursuant to the Acquisition of Land Act, 1967.

Eventually agreement was reached through meetings with the Kombumerri Elders including the (then) Vice Chancellor Professor Roy Webb resulting in the 1998 Deed of Agreement between Griffith University and the Ngarang-Wal Land Council (representing the "Kombumerri People Native Title Applicants QC96/69"). Under this agreement, the University made a number of commitments including incorporating Indigenous culture into its curriculum and where appropriate, working with the Kombumerri People to ensure that their cultural heritage is preserved, promote awareness of their values and traditions, and name University facilities in the Kombumerri language.

Finding common ground between mainstream white Australia and the traditional descendants of the First Peoples has proved to be difficult as exemplified by different cultural and legal understandings about the ownership and transfer of land – Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996). Native Title has proved to be one of the most divisive, dysfunctional, and controversial issues ever to be placed before Aboriginal Australia within their social mores (ceremony, legal, customary law) structure.

Sadly it has become a tool of the political system of the day. It has unleashed bitterness amongst traditional descendants and those who would claim rights to particular areas of land, opening the way for governments of the day to withdraw their resources, support and decision making processes until the issue of valid occupancy has been established.

However, negotiations over the 1998 Deed of Agreement between Griffith University and the Ngarang-Wal Land Council (representing the “Kombumerri People”) were undertaken without conflict and without political dissention. It is worth noting and remembering that this Deed of Agreement is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia and one of the few agreements negotiated for land in a metropolitan setting.

In May 1998 the (then) Minister for Education, Mr Quinn, announced in the State Budget that \$8.6 million had been provided to fund the acquisition of the 43 hectares of land adjacent to the existing Gold Coast campus.

On 18 December 2002 the (then) Education Minister Anna Bligh formally handed over the Smith Street land to the Chancellor Leneen Forde during a special ceremony. The celebration was attended by the site’s traditional custodians, the Kombumerri People, Education Queensland, the Gold Coast City Council and Griffith University to mark the transfer of the title deeds for the 43 hectares of the southern precinct land to the University.

The Agreement specifies that it should be reviewed every three years by the University and the Kombumerri People. This specification is met through formal documented meetings held on a triennial basis between Uncle Graham Dillon (representing the Kombumerri), the Gold Coast Provost and the Campus Liaison Manager. Informal meetings are also held on an ongoing basis to ensure that the requirements of the agreement are being progressed in a timely manner and issues can be raised and addressed as needed.

The success of agreements of this kind requires the commitment of the senior leadership of the parties involved, the presence of “champions” from all parties, and a process of regular meetings, both formal and informal, to review the progress of jointly agreed activities and projects, and deal with issues and disputes. In the case of the Kombumerri Agreement, it has had the strong support of the Griffith University Council and the Kombumerri Elders, a formal review process takes place on a three yearly cycle, a number of projects are being carried out under the auspices of the Agreement, and the Provost, Gold Coast Campus and Uncle Graham Dillon have “championed” the Agreement.

### **Naming of University Facilities**

In negotiations with the Kombumerri people about Native Title on the Smith Street land, one of the items agreed to was that the University would use local Aboriginal names for buildings and other features of the land. This provision was subsequently written into the lease with Campus Living Villages with respect to the development of the student village. Campus Living Villages negotiated with Uncle Graham Dillon and reached agreement on the following names, so that the cultural integrity of the land is recognised and honoured.

Jerringan – Aboriginal for saplings within the Ashmore area

Kombumerri – the traditional custodians of the land

Kamarun – ‘big man’ hence, a chief or king

Bullum – a well known Aborigine from contact time who was familiar with a lot of Kombumerri history and culture from his early days

Keendahn – an Aborigine who fought to stay living in the lands of the Kombumerri

Warru – a direct host matriarch of the Gold Coast Precinct

Migunberri – a clan group area in the Hinterland of the Gold Coast

All new students to the Village are provided with an overview of the meaning of the building names as part of their orientation. Uncle Graham Dillon is also invited a couple of times per year to talk to the residents about the Kombumerri culture.

The University agreed to survey the flora and fauna as well as sites of cultural significance as part of the Agreement. As a result of this survey, a Nature Reserve has been established on the campus and named Taran Bah, which means ‘Place of the Frogs’ in the Kombumerri language in recognition of the traditional custodians. A plaque has been erected at the site to inform passersby about the Copper-Backed Broodfrog discovered in this location in 1997 and to recognise the cultural significance of the site.

On 19 March 2009 an event was held on campus to unveil two commemorative plaques erected at each end of the Griffith University Bridge. The information plaques describe the 1998 Deed of Agreement and subsequent transfer of the land to the University by the Kombumerri People and give the Southern and Northern precincts of the campus Kombumerri names - ‘Pirin Bah’ (South Place) and ‘Kugin Bah’ (North Place).

### **Elder-in-Residence Program**

The Elder-in-Residence program was established by Griffith University approximately 10 years ago and is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia. Under this program, senior Indigenous Elders work with the University to provide mentoring to Indigenous students and to support Indigenous community engagement programs undertaken by the University.

Professor Boni Robertson, Professor of Indigenous Policy and Community Engagement initiated the Elder-in-Residence program at Griffith University and has worked with a number of Indigenous Elders, including Elder-in-Residence Auntie Delmae Barton, who have supported a number of Indigenous community engagement programs, such as the Murri Court, Murri Makeovers, and the Redlands Clinic.

Uncle Graham Dillon has been appointed as an Elder-in-Residence at the Gold Coast campus. He works directly with the Gold Coast Provost on Indigenous community engagement activities, aimed at increasing Indigenous participation in higher education.

### **Increasing Indigenous Participation in Higher Education**

A key aspect that underpinned the Kombumerri Agreement was the importance the Kombumerri People give to education and to achieving greater Indigenous participation in higher education. The Indigenous population in Queensland is 4.17% of the total population; however the Indigenous

higher education participation rate is only 1.64%. Year 12 OP eligibility amongst non-Indigenous youth is 47.1%, but only 17.0% for Indigenous youth.

The University has a strong commitment to promoting social inclusion in higher education, increasing Indigenous participation in higher education, improving success rates of Indigenous students, and engaging with Indigenous communities. The University's Equity and Diversity Plan sets out targets and strategies relating to these aims.

At Griffith University, the overall Indigenous student participation rate is 1.95%. 511 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students study across a broad range of undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs, with the largest number, 167, located on the Gold Coast campus.

As is the case in most Australian Universities, Griffith University operates an Indigenous student support unit, GUMURRII (Griffith University Murri (Queensland Aboriginal people) and Torres Strait Islanders), which conducts outreach activities with school and non-school leavers, and provides Indigenous university students with tutorial and mentoring support. The University also runs community promotions and events, the Uni-Reach program, is a partner in the Cape York Institute Higher Expectations program, and operates targeted projects, such as the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – funded Lighthouse and Pathways projects, a Department of Education and Training supported Health Outreach initiative and a First Peoples Website.

Several programs are underway that involve Uncle Graham Dillon, the University, and Education Queensland to encourage Indigenous students to consider undertaking higher education studies. On the Gold Coast, a program has been developed to attract more Indigenous students into the Health Sciences, including programs such as medicine and dentistry. The Griffith Medical and Oral Health Schools are working with Uncle Graham Dillon and local schools selected on the basis of their significant Indigenous student population to encourage more students to consider a career in the health sciences.

The Gold Coast Provost and Uncle Graham Dillon have been working with the Queensland Health Sciences Academy to encourage more Indigenous student enrolments. This school, which is located immediately adjacent to the University's Gold Coast campus, is a selective grades 10-12 Education Queensland School.

The University operates the Uni-Reach program which has been nationally recognised for its innovative approach to encouraging greater participation in higher education amongst equity groups. To support Federal and State government initiatives to lift participation rates, the University intends to introduce an enhanced version of Uni-Reach working with its partner schools in the Logan and Gold Coast regions on a community-wide basis to lift participation rates across the region, including amongst low socio-economic status and Indigenous sections of the population. The plan is to develop a pathways strategy that reaches back into grades 6 and 7 to encourage more students to aim to participate in higher education.

The University has a range of scholarships on offer each year. The Patience Thoms and Neville Bonner scholarships are available to Indigenous Australians and two of the Uni-Start scholarships are available specifically for Kombumerri applicants.

## **Kombumerri Cultural Display**

In accordance with the 1998 agreement a Kombumerri Cultural Display has been developed to educate staff and students and other visitors to the Gold Coast campus about the transfer of the Smith Street land and the 1998 Agreement. It also seeks to inform visitors to the display about the contact history between Europeans and the Kombumerri; showing how European settlement impacted on the long established lifestyles of the Kombumerri People.

The display was designed by several of our Gold Coast campus Design students and comprises a large glass map which shows Kombumerri country and a detailed timeline from the 1800s to present day Australia. The display has been installed in our Student Centre to maximise its visibility and will be officially launched later in the year.

The University has also commissioned a large painting to be displayed in the Library from a local Kombumerri artist which will articulate the partnership between the Kombumerri People and the Griffith University.

## **Conclusions**

The Kombumerri Agreement represents a significant development in relationships between the Australian Higher Education Sector and Indigenous People. Although the Agreement has its origins in a Native Title issue, it has provided a framework for an increasingly close collaboration based on a spirit of conciliation and goodwill on the part of both parties; the importance the Kombumerri People attach to university education, and the desire of the University to support the Indigenous community by achieving better outcomes in Indigenous university education.

Activities discussed above, and undertaken under the auspices of the Kombumerri Agreement have contributed significantly to the University addressing its Equity and Diversity commitments to the Indigenous Peoples. However, that much remains to be done is clearly evident in the message contained in the following Occasional Address delivered by Uncle Graham Dillon on the receipt of an Honorary Doctorate at a Griffith University Graduation Ceremony in July 2009.

“ Our young people have to adjust to believe that they are capable of achieving academic study outcomes, and are able to make a difference to our communities and to society by becoming a bigger part of the solution – be this a teacher, a doctor, an engineer, or a manager.”

“but we also need Griffith, other universities, their teachers and support services to walk that extra mile for Aboriginal youth who have yet to get onto that level playing-field along with non-Indigenous youth.”

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## **Towards an Improved Cross-disciplinary Structure for Work Integrated Learning Programmes to Better Meet Community Needs the Student Learning Experience and Graduate Outcomes - *Dr Heather Pavitt***

### **Abstract**

This case study looks at a work integrated learning (WIL) project in the public relations field and examines the opportunity to extend this type of learning across university schools and faculties which would make it more aligned with how organisations actually work in the community. This paper is a prelude to a stakeholder research study to obtain data to substantiate or provide discourse on the current literature.

In the final year of study towards a Public Relations degree or Corporate Affairs degree, students undertake a WIL course. A group of public relations students, supervised by a tutor, work on a public relations project with a community organisation. The students form a team, receive a brief from the organisation and research, plan, implement and evaluate a public relations event that meets the organisation's needs and expected outcomes.

This experience is an example of a learning experience that benefits the students as well as the community organisation they are working for. Students see the value of a real life experience where they can apply the knowledge and theory they have learned in a practical way. Despite not being paid for this work, students gain new knowledge and can include this in their CVs to assist them in finding full time employment when they graduate.

However, there is a gap in the structure of this public relations program comprising students solely from one discipline of study. In a real world situation a public relations professional team would not just be working with their peers. They would be collaborating with other functions within an organisation, people with different skill bases from such fields as marketing, finance, planning, advertising and design. In the public relations WIL course, these missing skills are covered by either the team's supervising tutor, or bought in by the community organisation.

The separation of academic disciplines and the creation of artificial boundaries between areas of study mean that students do not understand how their subjects interact together as they do in the real world. Thus providing students with WIL within the community that is broader than the limitations of their degree of study would provide students with a more realistic world view of how organisations – businesses, governments, local councils, charities and various community groups work.

Developing an integrated approach to university-wide WIP programs would support the university's responsiveness to its community and reflect its understanding of how organisations within the community work. Resources will be key to the success of such a program; coordination would need to be across all faculties to ensure the WIL projects are integrated into the curriculum.

Such a course of study would be responding to realistic community-identified needs, opportunities and goals and enable a more productive partnership with the community as well as providing an enriching learning experience for students.

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Community Engagement, Work Integrated Learning, Transdisciplinarity

At the University of the Sunshine Coast, in the final year of study towards a Public Relations degree or Corporate Affairs degree, students undertake two work integrated learning (WIL) courses. One is an internship and one is a group experience where a team of students, supervised by a tutor, work on an event project with a community organisation.

In this latter course, the group of students receive a brief from the community organisation and research, plan, implement and evaluate a public relations event that meets the organisation's brief and expected outcomes.

The course objective is to extend students' understanding of public relations in practice and to provide them with a comprehensive learning experience, along with a real understanding of work in the community, to enable them to be 'work ready' when they graduate. Educators agree that 'the most desirable teaching strategies and assignments are those which enable students to put theory into practice' (Coombs and Rybacki 1999, p. 57). Raelin (1997, p. 574) further argues that '...work-based learning deliberately merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit forms of knowing'.

This paper reviews the literature that relates to WIL within the community and is a prelude to a stakeholder research study to obtain data to substantiate or provide discourse on the current literature.

Community engagement is a strategic imperative for the University of the Sunshine Coast with a commitment to 'promote and support learning and teaching by increasing the number of regional professions, businesses and industries in which students undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL)' (Community Engagement Strategy 1.2 2010). Community Engagement is also crucial for the teaching of public relations where 'we provide projects and activities that offer students the opportunity to work directly with communities in which they live' (Fall 2006, p. 408).

Tilson reinforces this stating that 'When educators and practitioners foster a spirit of community service, students are more fully prepared for the challenges that lie ahead – and public relations can more fully realise its potential in society' (Tilson 1999, p. 5).

Community organisations that have been involved in public relations projects at the University of the Sunshine Coast over the past few years include; Cystic Fibrosis, Energex Sunshine Coast Rescue Helicopter Service, Bloomhill Cancer Help, The Noosa Longweekend, The Sunshine Coast Regional Council and The Encouragement Foundation.

*"...it is with immense respect that I acknowledge the professionalism and enthusiasm with which your five Sunshine Coast University students approached the launch of The Encouragement Foundation. [It was] a sophisticated, multi-faceted event that delivered education, engagement and enjoyment to all who attended. I have been immensely impressed by [the students'] dedication, resolve, creativity and talent and especially by their*

*absolute willingness to go the extra mile – their commitment has been exemplary. Personally, I am impressed to know that this calibre of student will be the business leaders and academics of the future” (Mr John Shadforth, Director, The encouragement Foundation, letter, May 2009).*

The sentiments expressed above are typical of the community’s response to the projects completed by the final year students under the guidance of this regional university and highlight the extreme value of WIL activities for all who are involved.

In Semester 1, 2010, one of the projects, and the subject for this case study, was Operation Rescue. This project required a team of seven students to stage an event to celebrate the work the emergency services carry out within the community. The students were supervised by an industry professional, who became their mentor, and the course coordinator.

The event project was initially attempted in 2007. Unfortunately, due to extreme weather conditions the event could not be held. But valuable lessons were learned – particularly by the academic staff – regarding the planning and logistical implementation of large-scale student/community events.

To ensure the WIL course is current and meets both the students and the community organisations’ needs there is a focus on continual improvement. Students undertaking Operation Rescue in 2007 had reported that in their planning for the community event they felt that they needed revision on some of the theory and practical aspects of public relations planning. The need to integrate learning and practice is supported in the literature.

*In order for students to engage in an academically fulfilling civic engagement projects – whether they be internships or other on-the-job training opportunities – it is necessary that they be able to use what they have learned in class (Fall 2006, p. 413).*

In response to this feedback, formal teaching was incorporated into the course in the form of a two hour lecture/workshop each week. Students were also required to have a one hour team project meeting each week– in practice often more than one hour was required as the event timeline became close to completion.

Students commenced the project in week one of the semester and they had 13 weeks to make the event happen. They had no budget, no emergency organisations signed up and no prescribed event structure or format.

This paper will focus on the planning and preparation of the 2010 Operation Rescue project rather than the implementation.

The course commenced with a team building exercise using Tuckman’s five stages of group development (Tuckman 1965, cited in Lewis and Slade, 1994, p. 176-178), Karpman’s team dynamic model (Karpman 2007) and the Myers Briggs personality tests (Myers Briggs 2010), to help students understand the different aspects of team work and to help identify how each member might contribute to the team. The team was structured to correspond with how a public relations

consultancy might operate and each team member was allocated particular areas of responsibility within the group.

The Operation Rescue team's first task was an environmental scan which included researching the emergency and rescue organisations in the community, their potential target publics and prospective venues. The team also carried out some primary research and discovered that the community were unaware of many of the activities that the emergency services carried out.

From this data they prepared an event plan, partnership proposals for each emergency service, as well as sponsorship proposals to raise necessary funds to cover venue hire, facilities, security, signage and promotional costs. They prepared logistic plans, risk management and contingency plans, and media and promotional plans, including designing the Operation Rescue logo and planning the promotional material.

In week six the students, as part of their assessment, were required to present a formal presentation and event brief/proposal to the class. In this briefing they identified their goals as educating the community and raising awareness of the work the different organisations do, helping the organisations attract potential volunteers and some fund-raising for the local AGL Rescue Helicopter

By the six-week milestone, the team has undergone the traumas of finding its feet, working with the different personalities involved and the ups and downs of 'will it really happen'. They struck setbacks such as the high cost of venue hire and public liability insurance, the difficulty of reaching the decision makers within organisations along with the pressures of completing tasks, involving external organisations, within the short time-frame. Moreover, students were not able to dedicate themselves to the project exclusively: they had to cope with their workloads for other courses and juggle outside university obligations. '...students often juggle existing employment, family and study commitments whilst engaging in WIL (Patrick et al 2009, p. 43). Students also struggled with the necessity of developing and working to schedules and Gantt charts, the complexities of creating feasibility and budget plans, the division of labour and the general problems of getting the team together when there were conflicting study schedules.

Slowly the project began to take shape and the team was able to notch up some successes. The selected venue agreed to waive their hire fee for the community event. But unfortunately the preferred date was unavailable and so the team were forced to hold their event early – week 12 of the semester, making their tight operational timetable even tighter.

The local council came on board as a partner. The local councils in Queensland are the coordinating bodies for emergency services and therefore, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council had all the contacts in the organisations the team wanted to partner with. The council was able to assist in signing up more of the emergency services as well as contribute some funding towards

the project. The University of the Sunshine Coast Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences agreed to underwrite the event should the sponsorship funding fall short.

By week eight the Operation Rescue community event was beginning to become a reality but the next four weeks saw the team struggle with many logistical setbacks, including uncertainty as to whether two of the major emergency service organisations; the Queensland Ambulance and the Queensland Fire Service, would be participating on the day.

Finally on Sunday 30 May, it all came together. With all the major services turning up on the day with their trucks, displays and personnel. Over 600 people from the community, many of them families with young children, attended and were able to enjoy the activities; the opportunity to climb through the rescue helicopter, ambulances and police vehicles, see displays from the Police Dog Squad, watch firemen abseil from their high extension ladder on the fire truck, sound the sirens in the Ambulance and Police cars and give their support and encouragement to the service teams during the tug-of-war games.

## **The Challenges**

### **The team structure**

Much has been written about the effectiveness of teams. 'Teamwork represents a set of values that encourages behaviours such as listening and constructively responding to points of view expressed by others' (Katzenbach and Smith, K. 1993, p. 21). Working in teams also provides students with the experience of working and relating with others within a formal team structure.

The team developed its own social culture over time, reflecting others' researched experience: 'Team members also provide encouragement to one another' (Raelin 1997, p. 569). Some of the problems the team encountered regarded knowledge gaps outside of the area of public relations. The students' task in reality required skills outside their expertise; skills such as marketing, graphic design and financial planning. In trying to give the students a real-world experience, the course requirements were, at the same time, making them work in an artificial structure.

Borrill and West discuss how important teamwork is to organisational performance. They point out that understanding how to develop effective teams that can perform to their best potential is critical and this includes ensuring that teams 'have the resources they need to carry out the team's tasks, this includes having a sufficient number of team members with the appropriate skills to achieve the task' (Borrill and West 2005, p. 152).

In the real-world, an event organisation's project team would be staffed with members who had a mix of skills with only one or two public relations professionals. The student team had to work additionally hard to find ways to overcome these missing skills which came from different academic disciplines.

In the Operation Rescue team one student had graphic design skills and the tutors provided assistance with marketing and financial requirements.

### **The time-frame**

The course is offered during a one semester period of 13 weeks. There is a 'need to be realistic regarding what can be achieved in the time frame available' (Patrick et al 2009, p. 14).

In this limited time, Operation Rescue had difficulty signing up all the emergency organisations as well as sourcing sponsorships.

They were also hindered by the ideal date for the event in the selected venue not being available so they were forced to select an earlier, less satisfactory date to fit in to the semester requirements.

In the planning of the course, the academics in public relations found that many worthwhile community projects that would have been ideal projects for students and the community fall outside of this 13 week timeframe. Swinburn University's IBL programme's set criteria for WIL programmes has identified this issue and have stated that they would need to 'be available throughout the year' (Levin et al 2010, p. 4). The academic workload implications of this are yet to be studied.

## **Resources**

Resources for this public relations course are tight both for the academic, the students and the community. Some otherwise viable community projects cannot be considered due to lack of resources. 'WIL is undoubtedly resource intensive.' (McLennan and Keating 2008, p. 11) and 'time consuming for faculties' (Levin et al 2010, p. 8).

**Financial Resources:** The course is non-funded. Students are advised that they may have to spend around \$80 over the semester to cover items such as phone calls, printing, travel to client meetings etc. This is deemed to be equivalent to the cost of a text-book. In reality students spend much more than this and there is little, often no, reimbursement available. This finding is supported by Patrick et al's research (2009, p.43) in which participants '...suggested assistance with fuel costs plus financial support...'

The course does not have faculty or school funding to back-up projects or provide resources such as printing, phone calls or administration.

On top of this – and partly due to the nature of community events – the projects themselves are non-funded. Again, in reality, few such events would be planned with zero budgets over such a limited time-frame in which to source funding via grants, donations or sponsorships. Part of the rationale behind the course undertaking specifically community rather than commercial events is that it is an opportunity for the University to satisfy its charter and contribute to its local and regional community in unique and valuable ways. Occasionally, some of the event projects, such as with Cystic Fibrosis and the Encouragement Foundation, have a support client who is able to manage any budget shortfalls, however, Operation Rescue and many of our projects have no such support. Operation Rescue particularly was a large project with no 'client' other than the University.

It is recognised in the literature that WIL programmes 'are constrained by the financial costs involved in providing the ongoing support and facilitation required to achieve the intended and desired learning outcomes for students' (Levin et al 2010, p.10).

**Human Resources:** Operation Rescue is a large event. The Police, with three vehicles; a car, a boat and a motorbike; Queensland Fire and Rescue Service with their trucks; paramedics with ambulances and equipment; and the AGL Rescue Helicopter as well as marquees, tents and an area for food and entertainment activities all required planning for staff to assist in setting up, running the event and during the shut-down process.

Volunteers were the major source of staffing. This relied heavily on other students in the public relations or communications courses. In fact students saw this as an opportunity to participate in a community event and their enthusiasm is to be acknowledged; signing up volunteers was not a problem. Students viewed this work as being useful for their CVs – good experience for finding employment on graduation. Certainly much anecdotal evidence from former students supports the

value of WIL in finding industry employment. Fall's (2006, p. 413) research also found that 'students perceive civic engagement activities to be beneficial to them as well as the organizations and publics they are service – even though they are not being paid for their work'.

### **Project Preparation and Co-ordination**

There is considerable research available on 'the workload involved in preparing WIL placements for students' (Patrick et al 2009, p.14). Planning for the projects takes considerable time for the academics involved. Relationships with the community organisations need to be developed maintained and nurtured. There is little recognition of, or support for, the additional workload this takes.

*Current academic workload models reward research, and although there is an allowance for teaching activities, there is little recognition of the mentoring and administrative tasks associated with internships (Levin et al 2010, p.8).*

Driscoll's reflections on a new Community Engagement Classification system introduced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of teaching, identified areas that were a challenge for institutions which included: 'Promotion and Tenure Policies Supporting Community Engagement' (Driscoll 2009, p 10).

There are particular skills necessary to be able to plan and develop and manage community WIL programmes. Academics may need training to develop 'skills to manage and facilitate WIL effectively but also [be] recognised and rewarded for their work in this area' (McLennan and Keating 2008, p.11).

### **Student Learning**

Taylor and Furnham (2005, pp 35-39) discuss Kolb's learning cycle and the development from this of the trainers learning theory. The application of this theory applies to a new entrant in a work situation. The new entrant will learn from other's behaviour in these new situations thus giving them new attitudes as well as skills.

Billet's (2001, p. 103) work builds on this theory citing 'there is clear evidence that workers learn through everyday activities in the work place'. His workplace curriculum model comprises the following elements:

- *Movement from participation in low to high accountability work activities*
- *Access to knowledge that would not be learnt by discovery alone*
- *Direct guidance from more experienced others and experts; and*
- *Indirect guidance provided by the physical and social environment (Billet 2005, p. 104).*

It is in the third point of the model which highlights a potential area for improvement in the WIL of projects such as *Operation Rescue*.

Billett emphasises 'the contributions to learning through shared problem-solving between the learner and expert others' (Billett 2001, p. 112). The expert other's in the case of Operation Rescue were missing in some of the knowledge and skills required in marketing, finance and graphic design.

While tutors are sometimes able to fill-the-gaps (whether through experience or their own quick-learning) the 'gap' in the student team and, therefore, the student learning opportunity is problematic.

Also important in this part of the model is 'guarding against inappropriate knowledge' (Billett 2001, p. 113). Billett discusses how 'not all learning that occurs ... may be appropriate or desirable'. In the case of Operation Rescue where the knowledge gaps exist, students may not have the skills to achieve tasks outside their area of public relations. The risk is then that these important tasks may not be carried out as well as they could be and the community event is not as successful as it has the potential to be.

A further point is 'accessing knowledge that is hidden'. Billett discusses how 'assistance of a more experienced partner to ease the way to access of knowledge may be required' (Billet 2001, p. 114). In some cases the expertise required is not available or alternatives have to be made to cover the knowledge gaps as in the case of Operation Rescue, where the tutors had to supply the missing expertise.

## **Discussion**

The fundamental basis of the public relations project course is sound. Biggs points out that 'Problem-based learning reflects the way people learn in real life' (Biggs and Tang 2009, p. 151).

Community projects present students with a real challenge in which they can use their problem solving skills and apply the knowledge they have learned in their studies. Through this programme students engage positively with the community and their 'learning outcomes will be enhanced through curricula that are relevant to community issues and priorities' (Universities and Community Engagement 2006, p.3).

There are additional benefits to students working on community projects. It is argued that WIL not only makes graduates 'work ready' but that there are other benefits, often not promoted, that working on a community project can provide. 'Senior university managers and academics identified the potential for promoting other more broadly defined educational goals – such as community participation and citizenship – rather than just employability through WIL' (Patrick, et al 2009, p.17). Fall further argues that '...students are more apt to consider a career path in a profession/industry in which they personally believe that they are "making a difference" among the publics they are serving while participating in community-oriented projects' (Fall 2006, p.413).

Tilson's (1999, p.5) research with students on a community service project found that

*...students developed both professional skills and a sense of commitment to the service of their community – skills that proved advantageous later in their academic careers and values that spurred an enthusiasm for further charitable projects.*

The area where the community projects could be enhanced is by having teams of students comprised of public relations students along with members from other disciplines. There are many areas in a university where knowledge and skills can be integrated – and be aligned with the real-world. The argument is in line with Wallis' (2005, p.7) view that 'the campus approach to scholarship includes interdisciplinary work'.

In the practice of public relations, professionals will work in teams on organisational projects in many different fields. In an IT company for example, a PR practitioner may work with team members who include marketing, engineers, information architects, financial controllers and systems developers. As Raelin (1997, p.569) expounds in his discussion on action learning, 'organizational members need to enter each others' area of operation in order to provide new perspectives and stimulate inquiry'.

Students benefit by being able to identify how concepts from one subject can be applied to another and are able to adapt to multiple faculty perspectives. If students are able to work on projects that overlap course boundaries, the experience is more aligned to how the real workplace operates. Dodge and Kendall's (2004, p.150) paper on Learning Communities describes how 'the separation of academic disciplines creates artificial boundaries between subjects that students could better understand as interrelated parts'. Learning communities are able to integrate logically related disciplines.

Communities of Practice develop amongst people who are united in a common enterprise and the experience creates stronger and more solidified learning. Being part of a community of practices allows students to 'not only learn to observe and experiment with their own collective tacit processes in action, but, while doing so, seek to improve their own performance' (Raelin, 1997, p.575).

For improved creativity Nijstad et al (2005, p. 175) conclude that groups work best when 'group members have mutually recognized areas of expertise and an adequate division of labour (i.e., group members should perform the tasks they are good at)'. Their research also showed that group members who are able to approach a task from a different perspective are less likely to 'get stuck in a rut' and therefore be more creative.

The opportunity exists to provide a learning experience for students where they can excel in creativity and innovation and use this to develop community programmes that better meet the community need. Ford (2005, p. 227) discusses how 'the diversity of knowledge represented in the team is an important issue'. He discusses that in an entrepreneurial setting the four areas of knowledge that need to be covered in a business venture tends to be segmented into: product/production, marketing/sales, management/administration and finance. These areas correlate to some of the missing skill bases noted in the public relations project teams: marketing, finance and production (e.g. graphic design).

Russell (2005, p.36) argues that many of the areas that academics work in 'simply cannot be adequately addressed by single disciplines'. She explains that as transdisciplinarity transgresses disciplinary boundaries it provides 'the integration and synthesis of content, theory and methodology from a number of disciplines in new knowledge production' (Russell 2005, p.35).

It is important to recognise that introducing team members with different knowledge bases may cause conflict as the same problem is viewed from a different perspective. Weingart et al (2005, p. 104) conclude that 'task conflict is a linchpin between functional diversity and quality outcomes'. Their model of cross-functional product development team conflict and performance shows how to manage conflict arising from team members' different points of view based on their different areas

of skill and approach. One method to counteract this is explained by Weingart et al (2005, p. 105-106) whereby

*Cognitive integration might be improved by providing opportunities for team members to shadow and interview one another to gain knowledge about the other functional areas, perspectives, concerns, demands, and so forth*

Weingart et al conclude that conflict can be managed and that overall cross functionality does provide an organisation with the means to maximize potential.

There are new opportunities that present themselves for 'graduates with a mix of knowledge and skills: biologist with law to work in biotechnology companies, historians with management to work in public agencies, IT specialist with creative arts to work in web design.' (Russell et al 2007, p. 576). In the field of public relations there are many cross disciplinary areas that work together.

*The challenge is to embrace new modes of thinking, researching and interacting and to follow new directions of enquiry. For universities to fulfil their role in providing dynamic, independent knowledge production for the public good, there needs to be academics and students within universities who courageously and creatively work across disciplinary boundaries (Russell, 2005, p.41).*

One of the challenges for WIL identified by Patrick, Peach and Pocknee (2005, p.29) is improving communication and coordination across disciplines and faculties. This, they state, would enable better sharing of information and knowledge. They found that programmes across faculties were 'not thought of in a consistent coordinated way' and there was a need for 'greater inter-disciplinary networking' and 'networks across faculties' as well as 'being able to draw on knowledge and information across disciplines and faculties'.

Universities have to think more creatively and broadly regarding students learning. In a technologically and relationship-complex professional world, cooperation is more and more required among experts from different disciplines. 'It is not simply a matter of pooling information. It is, rather, a matter of bringing diverse points of view and talents together to define and construct the human world.' (Zelderman et al 1992, p.138).

Stakeholder research is currently in the field to gauge how the experience of community partners, students and tutors on the Operation Rescue project match with the discussions found in the literature review. This should then provide evidence based outcomes, benefits and impacts for further analysis. It is envisaged that the findings of this research will be published in a subsequent paper.

## **Conclusion**

*Operation Rescue's* learning experience for students could have been enhanced by having team members with the missing skills such as members from the Faculty of Business with marketing and financial skills and team members from other schools in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences with skills in web design, and graphic art. The time-frame limitations of the 13 week semester also prevented the maximisation of the potential for the community event. Some of this pressure would be mitigated by having team members with existing expertise in the identified non-public relations

areas as students would not need to put so much of their time and effort into performing outside-of-discipline tasks.

It is vital to try to sustain and improve the WIL approach to professional learning: 'Civic engagement, as part of public relations education, not only introduces students to service learning but also enhances a university's relationship with the surrounding community.' (Fall, 2006, p. 410).

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## **Finding the Middle Ground: Critical Success Factors in Establishing a Partnership Between a Chamber of Commerce and a Regional University - Associate Professor Anne Langworthy, Jo Archer and Louise Clark.**

### **Abstract**

The economic impact of a university on a region has become well understood over the last decade. Part of the Federal Government Review of Higher Education (West Review) released in 1998 was a commissioned submission Assessing the Economic Contributions of Regional Universities (Centre for International Economics). This paper substantiated the economic benefits provided by regional universities and subsequently a number of reports across Australia have highlighted both direct and indirect effects of the regional university on local economies.

The fact that the university spends in the local community is appreciated by local business and is one driver for the support of business organisations. However the impact of the university can go beyond economic calculations which are often limited and based only on university spending - they rely only on the University's geographical location.

When the University and the Community, partner, the benefits of this engagement go beyond the merely transactional. The partnership can add value to the knowledge and creativity of the community. Place based opportunities potentially reap economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes for both partners and the wider region.

The Chamber of Commerce in this regional city is one of eight key regional influential organisations. Whilst Trader Groups and Chambers of Commerce can vary greatly in status and effectiveness, this Chamber has significant standing in the community and has a large active membership and is well entrenched locally. The Chamber is an independent, nimble, adaptive organisation with a clear local mission, one soundly based on the business landscape, history and identity of the City. The Chamber also has expectations of the region's university. The University is a large and complex organisation with a statewide and national role whose processes are sometimes a mystery to the local Chamber; local businesses see the University as operating in a totally different and perhaps cumbersome way. The University is willing to work with the Chamber and can see the important role the city has in welcoming interstate and international visitors and facilitating a positive relocation of transferring academics and students, for example.

Effective partnership however requires more than just the willingness of both partners.

This case study describes the regional benefits of partnership between a Chamber of Commerce and a University from both perspectives, the barriers to the collaboration and critical success factors including the creation of a community engagement broker role within the University and the identification of a middle ground.

## Introduction

Since the 1998 Federal Government Review of Higher Education (West Review) commissioned submission assessing the Economic Contributions of Regional Universities (Centre for International Economics), the economic impact of many universities on their state or their region across Australia have been highlighted.

Universities contribute to regions through four main avenues:

- Universities earn income, spend that income and attract students who also spend. This has a direct and multiplier or flow-on effects.
- Universities undertake research and development that could be focused on regional issues and/or have commercial application.
- Universities educate the labour force. This in turn can assist in attracting industry to a region and assist in the cultural and social development of the region.
- Universities can contribute to the social and cultural life of the region. They provide infrastructure, fulfil community service obligations and provide community volunteers. (Centre for International Economics, 1997)

In an Evaluations and Investigations Programme publication, *Engaging Universities and Regions* (00/15), Garlick (2000) assessed the contribution of universities to regional economic development. This involved an exploration of human capital outcomes, linking undergraduate and graduation student flows for each campus and region using postcode data, and an exploration of social capital engagement using four broad areas: leadership and strategic focus; knowledge enhancing programs; information and promotion; and infrastructure support for economic development.

Garlick found that campus structural forces were more significant in determining social capital engagement than either regional structural factors or operational factors.

Whilst the presence of a regional campus brings greater local spending and thus economic benefit, where there are high levels of engagement with the local community there will be a higher proportion of local students undertaking courses, as well as additional social and cultural interaction. "At the highest level of engagement, universities connect in a strategic, whole-of-institute way by providing an on the ground package of leadership, infrastructure, collaboration and multi-disciplinary research and teaching targeted at areas of regionally identified economic development priority". (DETYA, 2000a, p pxiii)

Universities have a role to play in improving the quality of life for their local communities and do this best through their core business of learning and teaching and research. In order to do this, university staff members need to not only understand, value and support the principles of engagement, but they also need to work actively to develop processes that are enabling. Therefore, an engaged university is one that develops solutions with its community to address strategic problems as a function of its core business of research, teaching and learning activity. An organisational structure and culture that 'permits, encourages, facilitates and sustains harmonious relationships among all

groups and individuals within the university' will enable optimal engagement (Benson and Harkavy 2002, p. 45). The key to optimal engagement is successful partnership.

## **Partnership**

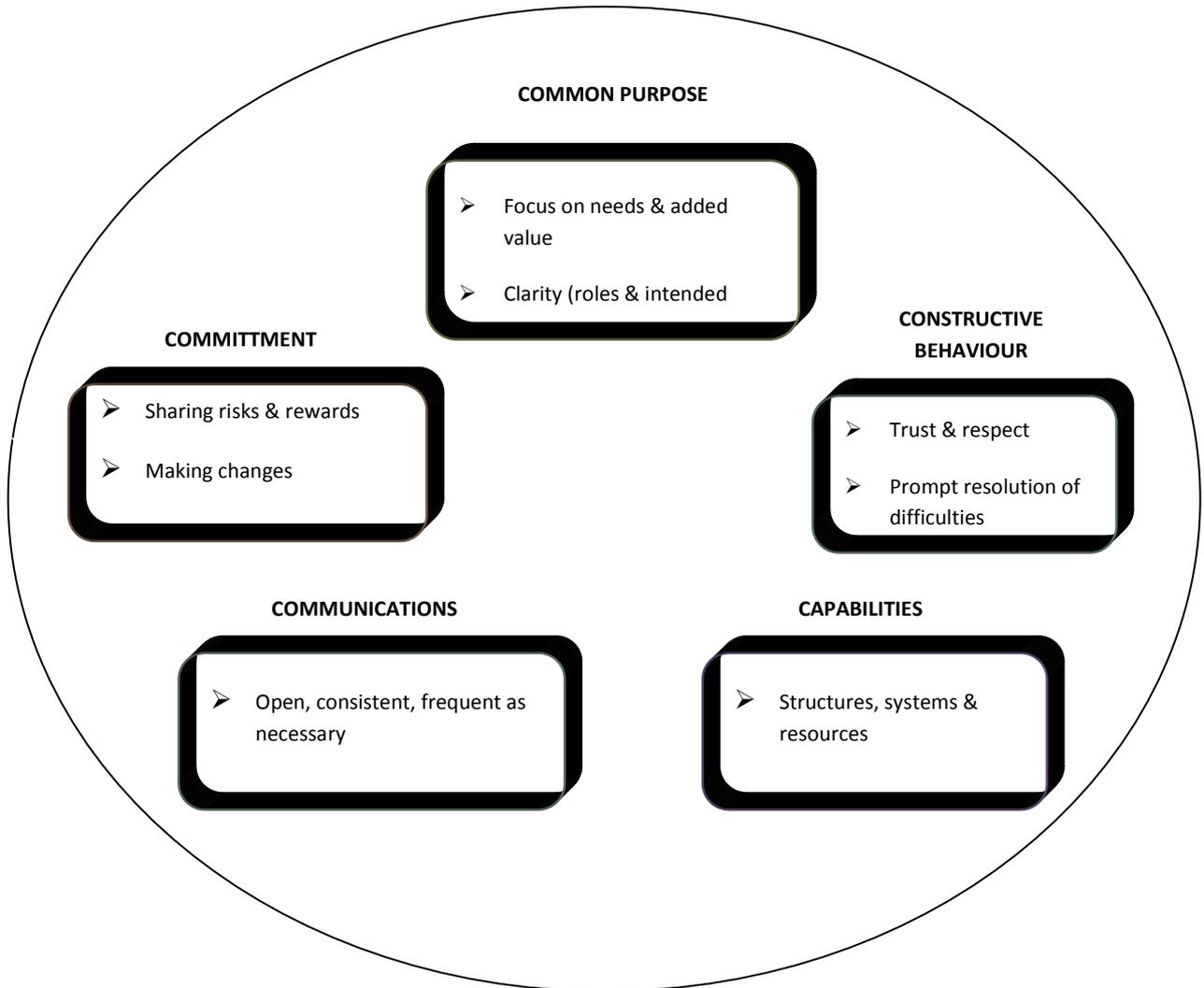
A partnership is a voluntary collaboration between two or more parties. The term can be applied to wide variety of forums, relationships and arrangements, where one or more parties agree to share and exchange resources and information and to produce outcomes that one partner working alone could not achieve. Partnerships can be formal or informal and cover a broad range of agreed resources sharing and cooperation. Brown and Waddell (1997) indicated that it is useful to think about partnerships as a process rather than an outcome.

Gray (1989:5) defined collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible."

Much work has been done in identifying the elements of successful partnerships (Koteinikov and Ten3 East-West, 2003; Cave, 1999; Hamer, 2002; Brown and Waddell, 1997; Walker, 2000). Successful partnerships usually include the following characteristics:

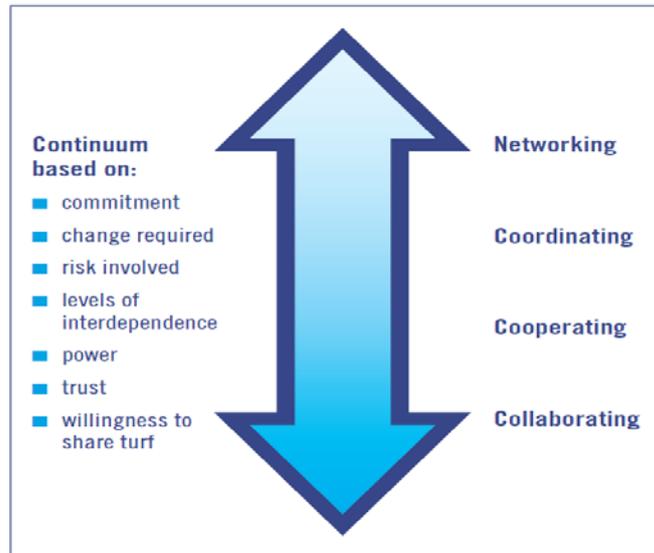
- they are developed from identified needs and priorities;
- they have shared goals, objectives and responsibilities;
- there is a clear understanding of the constraints and capabilities of each partner, the resource commitment (information, human, financial and technical) and the need to engage the whole of organisation rather than just individuals;
- there is regular, open, transparent communication and accountable structures for joint decision making and conflict resolution;
- the relationship has been developed in a way that engenders trust between all partners, effective informal networks and strong working relationships which underpin formal agreements (and support the evolution of the partnership in response to learning and change);
- there is a focus on the need to achieve results and not be just a "talk fest"; and
- there is evaluation and celebration of success.

Because local government in Australia and the United Kingdom has been increasingly concerned with community engagement, much recent literature relating to the nature of partnership has derived from this sector. For example The Local Government Association in the United Kingdom describes five characteristics of successful partnership (Cave, 1999) as represented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Five C's of Partnership**

Universities partner in various ways with industry and the community, in informal networks, formal committees, specific Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with organisations and in curriculum development and projects (research and consultancy). These arrangements vary hugely in effectiveness and implementation. Vic Health (2005) developed the partnerships continuum below to describe this range from informal to formal collaboration.



**Figure 2: Partnership Continuum (Vic Health, 2005):**

The model of developing a business plan, rather than generic MOUs or agreements, has proved effective in achieving focused outcomes. This model begins with a purpose and shared mission and:

- Works back from the outside (where the community is at);
- Suits the respective agendas of the partners;
- Has clear and specific goals and objectives;
- Has clear and efficient governance;
- Builds in an action review process;
- Is developed for a timeframe that allows achievement of objectives ;
- Has clear strategies, actions and responsibilities; and
- Has adequate resourcing.

The partnership between the University of Tasmania and the Launceston Chamber of Commerce can be viewed through the lens of this partnership continuum.

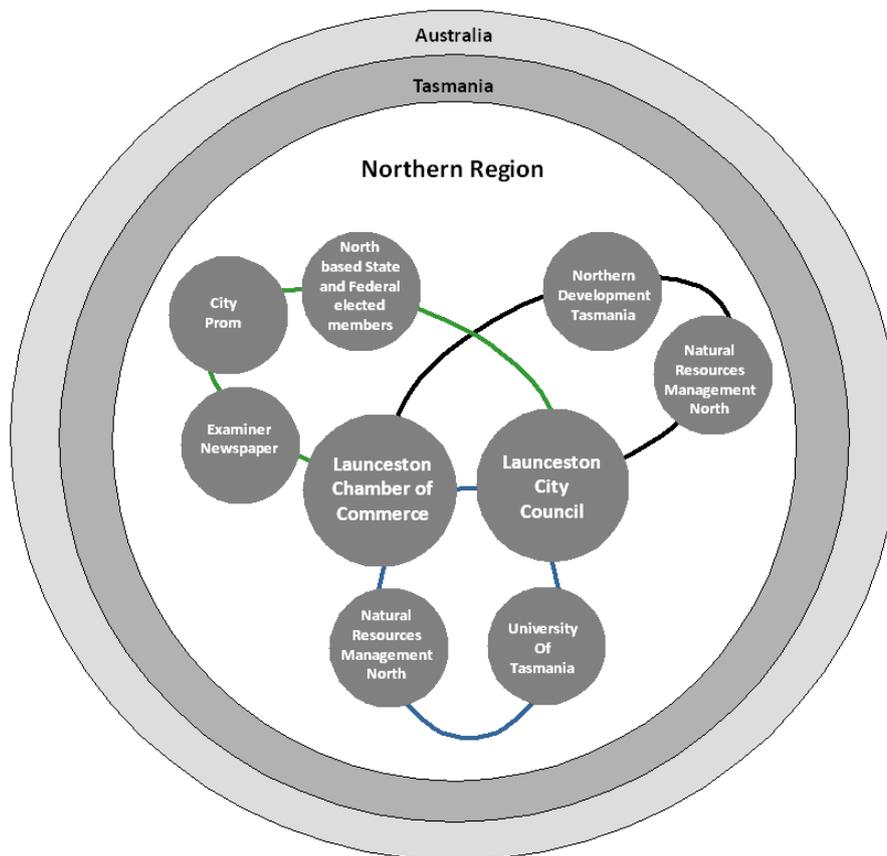
### **The Launceston Chamber of Commerce**

Launceston is regional city in Tasmania second in size to the State capital of Hobart. The Launceston Chamber of Commerce, one of Australia’s oldest chambers of commerce, was established in 1849, three years before the settlement was proclaimed a municipality in 1852.

Whilst Trader Groups and Chambers of Commerce can vary greatly in status and effectiveness, the Launceston Chamber has significant standing in the community and has a large active membership over 300 small, medium and large businesses representing over 30 business and industry sectors.

The member cohort is driven by business and industry leaders, who aim to, by banding together, maximise prosperity, sustainability and growth for the region. Members understand that the Chamber focus is about the 'greater good' of the region and that there is limited direct return for individuals.

Because of the active involvement of business and community leaders, the Chamber is an independent, nimble, adaptive organisation with a clear local mission which is soundly based on the business landscape, history and identity of the City. They are engaged, influential and active leaders. The Chamber understands the employment, economic, cultural and educational opportunities that the University brings to the region and is fiercely proud and protective of these benefits. The Chamber also has expectations of the region's university which is often a mystery to local business. The Chamber is a key influencer in the local and regional community and its status within the business community provides it with significant standing and credibility. Business, government and the community listen to its voice. Figure three below diagrammatically represents the nine identified key influential organisations in the region; the other eight are members of the Chamber and all bar one are represented on the Chambers Board.



**Figure 3: Key Northern Tasmanian Influencers**

## **The University of Tasmania**

The fourth oldest university in Australia, the University of Tasmania (UTAS) was founded by an Act of the Tasmanian Parliament on 1 January 1890 an original 'sandstone' university.

However it was not until 1 January 1991 that the Hobart-based University merged with its northern neighbour, the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology, to form a 'new' University of Tasmania. UTAS is one of the region's biggest employers and biggest spenders providing significant employment and economic benefits to the city and region. Because the University has not always had a presence in northern Tasmania, its position is jealously guarded by the regional community.

The University employs 2547 staff, excluding casual staff; has 24104 students in total and nine Faculties and Institutes operating on three Tasmanian campuses.

Over the last two years, through the appointment of a regional development and engagement manager, the University's focus has been to enhance ongoing communication with key stakeholders in the region to create long term and sustainable partnerships.

### **The relationship**

The relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and UTAS is grounded in the interest both have in the region: The University recognises the key role the Chamber plays in Northern Tasmania regionally, as a litmus test of business views and a conduit to the wider views of the wider regional community. The Chamber can see the integral role that the University has to play in the life of the city and the region and is keen to build on the University's strengths and points of difference.

One focus of the partnership in the first instance has been to strengthen the role and involvement of the Launceston campus particularly in the local community.

There are transactional aspects to the relationship between the University and the Chamber, one obvious one being the area of paid membership. The University is a Platinum Member of the Chamber. Platinum is the highest level of membership of the Chamber which involves higher levels of profile, activity and representation. This level of membership is also influential; these members are frequently called on for feedback, business advice and to mentor Chamber staff. Their opinions are sought and the perspectives they provide often improve the quality of Chamber's stance on specific issues and in dealing with higher levels of Government.

The University is represented on the Chamber Board and has for some years had an elected representative on the Chamber Board. In addition, the Deputy Vice Chancellor meets formally with the Chamber Board at least annually and the Chamber hosts the University Council once a year.

Although university representation at Chamber events comes from diverse areas within the University, the relationship with the Faculty of Business has established strong foundations. The Faculty of Business sponsors the Chamber's successful business awards program now in its seventh year, the Chamber supports an annual scholarship for a first year Launceston based student in the Faculty of Business and provides an annual prize in the faculty of Business's Internship program for a Launceston based student. For the last two years the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Business has participated as a judge in the Chamber's Awards program.

The relationship between the organisations has also been fostered through particular projects and activities. For example, the Chamber has worked in partnership with the University and Launceston City Council on the “Love Launceston” project where Launceston is marketed at career expos interstate to students and families. On a smaller scale but one that embeds value to both organisations, the Chamber and the University work collaboratively on educational seminars for Chamber members and familiarisation tours to help attract academics to the University’s Launceston Campus.

An interesting aspect to the relationship is that to the Chamber, the University often works in a way which is not transparent and often complex and bureaucratic. Certainly it does not operate in the same way that private enterprise does. Often it seems that the University cannot understand why an internal decision made without community consultation can irk or raise the ire of Chamber members and the local community. Yet both organizations under their current leaderships are willing to engage and work together in order to achieve mutually positive outcomes.

### **Benefits of the partnership**

For the Chamber, the University is a source of intellectual capability addressing local regional issues. Through engagement with the University, Chamber members are able to better understand how the University can help their business and how they can leverage of the University and what it is has to offer the community.

The partnership improves understanding of how the University contributes to the social, cultural and economic fabric of Launceston and enables the Chamber to better influence and have input into decisions made by the University that affect Chamber members, the business community and the region.

For the University the benefits include the referrals and facilitation of relevant local links, the Chamber support and promotion of UTAS corporate internships, research programs, Open Days, and new developments, for example.

In addition to sponsorships and the joint activities and projects like the Launceston City of Learning initiative for example, the access to the energy, skills, passion and support of an independent Chamber provides UTAS with a powerful ‘friend’.

### **Barriers, Risks and Challenges**

Despite the developing relationship, the partnership between the University and the Chamber is not without risk. One of the key risks to the partnership is the reliance on The UTAS Launceston development and Engagement manager and the Chamber Executive Officer to manage and enact the partnership and partnership goals. These people are in daily contact and constantly share information and have developed a very close working relationship. There is currently no succession plan nor a strategy should one or the other be replaced by an unwilling participant. These roles rely on senior management in both organisations for support and again there is a risk to the partnership if new, potentially non-engaged people come into management roles. Currently there is no written agreement or MOU defining the partnership and providing the necessary foundation to sustain the partnership beyond personality.

There is also a risk of over promising and under delivering on the partnership. Meetings and networking opportunities certainly engender enthusiasm and key players can readily identify opportunities. However, both organisations have key daily roles and responsibilities and developing and achieving outcomes from collaborative plans takes both time and resources. It is particularly important at this stage of the partnership that both partners perceive value from the partnership and that trust and mutual respect continues to be built as most Chamber members are time poor and there is still a need to overcome a certain level of cynicism in both organisations.

### **The partnership broker**

As the benefits of university community engagement have become increasingly apparent over the last decade and the importance of engagement highlighted by the social inclusion agenda, it has been observed that there emerging new role, a third role that not only straddles the academic and administrative divide but also crosses the institutional community. People in these roles are sometimes called “boundary crossers” (Johns, Kilpatrick and Whelan 2007) because of their capacity to move freely and credibly across these divides. These roles are also seen in health, education and local government where engagement with the community is crucial to achieving the outcomes.

At UTAS the engagement and development role is held by the former Executive Officer of the Chamber, someone who has credibility in both sectors and has the trust of all parties and thus can be an effective interpreter and facilitator of access. This role is considered by regional stakeholders to be a critical success factor for regional university community engagement in Northern Tasmania.

The role allows for the effective designing of activities that will deliver value and outcomes to Chamber members, the business community and the University. This process provides a way of introduction to the University for Chamber and community members that may have never set foot inside a University.

### **The middle ground**

The broker helps to identify or define the space where a representative and highly responsive organisation and a large educational organisation, constrained by many bureaucratic and cultural imposts, can meet. This middle ground is a place of mutual understanding and respect. For Paul Ranson, President Launceston Chamber of Commerce this is the place , “where the Chamber members and the University achieve a tangible benefit relative to their input from working together, not necessarily on a project by project basis but definitely required on a whole of partnership basis.”

### **Conclusion**

Creating the partnership between the University and Chamber of Commerce has been built over the last two years and over that time much progress has been made. However, it is still closer to the networking than collaboration level on the partnership continuum diagrammatically presented on Figure 2. The challenge ahead is to develop the partnership in a way that focuses on identifying and addressing key regional priorities.

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## **It Takes More Than Time: A Youth Commitment Through Community Partnerships - *Dr Anne Badenhorst***

This paper presents a case study of the Whittlesea Youth Commitment (WYC) which started in the City of Whittlesea, a Local Government Area (LGA) in northern metropolitan Melbourne in 1998. The WYC grew from concerns about changes to the Youth Allowance policy putting young people at risk of leaving school without support. A number of factors are presented which were important in the establishment: there was close association with policy concerns of both state and commonwealth governments at the time, convincing local data was provided that was of concern and relevant to a range of key organisations, there were networks in place to support a serious attempt at addressing the issues and there were critical partners including the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, the university and the local government of the City of Whittlesea.

The WYC team was a collection of organisations which signed a 'Spirit of Cooperation' agreement and developed the project. This team included the eight secondary schools in the City of Whittlesea, nine industry partners, two industry associations, two community agencies, five job network providers, the three local tertiary providers and four government agencies including Centrelink, the local police, the Northern Adult Community and Further Education Board, and the Northern Area Consultative Committee. The aim of the WYC was to 'ensure that every young person in Whittlesea, especially those that leave before completing their VCE or its equivalent, makes a smooth transition to another education option or further training or employment or their desired goal' (WYC 1998). Drawing on the case study, a commissioned review, local sources and interviews the success and outcomes of the WYC are discussed.

This paper explains that this exemplar project was embedded in a regional development project which supported innovation, learning and collaborative approaches. The WYC was successful in its own right and is still operating but more significantly the model is now, in 2010 being replicated in the region and elsewhere. Using a framework of 'communities of practice' and 'infrastructures of learning' it is possible to discern key elements which support understanding of the model and the regional development project underpinning it, and the way practice has been communicated, developed and shared. This paper argues that it takes time to develop collaborative partnerships and strong networks but equally important are the 'infrastructures of learning' on which successful economic development projects depend.

**Keywords:** Youth Commitment, Regional development, Learning in networks, Learning infrastructure

Through the presentation of a case study of a regional economic development project from the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne, Australia, this paper argues that it is necessary to have in place the 'infrastructure' to support innovation, learning and collaboration. It is widely acknowledged that trust is important in networks and it takes time to establish collaborative partnerships. This paper argues that equally important is the infrastructure to support and sustain networks and collaborative projects. Regional development organisations are in a good position not only to broker and initiate projects but also to provide this infrastructure, which is conceptualised in this paper using Wenger's framework of 'learning infrastructures' (1998).

## **Context**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Wenger describes learning not as an individual process but as a 'social practice'. Learning takes place in a 'community of practice' where 'a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al. 2003, p. 4). In this conceptual framework learning occurs 'through practices and their evolution over time, often being reified through the formalisation and commodification of those practices which fits well with ideas of learning in organisations. A second element of the communities of practice idea is identity, individuals that are learning through communities of practice define an identity with those communities, often following a route from the periphery of the community to a more central position and this is interesting from a learning city perspective in connection with ideas of social capital and networks (Charles, 2003). In identifying how learning is supported across networks a number of aspects of this theory were identified as relevant:

1. Focusing on the existence, or not, of a 'community of practice' alerts us to membership and participation and their meaning in a way that network analysis would not.
2. The distinction between institution and 'community of practice' highlights shared activities not what occupation or role individuals have.
3. Recognising a high threshold for learning which highlights also where learning is not occurring (Wickham 2004).

Wenger also talks about 'cultivating' communities of practice because although it is not necessary for all projects or groups to form a community of practice the existence of these communities supports learning (2002). In his conceptualisation, communities of practice can be supported by 'architectures of learning' which are 'the infrastructure' supporting people to 'engage, imagine and align' their practice (1998 p. 237). Wenger describes the infrastructure to support engagement in terms of physical and virtual spaces, ways of belonging and opportunities to apply skills, develop tools and generate memory or history of the group (1998, 237). Imagination is supported by 'orientation in space and time, opportunities for reflection and exploration', and alignment supported by 'leadership, coordination, information transmission and such things as contracts, due process and policy' (1998, 238). Using the framework makes discernable common elements which link projects and highlight the support underpinning them across the networks.

### **Method**

This case study was initiated as part of a larger study over the period 2006- 2009. In July 2010 it was updated. The study began with a literature search and examination of archives and documentation pertaining to the agencies involved, then interviews in 2007/2008 and in 2010 with network participants and a selection of relevant parties outside of the networks. The research also draws upon work compiled by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum including a guide to developing Youth Commitments based on the Whittlesea experience and the Youth Commitment Tool kit, a review of the Whittlesea Youth Commitment undertaken by the Asquith Group in 2001 and reviews of the LLEN in Victoria in 2002 and 2005.

## Case Study

### **Northern Metropolitan region**

There is a rich history of regional economic development effort in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne dating back over 20 years. Key organisations include NorthLink/NIETL and the Northern Area Consultative Committee (NACC, now the Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia Committee). These organisations formalised a regional economic development program in the northern region of Melbourne with a series of research and planning documents, starting with a comprehensive profile of the region in 2002 followed in 2003 by the first plan for the 'economic region', Growing Melbourne's North updated in 'Melbourne's North – the New Knowledge Economy' published in 2009.

The northern metropolitan Region is a wedge-shaped area consisting of seven Local Government Areas from the inner city to the urban boundary. The region's population was approximately 814,947 in 2006, with just over 28% of the population born overseas with the largest employing industry a declining manufacturing sector that employs 53,191 persons, followed by retail with 50,424 persons; health and community services with 45,579; construction with 30,607; and property and business services with 30,326 (ABS 2006 in NMRDA Business Plan 2010). The inner areas of the region have faced challenges in 'developing an environment for new employment options to flourish and managing future residential densities and the 'outer growth areas faced challenges with new home development, growing population and high susceptibility to change and economic stress as a result of higher unemployment, low skill levels and managing the rural interface with Melbourne' (Shepherd 2003, p. 14). In the 2009 Melbourne's Knowledge Economy report the region was characterised by; diversity; a resident population with a range of cultural, educational and ethnic backgrounds, and old and new suburbs offering different levels of amenity. .. (and) diversity of businesses including inner areas that are moving rapidly towards a knowledge economy and creative development at the same time as manufacturing, logistics and warehousing activities develop in the outer parts of the region (NEIR 2009 p. v).

The northern metropolitan regional development project has a strategic approach to address the challenges for the region with goals shared by key organisations, benchmarks for the region and a model for projects which is based on research, including local data, which supports the engagement of the key stakeholders and then the development of responses which are based on collaboration. Many of the participants in the projects talk about change and learning and the insights gained from working with people from different organisations and sectors. The exemplar project chosen to illustrate this approach and the support from the region is the Whittlesea Youth Commitment.

### **The Whittlesea Youth Commitment**

This Whittlesea Youth Commitment (WYC) started in 1998. It grew from research which was undertaken because of concerns about changes to the Youth Allowance Policy. The changes to the Youth Allowance aimed to encourage young people to stay in school by making them ineligible for support unless they were in formal training or education. RMIT's Northern Industry Education Collaborative Area Program (NIECAP) undertook research to understand the impact of the new policy on young people. The research found that young people did not know they would be without assistance or that limited support would be available to them if they left school (NIECAP, 1998). In

one year, four hundred and fifty young people left school in the City of Whittlesea and their whereabouts was not known. They were not tracked and it was not known whether they were in training, education or unemployed (NIECAP 1998). A solid body of local information was developed, not exclusively by RMIT, but drawing on information and resources in both regional development organisations, the City of Whittlesea and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. This included:

- an environmental scan of youth participation in employment, education and training and the broader community services available to meet their needs
- a destination survey of school leavers
- an audit of career teaching and vocational guidance in the local public secondary schools
- a regional skills audit to identify skills strengths and weaknesses in local industry.

A funding map was developed to chart the distribution of resources in employment, education and training from all sources, across the dimensions of school completers and early school leavers. It indicated that the average per capita resources to assist school leavers in the region, including early school leavers, was less than Commonwealth estimates and this needed to be addressed (Spierings 2000, p. 9).

The issue of young people at risk of leaving school early without pathways into further education, training or employment was high on the agenda of both federal and state governments at this time. A number of Commonwealth programs were introduced to address the issue, which had been under discussion since the late 1970s. By the late 1990s there was still 'very little success, as the numbers of 'at risk youth' had remained unchanged over this time' and Australia was 'one of the few OECD countries where school retention rates declined over the 1990s (Spierings, 2000, p. 3). The notion of a Youth Commitment was first proposed in an OECD Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life in Australia in 1997. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) 'an independent, not for profit body with a mission to achieve changes needed to enable all Australians to reach their potential through the acquisition of productive skills' picked up this concept. The DSF was well respected for its leadership in this area and engagement in national policy debates. They published *Why Australia Needs a National Youth Commitment* in 2000 and were influential in the report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways and Action Plan Taskforce in 2001.

It was within this context that the NACC had been canvassing concerned to gauge interest in the development of a project which focused on young people at risk of leaving school early without pathways into further education in the region. NIECAP took a leadership role and brought DSF into the project. The DSF was looking to develop a pilot Youth Commitment project and was interested in working in the northern region as there was a network already established. The intention to establish the Whittlesea Youth Commitment came out of a meeting which involved the DSF, the University, the City of Whittlesea, schools, and key stakeholders after a series of public forums and meetings with organisations. It took time to establish. Having been initiated in 1998 with existing networks in place, it took two years to achieve meaningful collaboration and levels of trust (Spierings 2000, p. 12). The DSF also brought new and vital information from one of their pilot projects in which they had trialled Transition Officers working in a community service organisation assisting young people at risk while they were still in school. They also brought information on general trends and issues for young people and their work in the formation of a 'Youth Commitment.' This

knowledge was shared and used to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the issues to the very different organisations that needed to engage.

The original aim of the WYC was to 'ensure that every young person leaving school in the City of Whittlesea, especially those who leave before completing VCE or its equivalent, makes a smooth transition to another education option or further training or employment or their desired goal' (WYC 1998,p. 1). The community team that formed the WYC signed an agreement but made a very deliberate decision not to incorporate or enter into a formal arrangement to retain a collaboration built on trust and shared commitment as expressed in the 'Spirit of Cooperation' signed by all. Community partners included:

- eight industry partners, local enterprises located in the City of Whittlesea
- two industry associations (NorthLink/NIETL and the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- two job network providers
- four government agencies including Centrelink, the government social security agency, the local police and the Northern Adult and Community Further Education Board and the NACC
- two tertiary providers (RMIT University, Northern Melbourne TAFE)
- the eight secondary schools in the city
- two community agencies (youth and family services and housing).

The WYC had one key position funded initially by the City of Whittlesea to coordinate the project. It was housed by RMIT University, which provided physical resources as well as colleagues working with related issues and programs, and research and project management expertise. The Committee of Management was a small group who brought the community team together and planned activities and programs. The community team included representatives from all partners, met twice per term and discussed ways of supporting young people and transitions. The key resources were the Transition Brokers working in the schools. These positions were established initially with funds from the DSF, the City of Whittlesea, the TAFE and the university, and then funded under a Victorian government program called Managed Individual Pathways (DET 2006) which, very fortunately, in terms of timing, came together well for the WYC. This program funded schools to provide a staff member to develop pathways and career planning with individual students. This was not just serendipity but rather evidence that the project was very much situated within the debates and developments in national and state policy and programs. It was a measure of the level of collaboration among the schools that they pooled the funding they received, to resource brokers across schools and other organisations and agencies.

The outcomes and initiatives of the WYC that were highlighted at this time included;

- implementation of a common student exiting procedure used across the eight secondary colleges
- development and publication of the School Leavers Guide and the Education and Training Passport
- collection and sharing of data, agreement about benchmarks and willingness to increase the complexity and breadth of indicators

- appointment of transition brokers jointly resourced by the secondary colleges to provide counselling, advice and support to young people leaving school before completing year 12 and to track their destinations for at least 12 months
- establishment of the Community Team to develop cooperation and collaboration across agencies to facilitate tracking of young people and through consideration of anonymous case studies to explore options and appropriate support for young people
- implementation of an innovative mentoring pilot project to support young people who had left school before completing year 12 and had not moved into other education or training options or employment. Participants received training, access appropriate support services, undertook paid work placements and were matched with a mentor (Edwards 2002, p. 3).

### **Local Learning Employment Network**

After ten years of operation the WYC is still 'recognisable to anyone involved in its establishment but it has also developed in crucial new directions' (interview 2010). The Victorian State government introduced the Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) program in 2001. A LLEN covering the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea was one of the first to be established with the aim to improve education, training and employment options for young people aged 10-19 years and support the creation and development of sustainable relationships, partnerships and brokerage of initiatives with and across local education providers, industry and community' (DEECD 2010). This 'presented a challenge to the WYC which became an opportunity (when) a strong collaborative relationship developed' (HWLLEN 2008 p.2).

The Hume Whittlesea LLEN (HWLLEN) has absorbed the WYC and now recognises the WYC Management Committee as the local planning group for Whittlesea (HWLLEN 2008 p.2). The Transition Brokers are considered critical to the success of the WYC with funds for these positions still contributed by the schools and the community team still a key part of its operation as it continues to bring together people from key organisations. The WYC coordinator – now a 'HWLLEN Partnership Broker' is funded by the HWLLEN and the City of Whittlesea provides an annual grant for WYC initiatives. Currently the WYC also support:

- a professional development program for schools and other education providers
- the preparation and publication of the school leavers guide
- a Whittlesea Student Representative Council (with Kildonan Uniting Care and the City of Whittlesea) to ensure the key stakeholders have a voice and this group also works with other youth participation groups in Whittlesea
- facilitation of, and engagement with a number of networks including a network for Vocational Certificate of Applied Learning coordinators and teachers, the Youth Connections network, Job Services, Koorie Schools and Health Network, Refugee support network and key government sponsored initiatives
- an Employment fair in February each year and breakfasts for young people which feature career information
- programs such as *Finding My Place* which support skills and personal development to assist re-engagement of young people with education or training
- critical data and statistics collection by the transition brokers
- research commissioned in partnership with the City of Whittlesea including a literature review of youth disengagement investigating the disengagement of young people with secondary education, and the supports and pathways necessary for young people to succeed in school and a research paper which investigates how schools and the support service

system can best work in partnership based on a series of interviews with primary and secondary schools in Whittlesea

- Taking Education Forward in Whittlesea forums in 2008 and 2010 which bring the research to stakeholders and aim to investigate ways to develop effective schools and community partnerships
- a new initiative with the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, the City of Whittlesea, RMIT University, Sustainability Victoria and Kildonan Uniting Care in Industry Education for Sustainability to support the education pathways and the creation of green jobs
- the application and advocacy for a Trade Training Centre in the region (HWLLEN (a) 2010).

Based on the experience of the WYC the HWLLEN is in the process of establishing a Hume Youth Commitment (HYC).

### **The Hume Youth Commitment**

There is considerable difference between the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea and this has influenced how the HWLLEN has developed a model for a Youth Commitment in Hume. The City of Hume is sprawling and has three quite discrete community areas. It already had a plethora of youth networks and as the Youth Commitment concept is now well established there is not the same excitement that the WYC created as a ground breaking pilot project. The initial aim of a Youth Commitment in Hume was to bring the networks together to start a process which might reduce duplication, increase collaboration across the city and support the objectives of the LLEN. There were not the resources or project support that the WYC had and the initial research did not have the same depth or detail. The model proposed was quite different initially, with a community team similar to the WYC management team as it had a decision making and management focus and the plan was to support it with working groups with more grassroots appeal. The model worked in that it brought people together and established relationships and priorities with the education and training working group developing a strong peer support and professional development focus (interview 2010).

The HWLLEN is now preparing to relaunch the Hume Youth Commitment (HYC) with a model based on the original WYC. The aim is to formalise organisational partners and the first step is in the development of a Spirit of Cooperation agreement. Also the HYC is working with the principals of the Hume schools as they see the value of transition brokers and collaboration across the schools. There are forty local organisations involved and a number of initiatives including:

- strategies to support parents understanding and support of children's career choices with flyers translated into Turkish and Arabic
- a program which provides life skills for disengaged young people and mentoring programs
- support for networks and advocacy support for young people (HWLLEN (d) 2008)
- The aim is to approach the City of Hume for the same support provided by the City of Whittlesea.

### **Evaluation**

The Whittlesea Youth Commitment was developed with the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. Dr John Speirings wrote 'Why Australia Needs a National Youth Commitment' in 1999 and the experience with the Whittlesea Youth Commitment informed the material and models used since, across

Australia, including the LLEN in Victoria and employment programs in many States (Kellock 2006, 6). The Whittlesea Youth Commitment was reviewed in 2002 and it found ‘great benefit ... evident in the strong sense of ownership of the Youth Commitment in a range of organisations, the strengthened basis for collaboration in a range of associated projects, and the desire to develop a system that accommodates the needs of the full range of school leavers (p. 4 Kellock 2002). This has been sustained and shows up in the LLEN reviews as positive outcomes of the LLEN initiatives. The Kellock review also highlighted ‘significant decline in the number of school leavers but equally importantly the reduction of uncertainty surrounding the outcomes for early school leavers’ (p. 30 2002).

**Discussion**

The HWLLEN believes the Youth Commitment model works well for the LLEN and that the ‘LLEN is a broker and the Youth Commitment model provides a way of supporting partnerships and to make activity sustainable’ (interview 2010). Critical elements of the model are identified as the transition brokers and the coordinator role. The key learning from the WYC is that the core service and the support which makes the difference for young people is the case management approach. Transition brokers ‘know the community, put people in touch with each other, communicate what the WYC is about, gather the data and make the difference to the young people’ (interview 2010). The other critical element is the coordinator. ‘Relationships and partnerships take management, time and administration, to say nothing about a bit of smoothing of politics and different agendas’ (interview 2010). Developing projects and sustaining effort requires support and it is unrealistic to assume that individuals from participating organisations will take on the role in addition to their work and the project activity.

The WYC was established through the development of a project to address an issue identified by the regional development agency, the NACC. Support was in place for its establishment and then to maintain the activity and develop new directions, and this support is now provided by the HWLLEN. The ‘infrastructures of learning’ assist in discerning where this support exists and how it underpins the activities in the regional development project. Table I provides some of the detail of support using the framework of the ‘infrastructures of learning’.

**Table I ‘Infrastructures of Learning’ Framework**

Engagement	Examples
physical and virtual spaces, joint tasks the availability of help, boundary encounters,  ways of belonging to different degrees, e.g. casual encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-initiated through information disseminated to organisations, public forums, meetings engaging mixed audiences and targeted stakeholders by NACC</li> <li>- networks across sectors engaged through City of Whittlesea, RMIT University, NorthLink/NIETL and NACC</li> <li>- information and discussion groups, project proposal development and working groups determined by stakeholders with meeting spaces, administrative support, catering provided by NACC, City of Whittlesea and RMIT</li> </ul>

	<p>University and HWLLEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- options to be in community team, management group or participate in network activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initiative and knowledgeability, activities that bring about knowledge of engagement, occasions for applying skills</li> <li>- problems that engage energy, creativity and inventiveness, accountability, exercising judgement</li> <li>- tools, artefacts that support competence; discourses, terms and concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional data and local level detailed statistics commissioned research by DSF, NACC now HWLLEN and City of Whittlesea</li> <li>- input from University research and development</li> <li>- presentation of government policy context, background materials by relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- media &amp; communications strategies City of Whittlesea and NACC</li> <li>- training, professional development, induction into projects through coordinator position</li> <li>- minutes of meetings, reporting etc responsibility of coordinator supported by NIECAP, NACC, DSF and HWLLEN</li> </ul>
<p>Reificactive memory; repositories of information, documentation and Participative memory; generational encounters, apprenticeship systems, paradigmatic trajectories and storytelling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional documents – <i>Melbourne’s Knowledge Economy</i>, HWLLEN brochures, WYC Handbook, Transition Broker manual, DSF Guide and toolkit</li> <li>- publications eg NACC Northern Contact, HWLLEN E-Bulletin and websites developed and supported by NACC and University then HWLLEN</li> <li>- contacts data bases developed from stakeholders and mail outs/email correspondence by NACC, and the HWLLEN</li> <li>- conference papers presentations, launches, events, celebrations</li> <li>- induction of new members, public meetings, boards of organisations, project groups , student council and forums</li> </ul>

### Imagination

<p>Location in space, time, meaning and power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy context of Australia and Victoria and local statistics</li> <li>- current issue presented to local stakeholders, history of action documented, explained and celebrated</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- critical partners engaged, leaders in organisations involved</li> <li>- work undertaken by NACC supported by coordinator once in place</li> </ul>
Reflections: models & representations of patterns, time off, breaks in rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- model for projects – initiated by research, engagement of stakeholders, support development of projects by NACC and NorthLink/NIETL</li> <li>- HWLLEN marked ten year history with speakers, history and celebration, brought DSF back into program</li> <li>- body of research and documentation brought together initially by DSF, NACC and university and City of Whittlesea</li> <li>- ongoing business but also development of new projects</li> <li>- events to mark success or new activity</li> </ul>
Exploration; opportunities and tools for trying things out, envisioning possible futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategy and planning NACC, university, City and DSF</li> <li>- Working groups and projects engaged in process by NACC</li> <li>- Community Team and Management Committee supported</li> <li>- Expo, breakfasts, tours, events with speakers organised</li> </ul>

## Alignment

<p>Common focus, cause or interest, direction etc and allegiance, leadership, sources of inspiration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leadership &amp; development of focus from NIECAP, and NACC and NorthLink/NIETL over time in context of regional development</li> <li>-NIECAP leadership in engagement of stakeholders and project</li> <li>- champions with commitment to addressing issues affecting the region from NIECAP, City of Whittlesea, schools and DSF</li> <li>- potential to make a difference, affect statistics and find new ways of working</li> </ul>
<p>Standards and methods; processes, plans, styles and discourses</p> <p>Communication; information transmission, spread of novelty</p> <p>Boundary facilities; brokers, objects, support for multi membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- management of stakeholders and partnerships, explicit model for projects and project management NACC and NIECAP HWLLEN</li> <li>- body of research and documentation</li> <li>- Publications, project plans &amp; documentation</li> <li>- Local media, PR, presentations</li> <li>- cross network support and network activities</li> </ul>
<p>Policies, contracts, due processes, mediation, conflict resolution, distribution of authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spirit of Cooperation agreement, formal roles eg. coordinator</li> <li>- minutes, contracts with funding bodies, financial and other administration with organisations done initially by NACC and University, then City of Whittlesea to LLEN</li> </ul>

This infrastructure is evident in how the WYC and HYC projects have been established and supported. The establishment of project teams, project management and administrative support, communications, publication and documentation are elements of engagement. The initiatives grew from regional networks and local issues which is a critical element in the engagement of participants, both existing and new members. Imagination is supported through the research and background work undertaken for the regional economic development project and the local area. Again, the support for the project teams is critical here. There have been public meetings and information provided on the issues to create interest and bring out stakeholders. The research and potential to solve the local issue is presented to engage ‘energy creativity and inventiveness.’ Documentation supports the group and publications and tools used to communicate the activity, document history and demonstrate capability in the region. These activities have allowed for engagement at different

levels or to different degrees and supported the exploration of solutions and ‘envisioning possible futures’. The infrastructure described as alignment are also critical. Without the facility of jurisdiction, the ability to develop policies, contracts and distribute authority, it would have been necessary for the WYC to formalise its organisation to begin its operations. Having this in place also made it easy to engage the City of Whittlesea and the DSF and gain funding for the pilot.

These projects and the networks which form them gather momentum and support through the work of the organisations and the benefits they bring to the participants. This can be challenging as ‘these projects are about change – change within organisations but also about changing how organisations work together’ (interview 2010). Although the starting point for new participants when dealing with the regional development organisations and the LLEN may be ‘what will you do for me’, there is learning about partnerships and this brings real benefits to the partners. The most common benefits cited were about ‘being able to do more’, ‘improving our service by knowing what other services are available’ and ‘learning about the roles of different organisations so being able to work more effectively with them, gain funds and be able to support more young people and new initiatives’. It was seen as critical that the profile of the projects remained high – public events, team celebrations, publications were considered important as many organisations commitment is maintained by the demonstration that the work matters, is recognized and they gain in this recognition. The sense of history and continuity was also seen as important. Good data and ongoing collection of statistics and qualitative research were identified as critical to sustainability, credibility and ongoing engagement (interviews 2007, 2010). This not only helped people to know how the work was making an impact but was as well hugely beneficial to organisations to inform their strategy and planning and to explore ways to improve the systems to support the young people.

### **Conclusion**

The WYC was and continues to be an important project addressing disadvantage and supporting young people to develop education, training and employment options. It is also a model of a Youth Commitment which is influencing and supporting the development of other Youth Commitments and policy. Its development and continued existence depends on support for community partnerships, ensuring ‘partners, teachers, and individuals are able to play their part, engage and learn, but not lose their enthusiasm in the expenditure of their energy on politics and organising and the million other things that meetings generate’ (interview 2006). This support was provided by key organisations and it facilitated the energy, enthusiasm, hard work and learning of the partners but also the focus and provision for ongoing development. The development of strong networks, programs and projects takes time and requires trust but equally important are the ‘infrastructures of learning’ on which successful regional economic development projects depend.

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## **Skill Shortages but Who's Talking? – Di Paez**

### **The Integrated Articulation and Credit Transfer Project -**

#### **A Report on Research in Progress**

#### **Keywords:**

Articulation, credit transfer, pathways, industry, engagement.

#### **Abstract**

The Integrated Articulation and Credit Transfer project (IACT) is an action research project exploring strategies and models which may overcome the barriers to articulation pathways, partnerships and agreements between the education and training sectors. The project seeks to improve the level of industry input into articulation pathway development, and to improve the levels of transferability and sustainability of articulation models and pathways between stakeholders. Ultimately, the project seeks to make articulation pathways easier to establish for stakeholders and more seamless for students.

A key area of the connectivity essential to the success of an articulation pathway that appears to be given little attention in the articulation pathway debate is the role of industry and the potential for an articulation pathway to meet, at least to some degree, the workforce requirements and skills shortages of the industry. The IACT project is exploring not only the level of connectivity that currently exists between industry and the education and training sectors for the purpose of the development of articulation and credit transfer pathways, but also how industry determines its role.

An 'industry-determined' articulation pathway model involves consulting with industry to gather their views on what articulation pathway model/s would assist their industry in meeting their current and anticipated workforce requirements, before consulting with education and training providers. Once the workforce requirements of the industry have been firmly established, interested education and training providers develop solutions to meet this industry need. The research is investigating what factors and processes are crucial to the development of 'industry-determined' pathway models. It is also testing whether these factors can be used as a model of engagement between industry, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) leading to the development of articulation pathways that can be duplicated by these three sectors in a range of industry areas. The study is significant because, in this model, industry to an extent is not only participating in the process as an equal partner but, for the first time, is in a prominent negotiating role from the outset of the articulation pathway development journey.

The project commenced in May 2009 and will conclude in May 2011. As such it is approximately half completed at this stage. This report describes and discusses the research results to date, but the authors wish to point out that it is not complete and the findings are tentative. More information about the project can be found at [www.usq.edu.au/iactproject](http://www.usq.edu.au/iactproject).

## Introduction

Many recent studies on workforce planning predict a serious shortfall in qualified employees in the next few years which will have, and is already having, a negative impact on the growth potential of Australian industry (Australian Industry Group, 2006, 2007; Australian Industry Group and Deloitte, 2008; ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Industry Skills Council, 2010; Skills Australia, 2010; Training and Skills Commission, 2009). The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008 set the following targets for education and training:

- Halving the proportion of Australians aged 20-64 without qualifications at Certificate 3 level or above between 2009 and 2020; and
- Doubling the number of higher [VET] qualification completions (Diploma and Advanced Diploma) between 2009 and 2020 (Council of Australian Governments, 2008).

Access Economics (2009) however estimate that an additional 3.6 million qualifications will be required nationally by 2020 to meet the COAG target. Middle level skills in the technical, paraprofessional and trades areas are in high demand relative to supply (Australian Industry Group, 2006). This situation is compounded by poor education completion rates: in HE the completion rate is about 72% nationally, but in VET it is only approximately 20-30% (Training and Skills Commission, 2009, p. 27).

Australian Industry Group (2006) point out that employees are one of a firm's most important competitive advantages, and that building their employees' skill base is a key element of productivity growth strategies. In a 2005 survey of employers, nonetheless, 'inability to secure skilled staff' was cited as the main barrier to company success (Australian Industry Group, 2006, p. x).

The characteristics of 'world class' companies are described as follows:

- The workforce is more highly skilled;
- There is a systematic approach to skills assessment and planning;
- A wide range of recruitment and learning options are employed; and
- There is a close relationship with education and training providers (Australian Industry Group, 2006).

Achieving 'world class' companies is difficult, however, and requires a partnership between companies, education providers and (ideally) government. Consultations with Industry (Training and Skills Commission, 2009, pp. 33-34) indicate that Australian employers are concerned about the following issues:

- The quality and relevance of training provided in preparing individuals for specific jobs;
- The lack of responsiveness of education and training suppliers to industry needs;
- The need for an improved interface between industry and providers across all sectors including school, VET and HE;
- The need for better linkages between the education and training sectors;
- Lack of work placement opportunities for students;
- The need for increased collaboration between stakeholders in developing workforce planning solutions;

- The need for clearly articulated career paths and career advice for school-leavers and others looking for career information as a basis for making education and training choices.

A key area of the connectivity essential to the success of an articulation pathway is the role of industry and the potential for an articulation pathway to meet the workforce requirements and skills shortages of industry. The IACT project is exploring not only the level of connectivity that currently exists between industry and the education and training sectors (for the purpose of the development of articulation and credit transfer pathways) but also how industry determines its role.

There are many barriers to seamless articulation and credit transfer between VET and HE as discussed in the Literature Review of the IACT Project (Byrnes J, Paez D, Jackson A, Dwyer C, & Blacker J, 2010a). Adding industry to the mix potentially adds an additional barrier but also adds relevance to the articulation process by putting the end point (that is, employment) into the equation.

The IACT project is using an action research approach to developing a framework for inter-institutional co-operation and communication between industry and the education and training sectors. The project seeks to improve the level of industry input into articulation pathway development, and to improve the levels of transferability and sustainability of articulation models and pathways between stakeholders. Ultimately, the project seeks to make articulation pathways easier to establish for stakeholders and more seamless for students.

The IACT project has chosen an Action Research methodology, because in this approach ‘there is a dual commitment...to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction’ (Gilmore T, Krantz J, & Ramirez R cited in O’Brien R, 2001, p. 3). O’Brien (2001, p. 3) points out that Action Research differs from normal problem-solving in that ‘the researcher studies the problem systematically and ensures the intervention is informed by theoretical considerations.... [including]... collecting, analysing, and presenting data on an ongoing, cyclical basis’.

Using Action Research methodology to develop an industry-determined tripartite model for articulation pathway development, the IACT project is exploring the following key topics:

- Definition and understandings of ‘industry’ in the context of articulation pathways;
- Key roles that industry can play in the development and sustainability of articulation pathways;
- The role of articulation pathways in workforce planning and building a sustainable workforce;
- The education and training sector’s level of understanding around workforce planning and development;
- Barriers and enablers to industry having a greater role in the development of articulation pathways;
- Mechanisms required to be in place to enable the sustainability of an articulation arrangement;
- Potential role of professional organisations in the endorsement, sustainability and promotion of the articulation pathways;
- Tripartite linkage and governance models.

For the purpose of this paper some commonly used terms are defined as follows:

- *Industry area* refers to a holistic grouping of like disciplines e.g. Health Industry;
- *Industry sector* refers to a specific sub-group or discipline of that industry e.g. Pathology, Pharmacy, or Psychiatry;
- *Occupation* refers to a specific occupation or job role within an industry sector e.g. Medical Scientist, Pharmacy Assistant;
- *Industry* refers to stakeholders within the industry sector who are actively and directly engaged in an occupation (that is they are either employed in or employing people in that occupation);
- *Education and training providers* refers to both the VET and HE sectors.

In accordance with this terminology, education and training organisations, professional and regulatory bodies, and workforce planning/development organisations are not considered to be 'industry'. These organisations provide a professional service to industry and contribute significantly to the 'industry' as a whole, but are not industry themselves.

## **Background**

Traditionally the development of credit transfer arrangements and agreements have been between a single registered training organisation in the VET sector (public or private), and a university in the higher education sector. While there has been some movement toward agreements that cross organisations, such as TAFE Queensland with one university, they remain education and training provider-centred. That is, they are initiated by, and directed by, education and training providers.

Both education and training sectors have connections with industry, but for different reasons, and therefore view industry differently. While VET providers look to industry for endorsement of delivery and/or assessment regimes, on-the-job opportunities for practicing competency, or employment opportunities for graduates, HE look to professional bodies for advice, validation and accreditation of their programs. The result is that each sector resonates with, values and ultimately connects with the different types of industry organisations – each of whom may or may not represent industry needs at the occupational, workforce issues and business practice ('grass roots') level.

There is limited use of information, data, or research about national and local skills shortages, industry career pathways, future workforce planning and development, educational products that align with skills gaps and what organisations represent the workforce needs of that industry; 'Employers also highlight their need for workers to have a mix of skills that include vocational and technical elements in addition to higher levels of critical thinking and theoretical understanding. Increasingly, career pathways will require a mix of educational backgrounds and experience.' (PhillipsKPA, 2006, p. iii). PhillipsKPA (2006, p. 10) state that this demand from employers for new skill mixes is a driver and catalyst for credit transfer arrangements.

During October and November of 2009, the IACT project team conducted in-depth interviews with education and training providers in both the VET and HE sectors in Queensland. The interviews drew on findings of the IACT project literature review (Byrnes J, et al., 2010a), and explored attitudes that Queensland VET and HE education providers have to working across sectors, and what factors are

required for cross-sectoral partnerships to be successful. Respondents were asked whether they include industry or employers in the development of articulation arrangements with HE/VET providers. Responses indicate that industry involvement in the development of articulation arrangements is low in both sectors (Byrnes J, Paez D, Jackson A, Dwyer C, & Blacker J, 2010b).

The IACT project team has also conducted consultations with industry and workforce planning organisations, results of which support the conclusion that there has been limited involvement of industry and employer groups in the development of articulation arrangements to date. The consultation with industry representatives for this project supports the conclusion that the involvement of industry in curriculum development and delivery are ad hoc and at best fragmentary (Byrnes J, et al., 2010b).

It should be noted that the need for industry to be more closely involved with education and training providers to address skills shortages is not new. Many recent policy documents allude to the need for a greater level of collaboration between stakeholders. Some of these include the following:

#### **Skills Australia, 2010**

Skills Australia have noted the need for 'a new partnership approach to workforce development at government, industry and enterprise level' and a 'shared agenda between all the players responsible for workforce development' including business services, industry development bodies, education providers, industry bodies and individual enterprises (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 10).

#### **Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review) 2008**

'Strategic policy making in the tertiary education and training system is not well co-ordinated or underpinned by information on labour market needs and other research across the industries and occupations served by both sectors. Better and shared information on future labour market needs, industry needs and demographic trends is required if integrated responses to community and workforce demands are to be met...' (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008).

#### **Transforming Australia's Higher Education System, 2009**

The Federal Government responded to the Bradley Review with the policy Transforming Australia's Higher Education System. One of the ten key reforms in the policy is 'Improving Tertiary Pathways: building stronger connectivity between the higher education and vocational education and training sectors' (Australian Government, 2009, p. 9)

#### **PhillipsKPA 2006**

PhillipsKPA (2006, p. 10) in Giving Credit Where Credit is Due, stated that there 'is potential for a much stronger role for Industry Skills Councils, employer organisations, professional accreditation bodies and employers themselves to identify the skills they require of graduates and facilitate partnerships between VTE and higher education providers in order to produce graduates with the desired skill mix.'

#### **Queensland Skills Plan 2008**

The 'continuing strength of the economy and labour market means greater effort is required to maximise and recognise the skills of the existing workforce, identify additional sources of skilled

labour and develop professional and paraprofessional skills.... In much the same way that industry, government and training providers have come together to address trade training, similar partnerships between the higher education sector, government and industry are now required.' (Department of Education Training and the Arts, 2008).

These statements suggest that there is a significant and potentially productive link between the education and training sectors and industry in the development of articulation pathways that can go some way to addressing not only current skills shortages, but future workforce needs.

### **The Industry-Determined Articulation Model**

The overall aim of this model is the development of a process for tripartite agreements which includes not only new industry-determined articulation pathways, but a model of engagement, future governance and sustainability.

#### **Initial Assumptions**

At the outset of the development of an 'industry-determined' articulation model, the IACT project had assumptions regarding the capacity of workforce planning organisations to engage with the articulation pathway development process. It was assumed that they would be in a position to be able to:

1. Provide evidence of current and future skills shortages for their industry area;
2. Map out career planning and upskilling points for their industry area (and particularly where an articulation pathway could support this);
3. Identify industry partners essential to an articulation partnership;
4. Provide advice on qualifications to target for the articulation pathway;
5. Have a working knowledge of the key education and training providers involved in the delivery of qualifications;
6. Be willing to provide advice, input, and guidance to the articulation model.

The IACT project undertook consultation with five organisations that have as their key role workforce planning and development for their industry area. The above assumptions have proven to be correct in the majority of consultations to date. In cases where this was not the case, assumption 5 above was the most lacking, indicating that in some industry areas there is a gap in connectivity between workforce planning and the qualification delivery.

#### **Methodology for development of the model**

The methodology is divided into the following four key phases:

- Phase 1: Identifying an Occupation;
- Phase 2: Industry focus;
- Phase 3: Education and training focus;
- Phase 4: Tripartite agreement.

## **Phase 1: Identifying an Occupation**

The overall aim of this stage is to work through a consultation process with the intent of identifying an occupation where an 'industry-determined' articulation pathway would have a significant impact on their skill shortages.

For this reason, this stage has a 'funnelling' approach, where consultation initially is focused at the 'whole of industry' level, with the aim to quickly 'funnel' the focus down to a discrete occupation for which an articulation pathway model can be developed. As part of this stage the following steps are undertaken:

Step 1: Establishing linkages with workforce development organisations;

Step 2: Identification of an industry sector and occupation;

Step 3: Selection of occupation.

Throughout these steps, criteria are applied as a way of determining which occupations have the potential for the development of an industry-determined articulation pathway. The criteria are:

- occupation identified as a skills shortage area;
- viable student demand for the identified qualification;
- existing VET and/or higher education product relating to the identified occupation;
- potential for 'transferability' of the proposed articulation model;
- identified career pathways and the relevant VET and higher education qualifications;
- capacity to commit resources to progressing the development of the articulation pathway;
- no industrial or regulatory issues which could hinder the development of articulation arrangements;
- key corporations/enterprises within the industry which are proactive in furthering career opportunities for their staff and which support articulation pathways;
- recognised professional organisation for the occupation which has a membership category for VET and/or higher education qualified members.

In addition due to the time restraints, the IACT included the following additional criteria:

- a new articulation model to be negotiated and implemented within the IACT project timeframes.

## **Phase 2: Industry Focus**

It is the intent that industry is the sole focus of this phase and the education and training sector is not involved until the industry is at the stage of identifying their workforce requirements for the identified occupation.

The role for industry is to collate key industry workforce information that will assist in informing the development of an articulation pathway model for the identified occupation. The industry is considered to be in a prime position to provide the required level of information:

- scope of their occupation;
- current and future workforce planning and development needs;

- career and education pathways (including movement between the VET and higher education sectors);
- existing qualifications (VET and higher education);
- existing articulation pathways.

As part of this stage the following steps are undertaken:

Step 4: Establish links with representatives from the industry sector;

Step 5: Identification of workforce planning requirements for the identified occupation;

Step 6: Communication of workforce planning requirements to the education and training sector.

### **Phase 3: Education and training focus**

The aim of this phase is to provide an opportunity for the education and training sectors to problem-solve potential education and training solutions to present to the industry for their consideration. This may include:

- qualification/delivery options;
- articulation pathway model options;
- shared delivery options.

While the intent of this stage is for the focus to be solely on the education and training providers, discussions with industry also play a key role. As part of this stage the following steps are undertaken:

Step 7: Development of education and training solutions;

Step 8: Communication of solutions to industry;

Step 9: Negotiation between industry and education and training about the solutions.

### **Phase 4: Tripartite agreement**

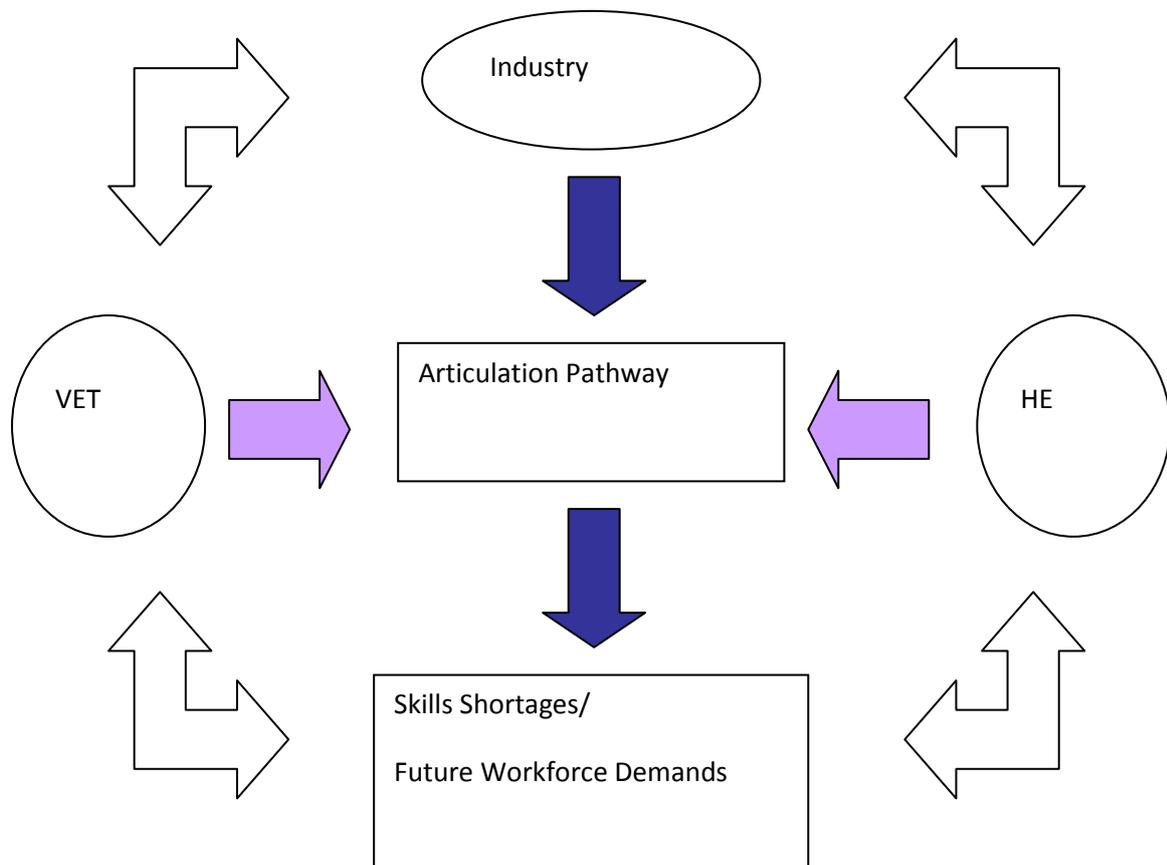
The aim is to develop a tripartite agreement between the industry sector, VET partner/s and HE partner/s. Step 10 involves the development of an agreement which may include:

- agreed content delivery;
- shared delivery models;
- articulation pathways;
- agreed credit transfer arrangements;
- marketing and promotion strategies;
- governance and sustainability arrangements.

### **The Model**

The following model (Figure 1) represents the concept that in order to address skill shortages and influence workforce planning, there are three stakeholders who are (or should be) essential partners in an articulation pathway – Industry, VET and HE.

Figure 1



## Findings to date

As previously indicated the IACT project is part-way through the action research project and therefore the following findings are only representative of work undertaken to date in Phase 1-2 (and part of Phase 3).

### Phase 1

- Workforce planning and development organisations were the ideal first point of call to provide further advice, information, industry contacts and an overview of the industry area and the different industry sectors.
- The concept of ‘funnelling’ down to the level of an occupation (Phase 1), prior to any discussion about a pathway was essential in controlling the scope of the articulation pathway development work. The skills shortages and workforce planning requirements of an industry area are often complex, so focusing on one discrete occupation not only controls the scope of the work, but makes the negotiations with stakeholders more meaningful and relevant.
- The application of the criteria was beneficial in identifying industry areas where further discussions regarding the development of an articulation pathway was not warranted. The decision for not progressing further in some industry areas was based on the following situations:
  - The complexity of the skill shortage needs at the time meant that workforce development needs emphasis and resources were focused more on immediate solutions e.g. trade training;
  - Development of articulation pathways was planned as a future workforce development activity for the industry sector and outside the timeframes of the IACT project;
  - There were not the aspirations within the current industry workforce to obtain higher level qualifications, despite there being an industry need for the higher level qualifications. This issue of ‘aspiration’ was viewed to be outside the scope of the IACT project;
  - Career pathways for the industry were not detailed enough to substantiate the progression of work with regards to an articulation pathway in the identified occupation.

### Phase 2

- Industry demonstrated they are in a position to provide in-depth information on their current and future workforce needs and a willingness and motivation to work with the education and training sector on developing articulation pathways to meet these needs.
- This phase also highlighted that industry has limited success in engaging universities on matters relating to articulation pathways and curriculum content issues and welcome guidance and information in this area. This indicates that in some instances education and training providers are not meeting the changing needs of industry by delivery industry-relevant and current qualifications.

### Phase 3

- Education and training providers did not have a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the current and future workforce planning issues facing the industry for which their qualification fed into and which their graduates enter.
- Education and training providers have demonstrated a genuine interest in the workforce needs of industry and have been proactive in developing solutions to meet the industry workforce needs. Solutions include the recognition that as individuals they are unable to provide the teaching and learning expertise required, but by collaborating with a VET/HE partner and industry the workforce needs can be met.
- The involvement of a high percentage of employers from the industry sector, including both the private and public employer groups, provides an incentive for the education and training providers to put time and resources into the development of solutions for industry. Education and training is an expensive undertaking, so knowing that the solutions would potentially meet the needs of the majority of the industry provides a strong business cases for the development of both new courses and articulation pathways.

Other findings to date which the IACT project will be continuing to explore in the remainder of the action research include the following:

- Industry-determined articulation pathways do have the potential to meet current and future workforce requirements for an identified occupation. Articulation pathways are viewed by the industry representatives consulted as being integral to the sustainability of their workforce;
- Industry is a willing partner in promoting the pathway both through their networks and existing workers, thus generating business for the education and training partners involved in the partnership;

There are potential cost savings for the industry to get involved in articulation pathways as training costs to a business for a graduate without the right knowledge and skills is significant;

Industry is very willing to participate in the problem solving and be partners, where relevant, in the development of future articulation arrangements;

Industry value and require the knowledge and higher-level cognitive skills of university graduates. However there is also a perceived gap in university graduates' ability to perform skill based job roles which are also required in all professional positions. From this viewpoint new graduates with learning from both sectors are highly valued and therefore becoming more sought after.

### Conclusions

Solving the skills shortage crisis in particular industry sectors is complex, and at times beyond the scope of the education and/or training sector. However, the existence of a link between skill shortages, the workforce planning and development needs of industry and the education and training sector delivery outcomes must be acknowledged.

While there are pockets where this acknowledgment is strong and work in this area is progressive, it appears more can be done to make the link stronger. If this is the case, who should really be talking

about skills shortages? Our research indicates that it should be employers, industry organisations, and then VET and higher education providers.

It is not the intent of the IACT project to propose that the education and training sector is the total or sole solution to skill shortages or workforce planning and development issues that many industries are facing. Neither is the IACT project proposing that all articulation pathways should be industry-determined. However, the IACT project is challenging all key partners to start talking about skill shortages, industry needs and education solutions, with curriculum content and articulation pathways in the mix, and to observe what innovative solutions develop. The research to date suggests that stakeholders may be surprised by what new innovative models and business opportunities emerge – the only way to find out is to engage.

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## Student-identified Learning Outcomes in Community-Engaged Learning in Economics and Finance – Dr Ingrid Schraner, Dr Helen Hayward-Brown

### Abstract

This paper reports on the key findings of an initial investigation into the student-identified learning outcomes in the capstone unit Economics and Finance Engagement Project at the University of Western Sydney. A qualitative analysis has been undertaken of the reflective learning statements that the students prepared based on the reflective learning journal they had kept over the semester. This analysis was used to map the learning outcomes the students themselves had identified. Hence the focus was not on the overall learning that had taken place, but on the learning the students themselves recognised as their learning from community engagement. The preliminary map of student-identified learning outcomes is structured in relation to the typology of service and learning presented in Eyler and Giles (1999) based on the work of Sigmon (1996). Key aspects of the map are discussed in relation to some of the characteristics of the particular service-learning setting.

**Keywords:** Community-engaged learning, service learning, experiential learning, learning outcomes, teaching economics and finance

### The context of this research project

#### Community-engaged learning at the University of Western Sydney

This institution embarked on a community-engagement agenda almost a decade ago. By now, even disciplines as reluctant as economics and finance have introduced compulsory capstone units in the final year of their business degrees. These units aim to ‘provide student exposure to the ill-defined nature of problems in business, the multidimensional nature of the issues, and to force them to consider not only the nature of the problem but also how realistic their solutions are’ (College of Business 2006). The university sees community engagement following the definition advanced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as:

*the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (no date).*

When developing the unit outline for the *Economics and Finance Engagement Project* the mutually beneficial exchange of resources was interpreted as having three components: students working for a community; community partners coaching students; and both benefiting from experiential learning. The mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge was interpreted twofold:

- (a) Community partners get a state-of-the-art consultancy report addressing an issue with the potential of enhancing their practice, which challenges their current ortho-praxis, while
- (b) Students address an issue that challenges their own understanding and that of their discipline, which encourages them to develop theory further, challenging current ortho-doxis.

The experiential learning aspect that results from the fact that students undertake real work for a community partner provides opportunities for critical reflection, which is an essential part of community-engaged or service learning. Yet community-engaged or service learning is different from other forms of experiential learning in so far as 'the value proposition of service-learning is not as one-sided as it is with volunteering, nor does service learning have the technical or individual development focus of an internship or field study' (Seifer and Connors 2007: 6). This therefore required the unit to be developed in a way that enables students to identify over the course of the semester the benefits for both sides in terms of shared resources and knowledge. In particular, students themselves have to become able to identify instances where these benefits appear in their own learning. In other words, students have to be enabled to describe student-identified learning outcomes, which are seen as a key aspect of the self-reflectivity of the learner that characterises community-engaged learning. In this sense it is expected that the unit Economics and Finance Engagement Project significantly contributes to students developing the graduate attributes of adaptable lifelong learning and of comprehensive, coherent and connected knowledge.

### **The Economics and Finance Engagement Project**

Students in this unit undertake a consultancy project for a community or industry partner, be it an economic development unit of a local government authority or a community organisation with an economic or finance problem. This involves the completion of a tender documentation based on a project scope provided by the partner, as well as a final report and an oral presentation of key findings. Each community or industry partner is responsible for a class of four groups of five or six students and provides a staff member, who comes to class for a weekly coaching session of 30 minutes for each of the four groups in a class.

While the students do not leave campus to work in a community setting, writing a consultancy report to address a real-life problem provides a real-life service to an industry or community partner. The students experience this setting as very different from their normal university routine. The weekly coaching sessions provide them with frequent, structured and reliable feedback. Also, the fact that the four 30 minutes coaching sessions take place during a two hour block of class time allows for one and a half hours of intensive group work. This is followed by a one hour workshop for all four groups together. This helps students link their experiences in service with the content of what they have learned in their degree to date and with learning to reflect about their own learning. Representatives of interested local government authorities and community groups develop the project scopes together with the unit coordinator over a period of four months prior to the start of semester. This preparation time allows for the identification of questions that are relevant for the community partner's practice and challenging for the discipline's current orthodoxy. The project scopes developed have to be of a level of difficulty and depth that teams of five to six economics and finance students can address over the course of one semester. Such course-integrated service-learning projects support students in learning to transfer knowledge from coursework to real-life settings. Steinke and Buresh see such knowledge transfer as one of three characteristics that distinguish experts from novices, characterised as 'an active, ongoing process requiring both a certain level of knowledge and active learning to complete' (2002: 10). Students are required to keep a reflective learning journal, which they use to write an assessable reflective learning statement of approximately 2,000 words.

As a rule of thumb, students are expected to spend about ten hours a week on this unit. This includes three hours in class and about one hour reflecting and writing their journal. The last week of semester is fully dedicated to the writing of the reflective learning statement. Some workshop time is used to discuss the development of assessment matrices for the tender documentation and reflective learning statement. Both the tender documentation and the final report are marked to industry standards by the community or industry partners, who discuss their proposed marks and feedback with the unit coordinator, who ensures consistent standards between the partners. The reflective learning statement is assessed by the unit coordinator.

### **The approach taken in this research project**

#### **Assessing learning in community-engaged or service learning and teaching**

One of the seminal works on assessment in this field is Eyler and Giles' 1999 book entitled *Where is the learning in service-learning?* The authors conducted focus groups, interviews and surveys with more than 1,500 students in several studies and present the insights they gained under the following headings: personal and interpersonal development; understanding and applying knowledge; engagement, curiosity and reflective practice; critical thinking; perspective transformation; and citizenship. Steinke and Buresh critically review the findings of Eyler and Giles in their 2002 article entitled 'Cognitive Outcomes of Service-Learning: Reviewing the Past and Glimpsing the Future'. They acknowledge the difficulties in documenting the complex relationship between student learning in general and service-learning in particular:

*The difficulties lie in finding a valid way to define service-learning's cognitive outcomes and, once defined, in developing a convincing way to measure them (Eyler, 2000). In the past, researchers have used various measures including: self-report measures of learning, course evaluation measures, general measures of critical thinking, and general measures of creativity; more recently researchers have coded openended responses related to course content including problem solving protocols. (Steineke and Buresh 2002: 6)*

They discuss these different measures of assessing learning in service-learning outcomes and provide an overview of the latest development and studies in the field. They are particularly critical of studies based on selfreport measures that do not consider the possible presence of what they call an overall "halo effect" due to the students' enjoyment of the service-learning experience. They suggest that a possible halo effect 'can be reduced by asking about specific cognitive outcomes in a question format that is different from attitudinal questions' (Steineke and Buresh 2002: 6). According to Steinke and Buresh's review of the recent literature on best practice in assessing learning in servicelearning courses, problem solving protocols are among the most promising outcome measures. This is because they lend themselves to being developed further, based on recent work on learning in the cognitive sciences:

*Three cognitive constructs seem particularly relevant to the academic gains students report with service-learning: transformations in deep structures of their knowledge organization, ability to engage more easily in their knowledge's analogical transfer, and increased metacognition about how their new insights fail to fit with their previous expectations (2002: 9).*

This research project focuses on the last cognitive construct, in so far as the students discuss in their reflective learning statements new insights that 'fail to fit with their previous expectations'. The

project asks, “Which of those new insights are recognised by the students themselves as learning outcomes they have achieved, and how can these learning outcomes be mapped?” It is only once the learning identified by the students themselves has been mapped that further research will be able to address the question, “To what extent and in which regard is this metacognition of learning due to good teaching practice in general or to practices related to service learning or community-engaged learning?”

### **Student-identified versus teacher-identified learning outcomes**

In a first step, this research project maps those learning outcomes, which the students in the first two years of the unit have identified as their learning. This means that learning documented in the students’ reflective learning statements, which is not recognised as learning by the student writing the statement, is not considered: the research project specifically aims at providing a map of those learning outcomes, which the students themselves recognise as their own learning. The reason for this particular focus lies in the fact that service or community-engaged learning aims at developing the students’ self-reflectivity – their awareness of their own learning. Being conscious of the learning outcomes achieved will help students develop the habits of lifelong learners. This includes an awareness of what helps and what hinders their own learning – the two questions that facilitate an active approach to improving their learning conditions. Hence the success criteria for community-engaged learning and teaching include not only the traditional criterion of what or how much the students have learned, but also the criterion of what or how much of their own learning the students recognise as learning. This requires that the students develop the ability to engage in some sort of meta-reflection or metacognition of their own learning. While the development of an assessment matrix for the Reflective Learning Statement provided an opportunity to start some discussion in this field, it became clear very quickly that the students needed more support in learning to recognise their own learning. This became obvious to the first author when marking the Reflective Learning Statements. She noticed the significant amount of teacher-identified learning outcomes, which the students did not recognise as their own learning achievements. At the same time, the sheer breadth and diversity of the learning outcomes the students did identify, made it clear to the first author that it was important not to channel this process of meta-reflection too early. To do so would lose or reduce the diversity of student learning. This was of particular importance as the projects the students undertook required the integration of skills and knowledge the students brought with them from outside their university courses and academia. Recognising and valuing students’ diverse backgrounds required a careful inventory of the diversity of the learning outcomes the students identified.

### **Student-identified learning outcomes in service learning outcome assessment?**

Correia and Bleicher’s 2008 article ‘Making Connections to Teach Reflection’ refers to the literature on reading comprehension, which discusses reflection as a teachable skill. They see their study as

*a response to Eylers’s specific call for more research that provides empirical evidence on how we can increase students’ engagement in reflection and self-monitoring of their learning (2008: 41).*

Correia and Bleicher (2008) analyse students’ reflective journals with the theoretical framework of reading comprehension, with an emphasis on giving the students frequent feedback on

opportunities for making connections with their service learning experiences (SLE) in three main regards:

- Students' SLE-to-self connections, including 'connections to their personal ideas, beliefs, and attitudes about schools and elementary school children';
- SLE-to-similar setting connections, including 'connections to classroom experiences at a similar grade level either when they were in elementary school or in more recent classroom experiences'; and
- SLE-to-world connections, including connections to outside sources such as previous courses, news reports, and books (Correia and Bleicher 2008: 44).

Correia and Bleicher (2008) identify reflection markers, which they use to support students moving from description to reflection when the students connect to their life experiences. We share Correia and Bleicher's interest in finding ways in which we can help students increase their own reflection. However, we are particularly interested in our students' meta-reflection regarding their learning achievements at the end of the course, when they look back over the semester and write a separate reflective learning statement based on their reflective learning journal. In other words, we are interested in taking on board some of Correia and Bleicher's suggestions to improve students' reflective capacity. Yet, in addition, we are specifically looking for ways to support our students' capacity to identify for themselves the learning outcomes they have achieved. We are interested in this capacity of our students, because we see their recognition of their learning achievements as a crucial step towards becoming successful lifelong learners, which is a key graduate attribute for our students. In doing so, we are aware of the danger that our own, necessarily limited views, can exclude learning outcomes our students have achieved, of which we are not aware. Our views are necessarily limited because it is not possible to be fully familiar with our students' wide and varied backgrounds and the issues their backgrounds contribute to their learning. The issue at stake here has been summarised poignantly in a student quote in the title of a book chapter by Mitchell and Donahue (2009): "I do more service in this class than I ever do at my site" – Paying Attention to the Reflections of Students of Color in Service-Learning.

Mitchell and Donahue (2009) focus on students of colour and their experiences with the lack of awareness of privilege, which white middle-class students can bring to a servicelearning class room. Students in our Economics and Finance Engagement Project come from a wide range of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds and bring with them a wide range of pairs of privilege and disadvantage, which will all impact on their learning. In addition, they study a degree course in an academic discipline that has for a long time been criticised for holding on to an ideological construct of being a 'value neutral' discipline based on a narrow understanding of natural sciences. The various debates around this issue were re-ignited by Sandra Harding's seminal 1995 article 'Can Feminist Thought Make Economics More Objective?'. The ensuing debates among feminist economists explicitly included the experiences of women of colour. However, mainstream teaching in economics and finance has, to an alarmingly large degree, remained impermeable to such critical questioning.

## **Mapping as a technique of content analysis**

In order to systematically analyse the learning outcomes identified by the students in their variety and diversity, a structured inventory of the learning outcomes identified by the students themselves needed to be developed from the students' writings, as opposed to the use of any outside structures. Following Bateman, O'Neill and Kenworthy-U'Ren (2002), we used cognitive mapping, an inductive approach that allows the emergence of categories from the students' Reflective Learning Statements themselves, rather than the categories being 'contaminated or constrained by prior work and a priori assumptions' (Bateman et al 2002: 1136).

In 2008, there were a total of 23 students divided into four groups, each working on a different project for one local government area (see Table 1 below).

### **Table 1:** Project Scopes in the one class of 2008

In 2009, there were a total of 61 students in three classes of four groups of four to six students. Two classes worked with the same local government area as the previous year and one class worked with another one. Each of the twelve groups undertook a consultancy project addressing a different issue as listed below in Table 2.

### **Table 2:** Project Scopes in the three classes of 2009

The first step of the cognitive mapping process involved both researchers independently reviewing the same three Reflective Learning Statements, noting the learning outcomes identified by each student and developing a first outline of how these learning outcomes could be mapped. Both researchers then met and discussed similarities and discrepancies between the student-identified learning outcomes they had mapped for each Reflective Learning Journal. This process was lengthy, detailed and much debated. The agreed categories and sub-categories were documented and both researchers analysed a further three statements separately. They then met again to discuss a refined and extended map that would be able to encompass all the categories and subcategories identified in the six statements analysed so far. The second author then continued to map the student-identified learning outcomes of further batches of reflective learning statements, while the first author would map one out of each batch. The coding was found to be generally consistent between the two authors, but there was no saturation point reached. Each new statement analysed would add further subcategories in one particular part of the map. This was consistent with the wide variety of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds of the students undertaking the unit.

Once the student-identified learning outcomes of 80% of all Reflective Learning Statements were integrated, both authors met again to review the map in light of the literature on service learning, which the first author had utilised while working with a new student cohort.

## **Preliminary content map**

Two key types of categories of student-identified learning outcomes emerged, which we linked to Sigmon's Service and Learning Typology, as presented by Eyler and Giles in their 1999 publication 'Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?' (see Table 3 below):

### **Table 3:** A Service and Learning Typology

**Source:** Sigmon (1996) as cited in Eyler and Giles 1999: 5

The first group of categories of student-identified learning outcomes related to the service outcome, the consultancy project undertaken and the project report provided to the community partners. The authors realised that whilst students all talked about similar issues, they chose to discuss these issues using different lenses or perspectives. In other words, students described similar issues, but saw them differently. It is likely that the perspective or lens that the students select to describe their learning outcomes is affecting their discussion of many other issues. However, the link between the lens selected and the other learning outcomes identified, and the significance of the selection of a particular lens, will have to be explored in more detail in further research. At this stage the map includes three main perspectives or lenses as categories, under which students presented the learning outcomes they related to their service and the consultancy project they completed, namely 'skills', 'project management' and 'group work' (see Map 1 below).

The second group of categories of student-identified learning outcomes related more to the learning goals than to the service outcomes identified by Sigmon. The categories mapped were varied and far-reaching (see Map 1 below).

**Map 1:** Two groups of student-identified learning outcomes

#### **The first group: three categories related to service outcomes**

These three categories reflect how students see their learning outcomes through a particular lens or from a particular perspective. In many cases, the students tended to only use one lens through which to view their experiences. However, in some cases students would combine two perspectives, or even three.

##### First Category 'Skills'

The sub-categories for this category are indicated in Map 2 below. While it would be tempting to group some of these subcategories together, this has not occurred when one or several students discussed the skills in question as separate groups. In this sense the metaphor of the map allows the analysing authors to first let the students' writings speak for themselves. It also allows the authors to characterise their later attempts at categorising the students' writing for exactly what they are: attempts at categorising others' writing. These categories then can and need to be interrogated to elucidate the authors' own assumptions. The mapping process used here aims at presenting the raw data in a form that allows a critical confrontation between the voices of the students, including their ways of structuring their own insights into their learning on the one hand, and the organising work of the analysing researchers on the other hand. Hence the term 'creativity' for example, is listed as a skill here, because this is how the students presented it.

##### **Map 2:** Category 'Skills'

Students who used this lens to interpret their learning outcomes, placed skills as the key learning outcomes, rather than seeing group work or project management as key influences on the development of skills. One student, despite difficulties with the English language, was able to convey

the wide variety of skills s/he identified as learning outcomes: Another student focused on service learning as a key to developing skills: Yet another student focused on the difference between the skills learned in a cooperative learning environment and skills he or she had developed previously:

### Second Category 'Project Management'

Here students tended to prioritise the tasks they had to master to manage their consultancy project and saw skills or group work primarily in this light. The sub-categories that emerged under this category are indicated in Map 3 below.

#### **Map 3:** Category 'Project Management'

Students who chose a project management lens were particularly interested in the work experience aspect of their learning and how this related to the skills they would need for a successful career.

The following statements are representative for this group:

### Third Category 'Group Work'

Some students were particularly keen about this aspect of their learning outcomes, and placed great emphasis on the group process, whilst other students paid little or no attention to this issue. The students who did comment, tended to relate a great deal of their learning outcomes to this group process, interpreting many of their experiences through this lens. A wide variety of sub-categories emerged in this category, which are listed below in Map 4 below.

#### **Map 4:** Category 'Group Work'

As can be seen from Map 4, learning outcomes identified by students using this lens ranged across a wide variety of 'group work' issues, some of which are illustrated by the following quotes.

### **The second group: seven categories related to learning goals**

The first category of this second group is labelled 'Self-understanding' and is by far the widest category (see Map 5 below). It comprises a wide range of categories and nodes. We will therefore discuss this category in more detail below. The fact that this category has many sub-categories with a variety of nodes reflects the width of issues on which the students reflected. A larger number of headings is not necessarily representative of a larger number of comments.

There is also the legitimate question whether it could simply be the case that the coders have a bias towards being more detailed regarding 'self-understanding' as opposed to, say, 'factual knowledge'. The authors discussed this issue extensively between themselves and with peers, and while they are aware of the possibility, on balance they concluded that this was not the case.

The category 'Self-understanding' and its sub-categories

'Self-understanding' presented the widest variety of learning outcomes identified by the students, many of which were interrelated. This related to the wide variety in the students' cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The students related their self understanding often to a 'changing' process in their development, be it from an intellectual, social or emotional perspective. In many instances it related to reflection about responsibilities in terms of 'the individual' versus the

wider group or team. It was found that there were strong links between this category and the category 'Emotions'. The sub-categories identified are listed below in Map 5 and are then presented in turn with more detailed nodes, together with examples of student comments relating to each subcategory.

**Map 5:** Five sub-categories of the Category 'Self-understanding' and their nodes

The first sub-category: 'Relating to others'

Some comments from students in this subcategory included references to different cultural backgrounds between students. Yet it was interesting to note that students did not make direct connections between crosscultural issues and their learning. Instead, students focused on relationship issues between people, who, in some instances, are from different cultural backgrounds.

The second sub-category: 'Changed views'

Students discussed that they had acquired new understandings and changed their views on a wide range of issues.

The third sub-category: 'Study methods'

Some student comments under this subcategory can illustrate the kind of learning outcomes the students identified.

The fourth sub-category: 'Achievement / success'

Comments under this category included the notion that leadership contributed to confidence-building. Problem solving and success were also related to feelings such as courage.

The fifth sub-category: 'Insight into relation to self'

Some of the comments students made under this subcategory revealed interesting insights they had gained about themselves and included the following.

**Discussion of key aspects of the preliminary content map**

Two major findings were identified from the preliminary content map. First, students chose one or several particular lenses to describe their learning outcomes that related to the service outcome, their consultancy report for the community or industry partner. Second, amongst the learning outcomes that related to the learning aspect of their service learning experience, the students identified the largest number of learning outcomes in the field of self-understanding. The relationship between these two findings, i.e. whether the selection of a particular lens in the first group is related to the learning outcomes identified in particular categories in the second group, needs further investigation. This investigation will have to take into account the links each student makes, as well as whether particular patterns can be identified for groups of students. The second finding, however, would indicate that over the semester something must have happened, which allowed students to understand more about themselves: the students were undertaking independent research to find out new answers. They knew their findings would have an impact on the course of action taken by real people in real life, and they were exposed to more stress than they

had experienced at university so far. Yet why would all this have such an impact on the students' self understanding as opposed to the five other substantive categories relating to learning goals? The authors suspect that the reason lies in the specific setup of the service-learning projects in this course and in the opportunities that result from not having an 'us' and 'them' structure characteristic of many service settings, where the students go out and serve 'others', outside the students' university world. Mitchell and Donahue (2009) discuss the impact such a setting has on students of colour, who may also be part of that 'other world', which students go 'out' to serve. What happens in this service-learning course is that the student projects make aspects of this outside world, which the students are to serve, part of what the discipline has to look at and deal with. This part of the outside world is no longer the 'other', but a legitimate part of university studies. This is not only in line with a model of service-learning where the community partner improves its *ortho-praxis* and the discipline expands its *ortho-doxis*, but also in line with the model of course-integrated service-learning. For a heterogeneous student body that includes a wide range of pairs of disadvantage and privilege, avoiding the 'othering' of groups of students is crucial – as is the explicit expectation, that the academic discipline has to overcome its own 'dysconsciousness' (King 1991), its own 'lack of awareness about race and racism' (Mitchell and Donahue 2009: 174). If we have a truly diverse student body, it is not only the 'lack of awareness about race and racism' that needs to be overcome, it is also the lack of awareness about other mechanisms of exclusion, of othering. In disciplines that lack such debates, this can be very confronting for the academics involved. However, for the students this can be a very fruitful experience. Students from backgrounds that have so far not been visible in the academic discipline they are studying, suddenly find themselves and their world a legitimate part of issues the discipline addresses, and this can be an empowering experience. Students on the other hand, who so far only saw their own backgrounds and circumstances reflected in the material they studied and were dysconscious of the privileges they enjoyed, can start thinking about such issues without putting an undue burden of 'double consciousness' (DuBois 1903/1982) on those students who do not share their privileges (Mitchell and Donahue 2009). The fact that the category 'Selfunderstanding' was by far the largest of the categories related to learning goals, would support this outline of a first understanding of the preliminary content map of student-identified learning outcomes. In order to investigate this aspect further, the content of the learning outcomes identified by students would now need to be reviewed and the following two questions addressed:

**Question 1:**

Do the three subcategories 'Relating to others', 'Changed views' and 'Insights in to relating to self' contain learning outcomes that are relevant for students who are disadvantaged and for students who are privileged? And are these learning outcomes relevant to disadvantage and privilege regarding students' cultural, educational or socio-economic backgrounds? And more generally, are the concepts of 'disadvantaged' and 'privileged' still meaningful in this context, and if so, in what sense? The student who 'unexpectedly learnt that not all group members have the same amount of free time on their hands' would indicate a background that does not force him or her to work extensive hours to pay his or her way through university. However, the student who was not used to taking a leadership role does not necessarily need to be from a disadvantaged background and may indicate explanatory limitations of such a dichotomous framework.

## Question 2:

Why did students not mention more learning outcomes that related to 'Factual knowledge', if the service projects challenged the academic discipline by explicitly addressing issues that traditionally were hidden by the discipline's dysconsciousness? Did the project not challenge the discipline enough, did the students not develop satisfactory answers, or would the students have needed more help specifically with identifying learning in this field? In addressing this second question, there would again first need to be a detailed analysis of the actual learning outcomes discussed by students. A next step would need to investigate the links between particular projects and the learning outcomes identified by students in particular projects, as it could well be that different types of projects make it easier or more difficult for students to identify learning outcomes in this field. In conclusion, this research project started out with a concern for respect for the voice of students and thus focused on the learning outcomes the students had identified themselves, rather than relying on a teacher-imposed agenda. This led to a map of surprising data being identified from analysing students' reflective learning statements and allowed the researchers to acknowledge learning outcomes that are as rich, complex and varied as the students' own cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

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## University Engagement in Two Regions and Educational Aspiration - *Professor Sue Kilpatrick*

**Keywords:** community engagement, regional campuses, social capital, educational aspiration

### Introduction

University-community engagement has joined teaching and research as core business for universities around the world. Higher education institutions now routinely and consciously address regional disadvantage and develop skills and innovation for their regions (OECD 2007). The Carnegie Foundation (2008) suggests that community engagement should be a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources between higher education institutions and communities, defined widely to include local, regional/state, national and global. Engagement can achieve academic goals of learning and research while meeting community goals of capacity-building for change and improvement (Holland and Ramaley 2008).

Holland and Ramaley (2008) describe a process of engaged learning and research whereby distinctions between research, teaching and service blur as academics and students become part of a cycle of collaboration and knowledge generation with the community. They describe deepening relationships with community partners, characterized by trust. These relationships create mutual benefits for university and community, build the capacity of both, and generate new energy for further collaboration. This is akin to the process of building and using social capital through learning interactions theorised by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) from a study of rural communities. Social capital is defined as 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (OECD 2001, p. 41). The quality of knowledge resources in the social capital networks and the extent to which individuals are prepared to utilise them for the collective good (which is related to trust), determine the quality of the social capital produced, and the quality of the mutually beneficial outcomes that flow from the use of social capital resources (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000).

Community capacity building requires diverse social internal and external networks or what Woolcock and Narayan (2000) conceived as bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bridging and linking social capital have been identified elsewhere as critical to educational institutions' contribution to rural community development and renewal, providing access to information, resources and support from a wide range of sources from outside the community (Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk and Prescott 2002). Researchers note the importance of linking social capital in strengthening rural communities (Haslam McKenzie 2003; Healy, Hampshire and Ayres 2004). In rural and regional areas, campuses are a rich source of external linkages with researchers, corporate and government sectors that can provide access to external resources beneficial for community capacity. The partnerships and collaborations that occur between universities and communities are manifestations of bridging social capital, forging links across sectors within the community. Such cross-sectoral partnerships are required for sustainable development (Woolcock and Narayan 2000). Kilpatrick and Loechel (2004) proposed that interactional infrastructure, or places and opportunities for people to come together for formal and informal interaction, foster social capital in rural communities.

At a regional level, Alison and Eversole (2008) propose that in order to catalyse regional development universities must understand regional advantages and regional knowledge creation and distribution processes. They advocate that a 'place-based university' should provide leadership in generating and mobilising knowledge in the context of their region and have 'regionally-grounded systems'. It is therefore important that a regional university understand its regional governance, industry, social and environmental context. Multi-level understanding within the university of regional advantages and regional knowledge creation and distribution processes is required (Allison and Eversole 2008).

Falk and Mulford (2001) proposed a model of community leadership titled 'enabling' leadership which is relevant to a discussion development in rural regions as it highlights the importance of context. Enabling leadership facilitates the building and use of social capital by building internal networks, links between internal and external networks. The leadership process builds trust between network members, which Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) have identified as a leadership role. Other rural studies have also highlighted the importance of leadership that extends beyond individual leaders, with Plowman, Ashkanasy, Gardner and Letts (2003) emphasising that innovative rural communities are characterised by distributed leadership through a large critical mass, as opposed to less innovative communities where leadership is vested in a small number of individuals.

The literature suggests that professionals such as teachers and health professionals are well placed to undertake informal or formal leadership in relation to social capital building within communities (Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk and Prescott 2002; Lauder, Reel, Farmer and Griggs 2006; Onyx and Leonard 2002). These people act as boundary crossers, moving freely across different internal and external domains and enjoying trust and credibility within each. Boundary crossers are not necessarily formal leaders (Johns, Kilpatrick and Whelan 2007). Research suggests that these people are trusted because of their status within the community and the professional code of conduct which governs their work (Onyx and Leonard 2002). Holland and Ramaley (2008) note that university leadership must pay attention to establishing a clear vision for engagement within the university and the organisational learning need to establish the capacity to engage. The concept of boundary crossers suggests there is a role for university leaders, other academics and students being active in the community and building social capital. Social capital built through this activity could be used by university and community in collaborations and partnerships for mutual benefit.

### **Engaging to raise educational aspiration**

While regional development through research is important, knowledge transfer through education remains a key contribution to of universities to regional development. The education provided by regional campuses provides opportunities for local residents to overcome disadvantage and improve their own life chances, opening doors to more fulfilling jobs and higher lifetime earnings. While some graduates may subsequently move and work elsewhere, many stay, or later return to their home or other rural area. Over half of the highly skilled workers who moved into rural communities in a recent study came from a rural location (Kilpatrick, Vitartas, Hominsan and Johns forthcoming 2010). It is well established that those health professionals who choose to practise in rural areas are more likely to have come from a rural background and/or had a positive professional placement during their university study (Dunbabin and Levitt 2003). The array of scholarship programs for rural residents to study medicine and other health disciplines also recognises the relationship between

rural origin or positive rural study experience and rural practice (for a list of scholarships, see <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/work-st-ug>). It is highly likely that the relationships between rural origin and positive rural experience during tertiary study and later rural practise applies similarly to other professions such as accountants, engineers and teachers, many of which are in short supply in rural and regional Australia.

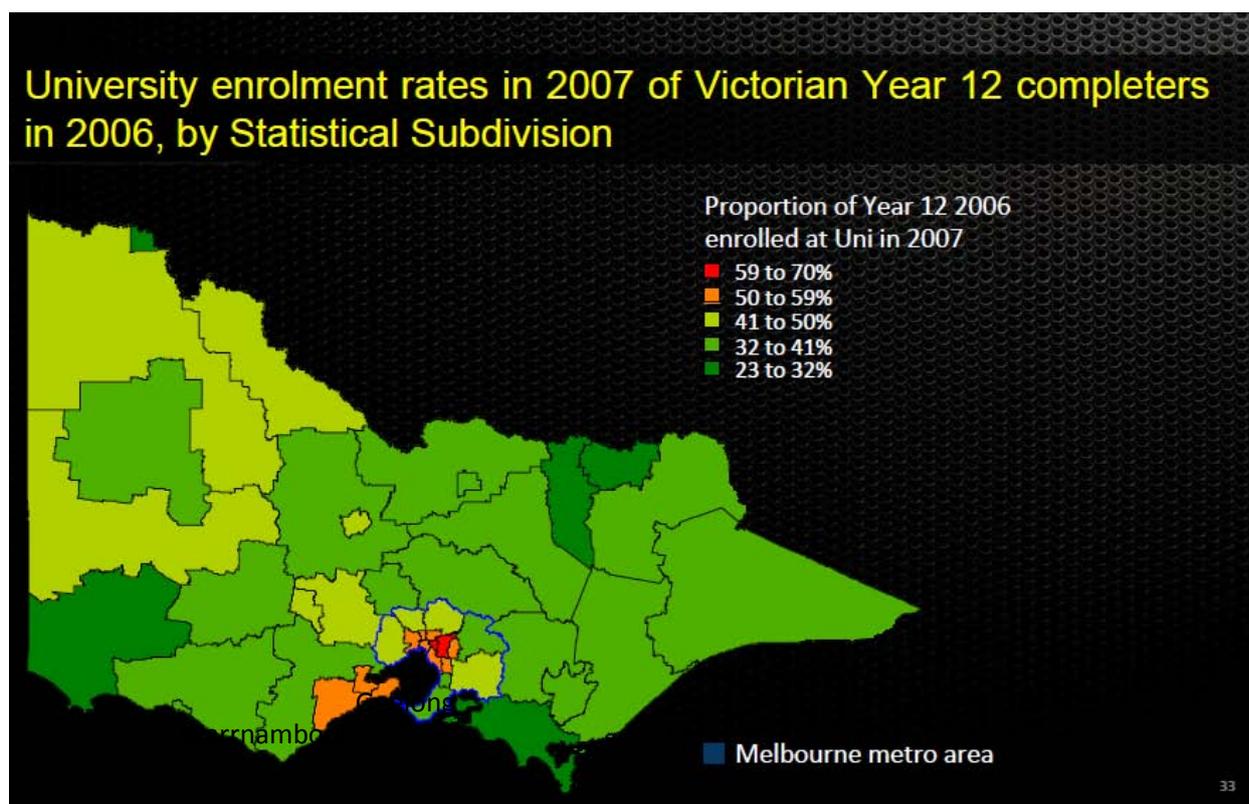
Rural and regional communities and industries have a legitimate demand for higher education to develop skills for industry and other local workforce needs. A scan of the Victorian Government's Skilled and Business Migration Program's list of occupations wanted in regional Victoria (see <http://www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/living-in-victoria/global-skills-for-provincial-victoria>), for example, reveals shortages of health, science and engineering professionals.

It is therefore crucial for regional development that regional campuses engage in partnership with their communities and industries to raise educational aspiration toward the qualifications needed for the future jobs in the region. University participation is an indicator of aspiration toward higher education, and a predictor of future educational attainment levels. Australian Government education participation and attainment targets, such as 40% of 25-34 year olds having a Bachelor degree of higher by 2025, are a response to the acknowledged relationship between economic and social development and higher education.

Participation in university in Victorian rural regions is below the level in metropolitan Melbourne. There are also variations between regions, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that participation at university in 2007 by 2006 year 12 leavers in the Geelong region west of Melbourne, for example is 50-59%, while that of their counterparts living further west in the South West region is 32-41%, falling to 23-32% in the area bordering South Australia. This difference is of particular interest to Deakin University, which has two campuses in Geelong and one at Warrnambool.

This paper examines community perceptions of Deakin's contribution to the two regions surrounding its regional campuses, Geelong and South West Victoria, and discusses possible relationships between differences in perceptions and University-related and other regional factors, including the role of Deakin in building social capital and community capacity and the interactional infrastructure of the two regions available for university community engagement. It goes on to consider the implications of these differences for Deakin's role in shaping regional educational aspiration.

Figure 1 University participation in Victoria



Source: First Progress Report of the Expert Panel on the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan (2009) Melbourne, p. 33.

### Regional engagement and Victoria's Geelong and South West regions

Deakin University was established in Geelong in 1974; it now has four Campuses: the Geelong Waterfront Campus, which is its head office, the Geelong Campus at Waurn Ponds, the Warrnambool Campus and a Melbourne Campus at Burwood. In 2009, 16, 000 of Deakin's 37, 000 students were enrolled at its regional Campuses, with over 1000 of these at the Warrnambool Campus. There were approximately 1200 full time equivalent staff employed at the Geelong Campuses and 123 at the Warrnambool Campus in 2009. There are no campuses of other universities in the Geelong and South West regions of Victoria.

The population at the 2006 Census was 252,000 in the Geelong region and 102,000 in the South West region (Regional Development Victoria 2009). Both regions historically had a manufacturing and primary industry economic base and have undergone structural adjustment. Key employment sectors in Geelong are retail, manufacturing, and health and community services. Key employment sectors in the South West region are agriculture, forestry and fishing, retail, and health and community services (Regional Development Victoria 2009). Only the Geelong region has developed a cohesive regional plan. The plan includes skills development as a central pillar (G21 2010). South West Victoria is still developing a regional plan (Regional Development Victoria 2009).

Rural and regional engagement is the first of Deakin University's six core commitments. Others relate to life-long learning, equity and access, research, contemporary and flexible teaching

programs and an international outlook. Deakin's goal for rural and regional engagement as set out in the Deakin Strategic Plan 2008-2012 Delivering Effective Partnerships is:

To advance the interests and aspirations of communities in rural and regional Australia, with a particular emphasis on Geelong and Western Victoria, by developing distinctive, lasting and beneficial education, research, economic, social and cultural partnerships, and providing knowledge, expertise and resources that will contribute to the life of those communities.(Deakin University 2009, p. 22)

Regular surveys provide information in relation to progress toward this goal. Deakin has previously undertaken an analysis of its partnerships from the perspective of partnership managers inside Deakin which identified that 'Deakin personnel had not yet embraced the notion that partnerships can be a mechanism for mutual capacity building– not just one way transfer of capacity' (Butterworth and Palermo 2008). Nonetheless, this previous research found Deakin staff reported mutual benefits such as joint research and joint curriculum development. The research did not investigate external partners' perceptions of benefits.

Partnership is defined according to Deakin's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 Delivering Effective Partnerships as 'collaboration in teaching and research that addresses community identified needs, deepens students' learning, enhances' community well-being and enriches the scholarship of the institution' (p. 9).

A regional partnership survey was designed to answer the research question 'what is the perception of Deakin's partners of Deakin's contribution to its region of Geelong and South West Victoria?' The survey of Deakin's partners in Geelong and South West Victoria first administered in 2006 was repeated in 2009 with some modifications. The original items tested in the 2006 survey items were supplemented by items drawn from the international PASCAL University Regional Engagement Benchmarking survey in which Deakin is participating (see <http://www.obs-pascal.com/pure>). All partners who were engaged in partnerships consistent with the above definition of partnership were included. Ethics approval was obtained. The survey gathered data on perceptions of Deakin's contribution to Geelong or South West Victoria across five key areas:

- economic, social and community engagement;
- research;
- Deakin courses and graduates ;
- Deakin infrastructure; and
- media.

The mailed survey sought feedback from senior representatives of regionally-based partners including local government, groups such as G21, the Committee for Geelong, South West Sustainability Partnership, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), school principals and members of Deakin University's Geelong and Warrnambool Community Leaders' Groups. Two otherwise identical surveys were sent out, one to partners in the Geelong end of the region and the other to partners in the South West end of the region. Each of the above five key areas included from one to six statements about Deakin's engagement with the community and provided for Likert scale responses (a total of fifteen statements). Survey respondents were also invited to provide written feedback on the statements within each of the key areas. The 175 individuals invited to

participate in the survey represented all the bodies that met the definition of partnership set out in Deakin’s Strategic Plan *Delivering Effective Partnerships*. Responses were received from 38 percent. This was made up of 27 from Geelong (30% response rate) and 47 from the South West (47% response rate). It is expected that the usual response bias applies: that is, those who chose to respond are more likely to feel strongly about Deakin, either positively or negatively. Results for the Geelong and South West Victoria regions were compared and chi squared tests were applied to test for differences.

## Findings

Generally speaking, key community members in the South West and Geelong regions were satisfied with Deakin’s contribution to and engagement with their region. As a group, respondents from Geelong were more satisfied with Deakin’s contribution and engagement than were respondents from the South West. Respondents from both regions attached a very high level of importance to Deakin’s activities in all the areas. The responses are set out in Tables 1 to 5 below.

**Table 1 Satisfaction and importance of economic, social and community engagement contributions**

		Count	Satisfaction	Count	Importance
<b>South West Region</b>					
1	Economic priorities	33	84.8*	32	100.0
2	Social priorities	35	77.1*	33	100.0
3	Cultural priorities	32	78.1	30	96.7
4	Participation in public debate on important issues	34	82.4	32	100.0
5	Participation in events, seminars, or workshops	39	84.6	35	100.0
6	Visible presence in developing partnerships	38	76.3*	38	100.0
<b>Geelong Region</b>					
1	Economic priorities	20	95.0*	20	100.0
2	Social priorities	25	100.0*	23	100.0
3	Cultural priorities	24	87.5	20	100.0
4	Participation in public debate on important issues	21	81.0	20	100.0
5	Participation in events, seminars, or workshops	23	91.3	22	100.0
6	Visible presence in developing partnerships	25	92.0*	24	100.0

\* Difference statistically significant at 5% level

Overall, respondents were satisfied with Deakin’s economic, social and community engagement, with a percentage satisfaction rating of 80 percent or higher on all statements. Respondents from the South West were most likely to be satisfied with Deakin’s engagement around ‘economic priorities’ (85%) and least likely to be satisfied with Deakin’s ‘visible presence in developing partnerships’ in the region (76%). Respondents from Geelong were particularly satisfied with Deakin’s engagement around ‘social priorities’ (100%).

**Table 2 Satisfaction and importance of research**

		Satisfaction		Importance	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>South West Region</b>					
1	Research useful to the region	36	77.8*	37	100.0
2	Participation in collaborative research partnerships with business	34	79.4*	36	100.0
<b>Geelong Region</b>					
1	Research useful to the region	23	91.3*	24	100.0
2	Participation in collaborative research partnerships with business	20	95.0*	23	100.0

\* Difference statistically significant at 5% level

The majority of respondents from both the South West and Geelong regions were satisfied with Deakin’s contribution and engagement in relation to research in their regions (88%). As a group, respondents from the South West (83%) were satisfied with Deakin’s engagement in research in their region, while respondents from Geelong (96%) were even more satisfied. Respondents from Geelong were particularly satisfied with Deakin’s ‘participation in collaborative research partnerships with business’ in the region (95%).

**Table 3 Satisfaction and importance relating to Deakin courses and graduates**

		Satisfaction		Importance	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>South West Region</b>					
1	Business and community participation in course development	33	87.9	35	100.0
2	Sufficient number of skilled graduates for the region	34	52.9*	37	100.0

3	Relationship with local secondary schools	29	75.9*	38	100.0
4	Course/unit content - relevant to business and community needs	34	88.2*	36	100.0
<b>Geelong Region</b>					
1	Business and community participation in course development	23	91.3	24	100.0
2	Sufficient number of skilled graduates for the region	23	87.0*	25	100.0
3	Relationship with local secondary schools	16	100.0*	23	100.0
4	Course/unit content - relevant to business and community needs	22	95.5*	24	100.0

\* Difference statistically significant at 5% level

Respondents from the South West reported a relatively low satisfaction with Deakin producing a 'sufficient number of skilled graduates for the region' (53%). Respondents from the South West were also less inclined to be satisfied with Deakin's 'relationship with local secondary schools' (76%). Respondents from Geelong reported high satisfaction with the statements in this area (greater than 80% satisfaction). In contrast to the South West, respondents were particularly satisfied with Deakin's 'relationship with local secondary schools' (100%) and that Deakin's 'course/unit content was relevant to business and community needs' (96%).

**Table 4 Satisfaction and importance of Deakin infrastructure**

		Satisfaction		Importance	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>South West Region</b>					
1	Participation by the local community in Deakin events	31	77.4*	27	100.0
2	Community access to Deakin's social and cultural facilities	34	82.4*	29	96.6
3	Community access to Deakin's sporting facilities	27	92.6	26	92.3
<b>Geelong Region</b>					
1	Participation by the local community in Deakin events	20	90.0*	16	100.0
2	Community access to Deakin's social and cultural facilities	19	94.7*	19	100.0
3	Community access to Deakin's sporting facilities	17	88.2	15	100.0

\* Difference statistically significant at 5% level

Respondents from the South West region were least likely to be satisfied with ‘participation by the local community in Deakin events’ (77%), but were very satisfied with ‘community access to Deakin’s sporting and cultural facilities’ (93%). Respondents from Geelong were satisfied with all statements (greater than 80% satisfaction) and were particularly satisfied with the community access to Deakin’s social and cultural facilities’ (95%).

**Table 5 Satisfaction and importance of media coverage of activities and achievements**

	Satisfaction		Importance	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>South West Region</b>	37	75.7	34	100.0
<b>Geelong Region</b>	27	85.2	22	100.0

Respondents from both the South West and Geelong regions indicated that ‘media coverage of Deakin’s activities and achievements’ in their region was highly important (100%), but in both cases satisfaction was lower (South West 76%, Geelong-Barwon 85%).

## Discussion

Some of the relatively more positive response from Geelong partners could be attributed to Deakin’s more substantial presence in that region, which is the location of Deakin’s Vice-Chancellor’s Office and two campuses with over 6000 on campus students and around 1200 full time equivalent staff, and the Geelong Technology Precinct. The Geelong Waterfront Campus, is located centrally in the City of Geelong. Deakin’s Warrnambool Campus is in South West Victoria with over 1000 students, about 125 full time equivalent staff and narrower range of courses than those available in Geelong. It is located ‘out of sight’, on the outskirts of the town. People in Geelong are more likely to be aware of Deakin, its campuses, staff and students and their activities.

Deakin staff have formal representative roles on regional bodies such as G21 (a regional development partnership) and the South West Sustainability Partnership. Deakin’s Strategic Plan has a strategy that includes ‘...deploying leaders from the Geelong and Warrnambool Campuses to identify local community needs and to facilitate active engagement with those communities’ (Deakin University 2009). Thus there is a clearly articulated vision for engagement from the highest level within the University (Holland and Ramaley 2008). In their private capacity Deakin staff and students are involved in a wide range of groups in both regions, such as school parents and friends associations, landcare groups and youth welfare organisations. Larger numbers of staff and students increase opportunities for engaged scholarship, community collaboration, leadership and building social capital for regional capacity building as described earlier (Holland and Ramaley 2008; Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk and Prescott 2002; Onyx and Leonard 2002). Although the South West has a just under half the population, as noted above there are only around ten percent the number of Deakin staff and 7 percent the number of students as the Geelong region. The Warrnambool Campus may

lack a critical mass of staff and students to act in leadership and boundary crosser roles to build social capital and community capacity in the region (Johns, Kilpatrick and Whelan 2007).

There are approximately fifty undergraduate courses available at Deakin's two Geelong Campuses compared to a narrower range of twenty courses at Warrnambool. The narrower range of courses at Warrnambool is likely to have contributed to the low level of satisfaction among partners in the surrounding region regarding the number of skilled graduates for the region (53%). When a course is available in or near their home location, VTAC 2008 Preference data show that more than 80% of students from the Barwon and Western District Statistical Districts, which broadly match Deakin's Geelong and South West regions wanting to study courses including education, nursing and biological science prefer courses available from universities in their area (that is university campuses in Geelong, Warrnambool and Ballarat). Some students do, of course, wish to move to Melbourne or other locations. Nonetheless, these data indicate that a high proportion of rural and regional students prefer to study in their home location if their chosen course is available there.

Historical university factors that may partly explain the differences in perception of Deakin's regional contribution. There has been differing commitment by the University to Geelong and South West Victoria. While the Geelong Campuses have grown steadily since Deakin's establishment, there were several periods before 2002 when courses and student load were cut at the Warrnambool Campus. While this has been reversed in recent times, the level of trust of the University by the community may have been adversely affected, impacting on social capital stores (Onyx and Leonard 2002).

There is an additional regional difference that could explain the more positive community perception of Deakin's contribution in the Geelong region compared to the South West. It relates to contrasts in the depth and quality of interactional infrastructure (Kilpatrick and Loechel 2004) and capacity to engage. The Geelong region is home to G21 which is a formal alliance of government, business and community organisations working together to improve the Geelong region, the Committee for Geelong, which is a non-political lobby group for Geelong, and an active Chamber of Commerce. Deakin University is a member of all three organisations. The Geelong Football Club plays a unifying role in the region. Not only do the Geelong 'Cats' help define regional identity, home games in the President's Lounge are prime networking opportunities for corporate members, which include Deakin University, the Gordon Institute of TAFE, local and state government and large and medium businesses. There are invariably State and Federal politicians present. Like G21, the Committee for Geelong and Chamber of Commerce, the President's Lounge is a rich site for university community engagement and building and using social capital. Membership of high level groups such as G21 is supplemented by Deakin staff membership of groups in various industry and community sectors. There is multi-level understanding within the university of regional advantages and regional knowledge creation and distribution processes (Allison and Eversole 2008).

G21's Report to the Region (2010) lists just four regional high order strengths. The first of these is Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE whose presence 'not only provides education opportunities for our community, but is a source of community economic and creative vitality' (p. 16). The fourth strength is the research capabilities of Deakin and a number of health and scientific institutions, all of which have partnerships with Deakin. There is ample evidence that Deakin understands knowledge creation processes in Geelong is part of an engaged learning and research community generating mutual benefits (Allison and Eversole 2008; Holland and Ramaley 2008).

G21 has developed a cohesive regional plan that includes skills development as a central pillar. South West Victoria is still developing a regional plan. The five South West local governments that make up a group known as the Great South Coast Region often compete for economic opportunities such as new businesses and large projects rather than cooperate, though there are signs that this is changing. There is a discussion paper for the development of a regional plan (Worland, Nicholas and Martin 2010). The proposal is for nine strategic goals including Building community capacity and Skills, jobs and education. The document notes 'Skill shortages are compounded by declining tertiary aspiration and attainment' (p. 25).

There is no Chamber of Commerce in Warrnambool which is the largest city and regional centre of the South West, nor other high level bodies such as a Committee for Warrnambool. Deakin University is a member of the formal regional groups that do exist, but these are equivalent to the 'second order' groups in which Deakin participates in Geelong region, such as the local learning and employment network. Deakin is invited to ad hoc activities such as development of a regional workforce plan. However, the interactional infrastructure in Warrnambool and the South West is not as rich as in Geelong.

### **Future action: aspiration**

The differences in educational aspiration and university participation in the two regions (Figure 1), partnership survey results and strategic goals identified in the Great South Coast Plan discussion document (Worland, Nicholas and Martin 2010) together suggest that Deakin should be engaging to address regional disadvantage and develop skills and innovation (OECD 2007) in the South West. Taking an enabling leadership approach (Falk and Mulford 2001), Deakin convened a group of education providers, the South West Local Learning and Employment Network, local government, TAFE, industry and other organisations with a shared desire to increase retention and participation in further education in South West Victoria. The group has agreed on issues surrounding retention and participation in further education and some strategies to address these. The strategies were developed in the context of regional advantages and knowledge systems (Allison and Eversole 2008). Deakin and the other organisations are progressing strategies that can be funded within existing operational budgets and seeking funding for other strategies. Identified strategies include establishment of a Chamber of Commerce to raise the training culture of small and medium businesses, involving industry in an awareness campaign about the future skill needs in the region, and a communication strategy to help families and people in the workforce learn about education pathways.

### **Conclusion**

The differences in community perceptions of Deakin's contribution to its two rural regions may be partly explained by the size of the University's operations in the two regions. However, regional differences in leadership, cohesion and interactional infrastructure, resources that facilitate building and using social capital, affect opportunities for Deakin to engage and the quality of its engagement. The Geelong region has come to believe that Deakin 'belongs' to Geelong and Deakin is a key part of its future. In the South West, a priority for Deakin is to engage with community educational, business and development bodies to build social capital resources that can be used to jointly address the challenge of raising educational aspiration. Deakin will benefit from more students and a richer,

community connected learning environment. The community will gain capacity for future development.

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## Teaching Teachers in a Remote NT Community – Dr David Blair Rhodes, Dr Wendy Giles, Charles Darwin University

### Abstract

Given the rapidly increasing enrolment of Indigenous students in schools across the Northern Territory (NT), the ongoing challenge for all educational sectors is to attract, develop and retain skilled and experienced teachers. A high rate of staff turnover makes it difficult for any school, and in particular those in remote communities, to deliver quality teaching by educators with experience and understanding of the local environment, and to maintain the continuity of program delivery. Kroneman (2007), in her assessment of the educational future for Indigenous communities in the NT for the Australian Education Union (AEU) argues:

Indigenous people, like all other Australians, expect their children to have a high quality education that meets their needs. They want it to be provided locally, to be inclusive of their cultures and to prepare them to be happy and productive citizens (p. 4).

In 2009, the Charles Darwin University (CDU) in partnership with the Catholic Education Office, Northern Territory (CEO), established a joint-venture approach to the implementation of measures established through Closing the Gap and the Australian Government Emergency Response (AGER). The resulting project is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Growing Our Own: A two-way approach to teacher preparation for NT Catholic schools, involves educating and preparing for teacher qualification, in situ, Indigenous assistant teachers in five remote Indigenous Catholic Community Schools in the Northern Territory (Slee & Keenan, 2008, p1), and is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee.

This paper will employ a case-study methodology to explore the experience of the Growing Our Own project at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School (OLSH) at Wadeye (Port Keats) a remote, Indigenous community situated on the western edge of the Daly River Reserve in the Northern Territory. The school services the largest Indigenous community in the Northern Territory. It is a bilingual school, with both Murinpatha and English spoken. This paper will argue that local Indigenous teachers are best placed to deliver and plan the curriculum around Indigenous languages and culture for students in this school. Additionally, these local Indigenous teachers are more likely to stay working at OLSH than are contract teachers from outside of Wadeye, and therefore improve the continuity of educational delivery. Indeed, this project has gained recognition within the local community.

Links between the school and the local community are imperative in contextualising the curriculum for the students. Over recent years, many trained Indigenous teachers have been lost from the system, and in the coming years this situation will be exacerbated by the retirement of a large cohort of women. To add to the problems facing remote communities, fewer Indigenous people are entering teacher training and the number applying for teaching positions in Catholic Education is negligible. There are, however, a relatively large number of Indigenous teacher assistants, some of whom have the very real potential of becoming highly competent teachers. There is a further untapped pool of Indigenous staff working in schools (Indigenous education workers, administration staff) who are interested in teaching but find the current teacher training courses inaccessible, often irrelevant, and therefore, out of the question.

The Growing Our Own project aims to develop an authentic ‘two-way’ model of teacher preparation, learning and professional growth. This will be achieved through the provision of creative and accessible pathways for Indigenous staff to train as teachers in their local communities, while also providing significant academically supervised professional learning for mentor teachers in cross-cultural awareness and Indigenous education. This paper seeks to explore these aims in the context of Wadeye and examine the challenges encountered and celebrate the achievements of the students and staff involved. Specifically, the attempt to link the preservice teachers’ culturally relevant ways of being, knowing and doing with contemporary curriculum and pedagogical knowledge will be described and analysed with reference to the aims of the project. The lessons learned from this community engagement project will be useful for future endeavours of this nature.

**Keywords:** Indigenous education, remote community, Northern Territory, diversity, teacher education

### **Introduction:**

The Growing Our Own project is a joint venture between Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Catholic Education Office NT (CEO). The aim is to develop an authentic ‘two-way’ model of Indigenous teacher preparation, learning and professional growth. This will be achieved through the provision of creative and accessible pathways for Indigenous staff to train as teachers in their local communities, while also providing significant academically supervised professional learning for mentor teachers in cross-cultural awareness and Indigenous education. This paper seeks to explore these aims in the context of Wadeye and examine the challenges encountered and celebrate the achievements of the students and staff involved. Specifically, the attempt to link the pre-service teachers’ culturally relevant ways of being, knowing and doing with contemporary curriculum and pedagogical knowledge will be described and analysed with reference to the aims of the project. The lessons learned from this community engagement project will be useful for future endeavours of this nature.

This paper will employ a case-study methodology to explore the experience of the Growing Our Own project at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School (OLSH) at Wadeye (Port Keats), a remote, Indigenous community situated on the western edge of the Daly River Reserve in the Northern Territory. The school services the largest Indigenous community in the Northern Territory. It is a bilingual school, with both Murinhpatha and English spoken. Local Indigenous teachers are best placed to deliver and plan the curriculum around Indigenous languages and culture for students in this school. Additionally, these local Indigenous teachers are more likely to stay working at OLSH than contract teachers from outside of Wadeye, and therefore improve the continuity of educational delivery.

### **Background of Educational Inequality:**

In remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory (NT), many schools find it difficult to attract experienced, high quality teachers, who are prepared to commit to long-term teaching contracts. There can be close to a complete staff turnover within a year or even a semester. This difficulty is the result of a complex mix of factors. Teachers based in urban centres are reluctant to move to remote communities, many of which remain almost completely isolated during the wet season. The distance from major services, which are usually located in town centres many

kilometres away; and the cultural differences and the isolation from friends and family, ensure a steady change in teaching staff, creating inconsistencies and a lack of continuity in schools.

Establishing a staff of local Indigenous teachers in remote schools in the NT is more difficult than it may first appear. The participation rate of Indigenous people from remote communities in higher education remains low, and the completion rate of tertiary education even lower. The result is that a small number of local Indigenous people from remote communities obtain higher education qualifications, and therefore few become teachers or other professionals in their communities, perpetuating the cycle of non-Indigenous servicing the communities. Therefore, schools, health facilities, and legal services are too frequently staffed exclusively by non-Indigenous people. Where Indigenous do work in these services it is frequently in low-paid, limited responsibility positions.

The Federal Government's intervention in the NT emphasised the importance of Indigenous children of compulsory school age enrolling and regularly attending school. Limited progress, however, has been made in resolving the serious disadvantage faced by remote Indigenous communities in the NT. A report commissioned by the Australian Education Union (AEU) in 2007 suggested that 7,500 Indigenous children in the NT did not attend school. Little has changed by 2010, with rates of irregular attendance in formal education remaining alarmingly high. The AEU argues that this is the result of 'many years of neglect under the previous CLP Government' (Kroneman, 2007, p. 6). However, this is compounded by the failure of education systems and government to engage fully with the perceptions and beliefs of Indigenous people about education and quality teaching and learning.

This situation does not necessarily reflect Indigenous people's perceptions and beliefs about the value of education. However, Schwab and Sutherland (2001) make the point that:

... for many Indigenous Australians, schools have been the agents of disempowerment, and dismantlers of cultures and traditions. Indigenous participation is marred by experiences of alienation and exclusion that have been propagated by systemic and institutional bias. Recent studies suggest that education and training in Australia continues to be characterised by a cultural environment that inhibits access for those who do not conform to, or understand, its often implicit expectations (p. 5).

The current situation can therefore be seen to result in a large part from the western (and often alien) nature of the educational experiences that are imposed on Indigenous people. The rigid nature of educational systems in Australia, and the routines that they adopt, including the structure of the school year, fail to take account of the local conditions in the Top End. For example, during the wet season, the populations of remote town communities increase, as roads are cut off and travel becomes increasingly problematic. During the dry season, remote community populations decrease, as people go back to country. The status quo makes no allowance for these seasonal variations, which have a significant impact on school attendance. Indeed, at the time that the school-aged population is most likely to avail themselves of school facilities, during the wet, schools are closed for the December/January vacation, and reflects what Schwab & Sutherland (2001) describe as systemic inertia (pp. 5-6).

Despite the claims of government and education systems, at both a Territory and Federal level, of the importance of school attendance and retention, there is little practical change to support the

political rhetoric. Were all of the young people of school age in remote communities to attend school at the same time, there would not be enough teachers to teach them, classrooms to house them, or furniture to seat them (Taylor, 2010). The policy of aiming for 100% school attendance rates appears to be a myth, wrapped in the rhetoric of political paternalism.

Given the escalating levels of educational disengagement by Indigenous young people as they progress through primary and secondary school, it is not surprising that involvement in tertiary education by Indigenous people is limited. Attending university in the Northern Territory for an Indigenous person from a remote community will usually only occur if they relocate to one of the main centres such as Darwin or Alice Springs. The complex range of family and community obligations and expectations faced by Indigenous people usually makes relocation for any extended period of time unviable.

### **Growing Our Own:**

The Charles Darwin University (CDU) in partnership with the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Northern Territory (NT), has established a joint-venture approach to the implementation of measures established through Closing the Gap and the Australian Government Emergency Response (AGER). Growing Our Own: A two-way approach to teacher preparation for NT Catholic schools, involves the training and preparation of Indigenous teachers for remote communities (Elliott, 2009; Elliott & Keenan, 2009; Slee & Keenan, 2008). The project is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee. A wide range of research indicates that:

Indigenous people, like all other Australians, expect their children to have a high quality education that meets their needs. They want it to be provided locally, to be inclusive of their cultures and to prepare them to be happy and productive citizens (Kroneman, 2007, p. 4).

Given the ever-increasing enrolment of Indigenous students across the five Indigenous Catholic Community Schools (ICCS), the ongoing challenge for Catholic Education, indeed all educational sectors in the NT, is to attract, develop and retain skilled, experienced leaders and teachers. A high rate of staff turnover makes it difficult for any school, and in particular those in remote communities, to deliver quality teaching by teachers with experience and understanding of the local environment, and to maintain the continuity of program delivery (Elliott & Keenan, 2009; Slee & Keenan, 2008).

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), indicate that the Indigenous population of Australia in 2007 was 517,000 people, 2.5% of the total population. As of 30 June 2007 the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of the Northern Territory was 210 627. It was estimated that 64 005 of this total were Indigenous; equalling 30.4% of all people in the Northern Territory. 41 003 of the Indigenous population were identified as living in very remote communities. 3760 of those identified as Indigenous reported having some form of post-secondary higher education/vocational training qualification. More than half (54%) of Indigenous respondents in the 2006 census were under 25 years of age. An Australian Indigenous language was spoken at home by 59% of Indigenous respondents (ABS, 2009).

Indigenous people, while comprising almost one third of the total population of the NT, the most significant percentage of any state or territory population in Australia, are chronically under-

represented in post-compulsory education qualifications. The majority of Indigenous people in the NT live in remote or very remote communities, and therefore have restricted access to educational opportunities available to the majority of Australians. Language and cultural contexts further disadvantage Indigenous people in the Northern Territory from access to education.

The NT Treasury, in 2004, identified two distinct populations in the Northern Territory, each with quite different characteristics, composition and growth patterns. The Indigenous population of the NT was identified as being considerably younger than the National average, less migratory, with higher fertility rates, higher mortality rates, lower life expectancy, higher growth rates and a more widely dispersed and permanently settled population. Taylor (2010) argues that:

The message was simple – while the nation as a whole might be increasingly focused on the means to finance and service retirees and the aged in general, Indigenous people (not just in the Territory) barely reach retirement age. Their concerns are more firmly fixed at the opposite end of the social policy spectrum to do with child development, housing for new family formation, education, training, youth criminal justice, employment, and the means to securing asset accumulation and sustainable livelihoods (p. 1).

The sources of Indigenous Australian's social and educational disadvantage are complex, and arise from systemic neglect. The poor educational outcomes that exist in the Northern Territory, arise from a historical legacy of systemic inertia (Schwab & Sutherland, 2001), and are compounded by extreme difficulties in attracting and maintaining high quality teachers in remote communities (Taylor, 2010; Elliott, 2009; Elliott & Keenan, 2009; Slee & Keenan, 2008). Lack of consistency in teaching staff and administrative procedures, over an extended period of time, has left a legacy of educational disparity.

The low levels of Indigenous participation in Higher Education, cited previously in this paper, account for the small number of Indigenous professionals. Schools, medical and other professional services in remote Indigenous communities are therefore largely staffed almost exclusively by non-Indigenous people. These service providers are frequently young and/or inexperienced, and rarely stay in the communities longer than a year or two before leaving. This high staff turnover is exacerbated by a reluctance of experienced, mid-career teaching staff to live in these isolated, often poorly resourced and frequently linguistically and/or culturally distinct communities (Elliott, 2009). Given the current situation, local Indigenous people, many of whom are already working as teacher assistants, are best placed to work as teachers in these communities, therefore ensuring continuity of education, policy and providing role-models for younger community members.

The *Growing Our Own* program is a customised teacher education program that is taken to remote communities. The pre-service teachers are therefore able to remain in their communities, with their families, and are able to fulfil their obligations. It is an intensive, mentored program delivered in situ, and is funded by the Commonwealth government, Charles Darwin University and Catholic Education Northern Territory.

Growing Our Own developed over 2008 with community consultations, risk analyses and planning. The course is intensive and compacted across the whole academic year (February to December) rather than the traditional two, twelve week university semesters (March to October). While most Charles Darwin University students complete a four year Bachelor of Teaching and Learning over

three years by using the Southern Hemisphere summer semester (November to February), the intensive program for Indigenous students can be completed in two years using the equivalent of four ten week teaching sessions (school terms) per year (Elliott, 2009, p. 221).

Each of the pre-service teachers involved in the program are Assistant Teachers (AT) in remote Catholic Schools. Each site has approximately four pre-service teachers in a cohort, allowing for flexible delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of the local context. The program seeks to build on the pre-service teachers experience as Assistant Teachers, and capitalise on their learning styles. Given that most of the pre-service teachers involved in the program speak English as a second or additional language, English literacy skills development is a necessary focus.

The Growing Our Own program operates as a partnership. The pre-service teachers live and work in the local community. As previously stated, each of them currently works as a Teacher Assistant (TA) at the local Catholic School. Each site has its own School-based Coordinator. This teacher works on the staff at the school and is the regular program contact for the pre-service teachers at the school. Each pre-service teacher has a school-based mentor, usually the teacher that they assist in their role as AT in the classroom on a daily basis. This mentor supports the development of the pre-service teacher's teaching skills, and facilitates learning through professional conversations about classroom dynamics, classroom management, programming, curriculum materials, assessment, reporting and evaluation and accessing school facilities and equipment.

On a weekly basis a lecturer from Charles Darwin University will visit the site to conduct lectures and observe the student's teaching development. The time spent at each site varies, although at least one full school day per week is set aside for lectures. The reason for this variation is the logistical differences in visiting each site. Lecturers literally arrive by four-wheel-drive, aeroplane, and during the wet season, by dinghy at one site. The schools are supportive of these visits by CDU staff and the pre-service teachers are released from class so that they are available for lectures on these days.

### **The Case of Wadeye:**

Wadeye (Port Keats) is a tribal Indigenous Catholic community of more than 2500 people situated on the western edge of the Daly River Reserve in the Northern Territory. The CDU lecturer arrives at Wadeye via a twenty-seater, twin engine plane. The flight time is approximately 50 minutes. During the wet season Wadeye is cut off by road for up to five months, and air flight is the only option for travel, although food and supplies are delivered to the township each week by barge.

First contact with European society started with the explorations of Captain King in 1819 but the complex and sophisticated social, economic and cultural systems of the Indigenous inhabitants of the region remained relatively unaffected up until contact with non-Aboriginal influences in 1935. The establishment of the town of Wadeye started with the founding of a Mission by the Catholic Church in 1935. Called Port Keats by the non-Aboriginal administration, its Aboriginal name was Wentek Nganayi. This area is often referred to as 'Old Mission'. In 1938 the Mission moved to the present site of Wadeye, closer to a reliable water supply. Services provided by the Mission attracted people from the tribal groups within the region, an increasing number of whom took up residence at Wadeye. These people were always considered as visitors by the traditional owners of Wadeye, the Kardu Diminin, and had none of the rights that go with the ownership of Wadeye land. This same attitude prevails today.

The community of Wadeye is comprised of seven tribal clans, each of which speaks a different language, although the dominant language is Murinhpatha. This is also the language spoken by the Indigenous teachers at the school. Wadeye is a proscribed community under the NT Intervention, so alcohol cannot be bought or consumed unless a licence is obtained. Of the population of approximately 2500 people, 1500 are aged less than 25, 700 of whom are school age. The majority of school aged children do not attend school, despite various initiatives by the community and the school. There are 500 people aged 25-50 in Wadeye and only 100 people aged over 50. Between 60 and 80 babies are born in the community each year. It is estimated that the population of Wadeye will double in the next 20 years. There are 144 habitable homes in Wadeye, with an occupancy rate of approximately 16 persons per dwelling (Gray, 2006; Taylor, 2004).

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School (OLSH) Wadeye, is a bilingual school. Murinhpatha and English are both used as languages of instruction at the school, although Transition is almost solely in Murinhpatha, and English is integrated thereafter. Most people in the community can speak basic English, including the children. The pre-service teachers at the school have no problems comprehending English, provided any technical terms are explained carefully. Each classroom has an Indigenous Teacher Assistant (TA) to work alongside the non-Indigenous teacher. There is a strong focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) across all learning areas and there are daily Accelerated Literacy (AL) classes. Given the religious origins of the school it is not surprising that there are daily religious education lessons, frequently delivered by the Indigenous TAs.

Each of the sites presents its own challenges and rewards. One of the major points that each of the lecturers involved with the Growing Our Own project has noted is the need to respect traditional knowledge and culture. This is certainly true for the site at Wadeye, where the three remaining students are connected through family and community, and work together effectively and collaboratively. Time is needed to build relationships which can be sustained over time. The curriculum cannot be pushed too quickly. Each unit that is taught in the program is customised by each of the lecturers to support student learning styles. This determination usually occurs on a small-group basis, through individual discussion and observations of the students.

There is considerable diversity amongst the Indigenous students enrolled in Growing Our Own, and the basis for customising the content is recognition of their unique social, cultural, linguistic and cognitive characteristics (Elliott, 2009). The students have a preference for collaboration and team work, which is a consideration in customising and personalising content and pedagogy. The Indigenous students prefer to work as a team, coming to consensus and understanding within the group in their own language. Individual learning can occur during consolidation; however, the learning of new material is best approached collaboratively.

It is also important to allow time to receive an answer when a question has been asked. Silence is not necessarily an indication of a lack of understanding. The Indigenous students will quite often take their time to think, then confer with each other before speaking through the most confident person. An answer of yes, however, does not always necessarily mean yes. Often they will appear to 'agree' in order to be polite when they do not necessarily understand the issue. It may need to be revisited and discussed several times. The Indigenous students do not like to be singled out, so a group approach is always the best. Standard, mainstream education approaches and materials do

not work in these Indigenous communities. The CDU educational medium of the Blackboard based portal – Learnline – is not an effective tool for the Indigenous students.

Literacy teaching forms part of all of the units of the course. Given that the students are bilingual and English is a second or third language, achievement of the learning outcomes can take considerably longer. The small size of the class enables greater opportunities for one-on-one learning, and the CDU lecturer works collaboratively with the school-based coordinator to further enable literacy and numeracy development for the students.

An important part of the customisation of the curriculum and the addressing of individual learning styles is a focus on assessment processes and practices. The Growing Our Own program allows flexibility in choice of assessment tasks, to enable each student to demonstrate their learning achievements in differing ways (Charles Darwin University, 2008; Slee & Keenan, 2008). The design of assessment tasks is centred on articulating meaningful outcomes and objectives (Elliott, 2009). Assessment tasks therefore allow the opportunity for collaboration, group discussion, individual consolidation of knowledge and a practical demonstration of learning achievement.

The *Growing Our Own* project commenced at Wadeye with two groups of students. One group were in-service teachers who needed to complete a further year of teacher education to allow them to register as teachers with the NT Teacher Registration Board (TRB). They graduated in May 2010. They comprised of one male and three female teachers, each of whom had been involved in teaching at OLSH for many years. The second group comprised of four local ladies who are currently employed as TAs at OLSH. One of the women has since moved out of the community and has withdrawn from the program. The three remaining TAs are extremely dedicated and focused on their teacher training.

Community participation is a key component of the experience of the Growing Our Own program at Wadeye. There is ongoing support of the program from within both the school and the wider communities. Each site was visited twice soon after the project was approved by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Consultation with the community was seen as a vital element for the success of the program as the community members are seen as partners who have pledged their support in various ways: moral support, allowing flexibility in meeting family and community obligations, and support from school colleagues. The Teacher Assistants were nominated by the community to take part in the part in *Growing Our Own*. The nominated students then participated in a full day workshop so that they fully understood the demands and the commitment required. Some prospective students opted out at this stage (M. Maher, personal communication, April 30, 2010).

The cultural knowledge of the community has been embedded constantly in the units which have been delivered. The strong partnership which has evolved between CDU and the community is clearly illustrated in the following example, which is but one of many. A cross-curricular assessment task was undertaken which encompassed outcomes in the Technology, Science, Arts and Literacy curriculum components. The students invited the CDU lecturer on a weekend excursion to 'their country'. The organisation for this involved elders in the community providing, not only permission to visit their land, but also their presence to explain features of their dreaming and the physical environment. School staff also volunteered their time and a school vehicle which transported the adults and many enthusiastic children. During the expedition, various aspects of bush tucker were

pointed out in great detail, with the vehicle stopping many times on route. There was successful fishing, eating of bush plums and berries, a demonstration of the many uses of the Pandanus tree, and much celebration by all of being in 'their country'.

In subsequent weeks, the knowledge demonstrated and shared on that weekend was transformed into a big book for use in the classroom. It detailed various plants and their uses, with original illustrations by the women. The text was written in both English and Murinhpatha. Every part of the book was conceived and produced by the ATs. They then proceeded to plan and teach lessons in their classrooms using the book as a resource. The children were enthralled by the lessons which related specifically to their knowledge and experience.

The challenges and celebrations associated with participation in the *Growing Our Own* program are often difficult to distinguish. The program brings together two cultures and allows for (indeed demands) a mutual exchange of ideas, beliefs and values. The reciprocity between students, lecturers, mentors and coordinators offers the opportunity for all to gain a new perspective on education, and possibly life, in a remote Indigenous community. Literacy in English is one of the chief obstacles that have been faced in this program. The bilingual nature of the community and the school at Wadeye has necessitated adaptations on the program that is delivered at other sites. The process of building and sustaining relationships has been central to all of the work conducted at Wadeye in this project.

#### **Some Concluding Reflections:**

For the authors of this paper, the *Growing Our Own* program has allowed us to experience fresh insight on the sheer determination required by these three strong and vital women to overcome adversity and, through tenacity of spirit, strive toward a re-imagined future, not only for themselves, but for their families and their community. The students' commitment to their studies and their motivation to contribute to their community is inspiring.

The *Growing Our Own* program is sustainable in and of itself. The contribution that can be made to enhancing the educational outcomes in Wadeye, and similar communities, cannot be underestimated. The potential for further cohorts of students in Wadeye to train as teachers is considerable. There does, however, need to be careful consideration made about future participants, and adequate support provided to ensure satisfactory levels of literacy in English. The viability and cost of sending a lecturer to the site via plane each week would need to be reviewed and alternatives considered.

This program offers the very real potential for growth in a community that has suffered through years of government and educational policy change. Local Indigenous teachers have the potential to provide positive role-models for local children. Educational achievement needs to become a real possibility for the children of Wadeye. The students in the *Growing Our Own* program can be the instigators of positive change in a community that deserves to thrive.

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**Classrooms without Borders: Using Academic Service Learning to Enhance Pre-Service Teachers' Understandings of Diversity and Difference. A Longitudinal Study.** - *Tania Ferfolja, Diana Whitton, Claire Sidoti*

Paper in Spring 2010 Journal

# Unearthing Assumptions of Engaged Research About (Indigenous) Engagement Within School Communities - Aggie Wegner, Tess Lea, Catherine Holmes, Eva McRae-Williams, Richard Chenhall, Helen Thompson, Johanna Karam

## Abstract

This paper explores engagement through multiple prisms: engagement in the context of community-oriented university research, engagement conducted under the auspices of a research partnership with a community organisation that itself sponsors school-community engagement; and engagement as the subject of research. In the research presented here, we are exploring the dynamics and levels of engagement in school-parent relationships in two urban and one regional primary school in the Northern Territory, with a particular emphasis on the carers responsible for Indigenous students in these community settings.

Prompted by our 'engagement' with schools and the not-for-profit community development organisation, this research started with the following assumption – that parental engagement with schools has positive effects on children's educational outcomes, and that this engagement can be generated through the cultivation of enablers. This paper points to the need to re-conceptualise this assumption and examines the pressures from a variety of community and government organisations for collaborative researcher partnerships or university researchers to engage with industry partners (our relationships of engagement) in shaping *a priori* assumptions about engagement (our inquiry topic).

**Keywords:** levels of engagement; contradictions of engagement; engaged research; parent-school engagement; Indigenous engagement

## Introduction

Community participation encompasses various activities between various partners. In the context of the research presented here, our aim was: (1) to conduct engaged research; and (2) to explore the dynamics, understanding and levels of engagement in school-parent relationships in two urban and one regional primary school in the Northern Territory, with a particular emphasis on the carers responsible for Indigenous students. Education outcomes in the Northern Territory are considered amongst the poorest in the country, particularly for Indigenous children (Ladwig and Sarra 2009). One response to this situation has been the uniform acceptance of the value of parental engagement in schools.

Parental engagement is touted as important in the cultivation of positive interactions between parents and teachers, which are assumed key to the facilitation of improvements to children's educational outcomes (Fan and Chen 2001; Izzo et al. 1999). This is reflected in Australia's most recent iteration of its national Indigenous education policy platform whereby 'engagement' is listed as the second of six priorities aimed at 'closing the gap' in schooling outcomes. Even beyond educational spheres and larger policy arenas, the concept of engagement appears to be the new 'in' mode, associated with notions of building stronger communities in all areas of life, as well as shaping research approaches and discourse.

Effective engagement is premised on an underlying assumption of its 'goodness'. However, despite the wide ranging interest and investment in engagement, it is multifaceted in nature and can be interpreted and applied in different ways (Carreon, Drake, and Barton 2005; Theodorou 2007).

In a policy context, Indigenous parental engagement with schools has been understood as a necessity since the 1970s, at this time being understood as parental education within homes – with for example, parents being supported and encouraged to spend time reading to and with their children (Watts and Henry 1978). In the 1980s, there was a shift towards participation by Indigenous parents in governance structures such as existing school committees (Sliwka and Istance 2006) and the 1990s were characterised by government funding for the formation of adjunct school committees aimed at increasing Indigenous involvement in education decision-making. Yet the increased involvement in decision making potentially provided by these structures coincided with a decline in educational outcomes for Indigenous children. This coincidence generated much debate in academic and educational spheres and the result was that the adjunct councils became defunct (see Loke 1993; Ngarritjan-Kessariss 1994, 1997).

Since the beginning of this decade, the emphasis on parental engagement has focused on *school-based* community activity participation. Programs that aimed to involve families in schools, ranging from family rooms to breakfast programs to parenting support groups, were implemented. Fredricks *et al.* (2004) categorise engagement in the school setting into three types: behavioural, emotional and cognitive. Behavioural engagement refers to getting involved in social activities as well as academic activities in the school and following rules and norms. Emotional engagement focuses on values, a sense of belonging, but also emotional investment. Cognitive engagement refers to some form of investment based on one's willingness to achieve certain goals. These different constructs of engagement overlap and are frequently discussed in the literature (see detailed overview in (Fredricks *et al.* 2004)).

Zellman and Waterman (1998) examined parental involvement in schools in an American context and challenged the assumed importance of engagement to educational outcomes. The authors found parental style and the way in which parents interacted with their children to be a more important predictor of educational outcomes than the extent to which parents were engaged in schools. They commented:

At some level, this finding of the transcendence of parenting style over parent school involvement seems little more than obvious: Parenting, which goes on all the time, counts for more in understanding child development and performance than a particular behaviour, such as level of parent school involvement. Yet work in the area of parent involvement focuses heavily on school-site involvement, ignoring this perhaps more significant relationship. (Zellman and Waterman 1998, p. 379)

The research team identified a need to examine the engagement phenomenon for Indigenous parents in order to shed light on how the educational outcomes of their children could be improved.

## **Engaged Research**

At the onset of this project, the objective was to conduct engaged research. That is, we (the University) were engaged with our project partner, the schools and families who agreed to participate. As such, this project provided an important opportunity to not only conduct research on engagement but also engage in the process.

Through a collaborative project with the not-for-profit organisation, The Smith Family, and with additional funding from the Australian Research Council, our original intent was to identify barriers for carers of Indigenous students who might otherwise be marginalised from the school, with the aim of helping schools, and our collaborating industry partner, to adjust their program initiatives. We thus viewed our ethnographic task in the light of a methodological correction, taking the merits of thoughtful engagement for granted, in common with the broader policy community.

As researchers we engaged on many levels, with different stakeholders, policy advisors, school teachers, other staff and parents. We observed social processes in lived (and worked) environments, we built relationships and we talked to people and interviewed them in a range of settings.

Our intention, based on this research, was not to deliver the so-called magic bullet on engagement. Rather, it was to provide an enhanced understanding of the contradictions and assumptions around engagement that may exist between carers of Indigenous children and their schools. In doing so, we were able to document the experience of undertaking engaged research.

## **Methods**

An ethnographic exploratory research approach provided the depth and richness of the findings of this project. This approach was selected because of its inherent value in examining complex life worlds to better understand beliefs, values and attitudes which reproduce and inform behaviour; for its usefulness in exploring a subject not previously studied; and for its snowball recruitment approach to engaging parents as participants. This aspect was important for engagement as the researcher had to build relationships of trust within the school and school community, the three participating schools, in order to gradually build a possible list of contacts to invite to participate. The role of school personnel as well as participating parents was vital in order to understand their respective views and perceptions with regards to engagement.

Guided by an interview protocol, open-ended face-to-face interviews were conducted which allowed us to obtain nuances in the participants' responses. All participants, school staff, parents as well as policy makers, were forthcoming and happy to participate after they were briefed on the project. For the participants the notion of engagement and perceived positive influence on children's educational outcomes was viewed as important and therefore their participation was ensured. A total of 26 school staff, 9 policy makers and 33 parents' interviews were conducted. Additionally, program information on engagement efforts were collected as were policy documents. The data were then coded into themes, categories and emergent patterns with the information used to describe the emergent contradictions and assumptions concerning engagement of Indigenous parents/carers within school communities.

With the participants' consent, some interviews were tape recorded to obtain a verbatim record or alternatively extensive notes were taken in order and to allow the research team to interact and

probe during the meetings. The data were analysed using discourse analysis as we were looking for patterns in the language used but also the meanings associated with certain words or phrases. It was important to recognise the 'setting', as it is a means for understanding how things are done and what is implied by words chosen (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates 2001). For example 'engagement' or 'involvement' did not necessarily mean the same thing across stakeholders and also generated much debate among the research team.

### **How is 'engagement' played out in reality in three NT schools?**

In this research project, all three participating schools have a large Indigenous cohort of students and therefore have a strong focus on engagement. These schools have programs such as 'School at the Centre' or 'Breakfast with a Mentor', run largely by non-government organisations. They employ large numbers of Indigenous staff, drawn from their surrounding cohort communities. They have open days, film nights, concerts, breakfast clubs and highly popular student-led reporting, where the child showcases the semester's learning in a self-assembled portfolio. They have liaison officers to link households to classrooms and means by which welfare assistance, for accessing emergency cash, food, shelter, or translation of an administrative form for banking or some other requirement is happily facilitated. Fund-raising efforts to resource extra-curricular benefits for community members are considered part of school business. Parents have places where they are encouraged to gather for tea and coffee after dropping off their children, and students have dedicated homework centres with tutors and after-school carers on hand. The school brings in health professionals if there are medical issues to attend to, and knows exactly which children are under the care of the state, who may have experienced tragedy in their life, or who has a diagnosed learning disorder. In short, the schools involved in this study have very active forms of parental engagement, yet Indigenous student outcomes remain poor.

Most school programs/activities that we encountered in our study would be what Fredricks et al. (2004) describe largely as 'behavioural engagement'. To a lesser extent, these programs promoted emotional and cognitive engagement processes. One such example of this was the Family and Schools Together (FAST) program operating at one school site in partnership with The Smith Family. The FAST program is a school based early intervention program for children aimed to prevent children's educational failure (McDonald 1998). Teachers work with multiple families and their children over a period of eight weeks in order to strengthening the family unit. It is therefore not surprising that this focus on behavioural engagement at the policy and school level had also shaped Indigenous parents' perceptions around what was considered to be the 'right' form of engagement or involvement with the school.

For educators in this study, the programs mentioned above were considered to play an important part in their efforts to engage families. Most educators, when talking about engagement, highlighted the programs that they had developed, such as 'cinema under the stars' and 'big breakfast' programs, and voiced the efforts they employed to improve Indigenous involvement in schooling. They believed that Indigenous parents needed to be enticed to come to the school in order to create an opportunity for staff to discuss a child's academic performance and considered this form of engagement as a worthwhile strategy.

Similarly, policy makers emphasised the need for engagement. As a matter of fact, they advocated for more engagement between Indigenous parents and the school. From the policy makers'

perspectives, engagement is an intrinsic part of education and its 'worthiness' is rarely questioned. However, the interviews with policy makers highlighted the inchoate ways in which engagement practices were implemented and fostered. They argued that these were dependent on individuals, mainly school principals, rather than on specific policies which addressed engagement. Policy makers were continuously referring to an individual's capacity and vision.

In contrast, research with parents illuminated five key assumptions surrounding engagement in schools and engagement in research practice.

### **Fear as a catalyst for (non)engagement**

Behind the focus on engagement was an assumption that parents were not engaged enough. This supposed lack of engagement was explained by some policy advisors and school-based staff as parental fear of school institutions. With schools believed to be an uncomfortable or threatening place. Engagement initiatives were believed necessary to overcome this situation. This is illustrated in an interview with a policy officer who stressed that the front office of a school could be either hostile or welcoming. Putting himself in the shoes of parents, he sympathetically imagined making the difficult first step of pushing open heavy glass doors to approach the reception staff, only to encounter boxes full of school uniform packets and counters covered in piles of paper shouting everything but 'culturally safe place' to the nervous Indigenous adult.

Another example of the perception that Indigenous parents were fearful of schools was described by an educator. They maintained that the school was an unfriendly space for Indigenous adults who are 'ashamed' to be there:

I think we need to make the classrooms friendlier for the parents. I mean, I'm not saying they're not, but a lot of our Indigenous parents are very, as I said, ashamed, [they] don't want to, don't want to come in here, so I don't know if maybe holding things outside of classrooms will work, I'm not really sure.

In contrast, this research found that parents did not feel intimidated, unwelcome or excluded from the school environs. The findings revealed that very rarely did parents feel anxious about entering school grounds or approaching staff when they had concerns or issues they wished to raise. Parents typically described the schools as being 'like family', as 'friendly, 'supportive' and 'helpful' or as a 'good place'. They did not feel alien or excluded from the school and were often perplexed by the suggestion of such an idea.

Ironically, the behavioural engagement pursued by schools for the express purpose of enhanced academic outcomes has not worked. Yet the response to the poor academic outcome has been to further invest in 'feel good' engagement reproducing with circularity more of the same.

### **Level of engagement**

School-based stakeholders, including government and non-government organisations, also maintained that parental involvement of Indigenous students was important and promoted a high level of involvement in schools. Parents agreed with the notion that their involvement was important; however, they felt that their current level of participation was appropriate and satisfactory and any more would be a burden. For some parents, the expectation that they should

be involved in so much was already onerous. Educators and policy makers were unaware of Indigenous expectations with regards to 'enough' engagement and have kept trying to increase their participation in behavioural forms.

### **Forms of engagement**

School personnel consistently strove to increase the engagement of Indigenous parents, implying that existing approaches were inadequate and were the root cause of poor educational outcomes. Conversely, parents were genuinely satisfied with the schools' attempts and existing initiatives aimed at improving parental engagement. Educators and policy makers used the interviews as a platform to highlight their considered need for increased engagement. Parents, on the other hand, voiced their satisfaction with their current forms of behavioural engagement.

### **Assumption of invisibility**

As noted, parents of Indigenous children were urged to engage more with schools. This study aimed to target those Indigenous parents who it was believed were 'invisible' and not engaged in the school. As it turns out, among parent participants, the more marginal and seemingly 'high risk' the parent group was, the greater their actual contact with the school. In fact, the real invisible parents were more likely to be those who worked full time, whose children attended regularly and where academic outcomes left no cause for concern.

This high level of presence can be traced back to parents' availability due to unemployment, walking their children to school due to a lack of transport, participating in breakfast and other programs together with their children, as well as trying to support children with learning and behavioural difficulties. However, a high level of 'behavioural engagement' does not necessarily correlate with either improved attendance or educational outcomes of children.

### **Assumptions about engagement**

We had expected difficulties in identifying and interviewing the perceived 'non-engaged' Indigenous parents (or the invisible parents). After the initial introduction by the school's Indigenous liaison person to Indigenous parents, and recruiting through a snowball approach, parents were enthusiastic about sharing their stories. The participants expanded on their answers and provided us with stories and engaged in a meaningful way by asking questions, agreeing to participate in follow-up focus groups and keeping informed.

### **Discussion**

In this paper, we argue that contradictions and assumptions inherent within the concept of 'engagement' gather momentum to become powerful institutional discourses. This raises the question, 'What form/s of engagement is/are necessary for improved academic outcomes?'

Zellman and Waterman (1998) argued that parent interventions geared towards improving academic outcomes would be more productive if they addressed the more fundamental issues of parental roles, good parenting and parental relations with children which promote cognitive and emotional development. They make the important point that parenting style is not enmeshed in a social context defined by poverty, wealth or ethnic background and that it is both teachable and

changeable. While they make the observation that significant time and resources are already devoted to parent involvement programs, they argue a case for a clearer focus on improved parenting in order to achieve more significant and long-lasting effects on children. Investment in productive engagement for the purpose of better educational outcomes starts at birth – not at school entry.

A question remains: would Northern Territory school children and parents benefit from a conscious shift away from behavioural forms of engagement to cognitive and emotional forms?

Reflecting on the methods used in this research, an ethnographic exploratory approach proved to be successful in obtaining insight and an understanding in the participants' views and perspectives with regards to engagement. This study has also raised questions about undertaking research on engagement with community. From its developmental stages, commonly held assumptions about the moral worthiness of engagement informed the research design. In large part this was a response to the need to develop a research project which ticked boxes for multiple parties, including the university, research funding and the community organisation sectors. Together, these partners required development of an approach which capitalised on framings that placed Indigenous school engagement as essential for better outcomes.

Yet as the research has evolved and findings have been revealed, the potential for 'engaged research' to be complicit with moral discourses with notions of Indigenous pathology at their heart has been highlighted. Improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous children, the ideological loadings within discourses of engagement, and the orthodoxies of university to community research partnerships, all require critical rethinking. This paper explored each of these tension points, as part of our attempt to shift beyond a limited educational field of view toward an understanding of the complexity of the larger social worlds in which each actor within our engagement project is enmeshed.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Catalysts for Social Inclusion: the practices and effectiveness of the Catalyst-Clemente program for social inclusion pathways to higher education – Professor Brenda Cherednichenko, Associate Professor Peter Howard, Anne Hampshire, Professor Jude Butcher, Professor Sherry Siggers, Associate Professor Paul Flatau, Dr Tim Marchant , Jonothan Compton, Youssef Taouk**

### **Abstract**

The Catalyst-Clemente program is a partnership between communities, NGOs and universities. The Catalyst-Clemente program delivers accredited university courses in humanities subjects to disadvantaged people in a community setting. The program has its origins in Earl Shorris' Clemente program in New York in the mid 1990s. Its philosophy is that tertiary-level education in the humanities can assist socially disenfranchised people out of cycles of poverty and homelessness. This research examines the immediate, short and longer-term outcomes for disadvantaged people from their participation in a community-embedded and socially-supported university education pathway to social inclusion. This paper will report the first stage of this Australian Research Council collaborative grant which brings together Mission Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society, Australian Catholic University, Curtin University, Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University.

The research utilises a survey instrument across the four domains of health and well-being, social supports, program engagement and participation and social inclusion, together with in-depth interviews which collect qualitative data about student experiences and outcomes of the program. The Catalyst-Clemente program incorporates community engagement, social inclusion, appropriate adult learning approaches and cross-cultural understanding to provide an educational pathway for marginalised people. The program is designed specifically to address their personal and learning needs to enable access to higher education. Catalyst-Clemente provides a tangible model for community embedded socially supported education that enhances the presence and an evolutionary role of universities within and with community. The paper discusses the outcomes of the program to date and provides tentative findings emerging from the first phase of the research, including the identification of barriers and enabling factors in the program.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Engagement, Partnership, Equity

### **Context of Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion and Catalyst-Clement**

“...the choices are there and you just feel better because you have choices” (Jana).

Social exclusion occurs when individuals, families and neighbourhoods: experience low incomes relative to community norms and needs; do not have secure and safe shelter; experience unemployment; live in fear in their environment; cannot access the health, child care and social services they need; do not receive adequate schooling; are not connected with friends, families and their neighbourhood; and experience self-esteem and quality of life outcomes well below those of the general Australian community. Social exclusion impacts on individuals, families and communities,

leads to involvement in criminal activity and contributes to increased levels of public spending on welfare and related public services (Martijn & Sharpe, 2006; Kohen *et al*, 2008; Henry, 2008). It also results in a decline in social cohesion and an inability to harness society's human capital resources at a time of an increasingly ageing population (Abhayaratna, & Lattimore, 2006; Productivity Commission, 2005).

Australian data from the Household, Income, Labour Dynamics in Australia survey demonstrates that around 13% of Australians who are facing disadvantage have the following profile: incomplete secondary education; typically experience unemployment for more than eighteen months; high reliance on welfare payments, and low income; poor physical and mental health; and experience the lowest levels of social support of any group (Headey & Warren, 2007). Vinson (2007), who mapped disadvantage in Australia, highlights that pockets of concentrated and severe social disadvantage have become entrenched across certain communities. He notes that "it is difficult to deny the centrality of limited education and its impact on the acquisition of economic and life skills in the making and sustaining of disadvantage in Australia" (2007, p. xiv).

### **The role of education**

There is extensive evidence to suggest that there are positive correlations between education and the good health and wellbeing of individuals (Hammond, 2002; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Hartog & Oosterbeek, Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999). The specific impacts of education upon health and resilience throughout the lifespan have been thoroughly investigated (Hammond, 2004; Grossman & Kaestner, 1997; Hammond, 2002; Hartog & Oosterbeek, 1998; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Many of these impacts are related to psychological qualities which "may promote attitudes, practices, and life circumstances that are conducive to positive health outcomes" (Hammond, 2004, p. 552). A number of studies have indicated that relevant education can lead to improvements in: self-confidence (Carlton & Soulsby, 1999; Dench & Regan, 1999); self-efficacy (Wertheimer, 1997); self-understanding (Cox & Pascall, 1994); competencies, communication skills, and civic engagement (Emler & Fraser, 1999; Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992); a sense of belonging to a social group (Emler & Fraser, 1999; Jarvis & Walker, 1997); and substantive freedoms and capabilities (Sen, 1999). It is the combination of these 'soft' psychological outcomes and 'hard' social outcomes which indicate how purposeful and appropriate education can contribute to improvements within the social, economic, and personal domains of a person's life (Hammond, 2004; Luby & Welch, 2006).

### **The Clemente Program**

Providing educational pathways to social inclusion for people who are disadvantaged or marginalised requires their access to education which enables them to have the confidence and capabilities to take personal control and engage purposefully in a changing society (Benson, Harkavy & Puckett, 2007). It is the potential of education, including higher education in the humanities, to improve social mobility and promote social inclusion, delivered through a cross-sectorial collaboration that is the foundation of the *Catalyst-Clemente* Australian program (Shorris, 2000; Hammond, 2004; Stevenson *et al*, 2007). Founded in New York, the *Clemente* program's philosophy is that tertiary-level humanities education can help lift socially excluded people out of poverty and homelessness (Shorris, 2000). Studying the humanities requires people to think about and reflect upon the world in which they live, and it is this intellectual engagement which in turn can promote a broader re-engagement and "activity with other people at every level", assisting them to escape

from generations of poverty (Shorris, 2000, p.127). The transformative potential of adult liberal education, which builds the capacity of students to view themselves in terms of their intellectual and personal capacities, and as agents, has been noted generally (Nussbaum, 2001). Scott (1998) notes that such education aligns "...various disparate parts of the self to gain coherence, peace, and a sense of wholeness...*promoting*...a sense of freedom and authenticity which can contribute to meaningful work and activity in the social sphere" (p. 183). Those people most in need of access to education and the critical pathway it provides to transformative learning and engaged citizenship, however, are often those least likely to access it (Butcher, Howard & McFadden, 2003). Reasons include an inability to meet entrance requirements, very low incomes and a complex suite of health and social problems which inhibit their ability to maintain their studies. To address these personal, social and learning needs the collaboration of community agencies, business and universities makes possible the offering of an integrated, learner-centred program (Howard *et al*, 2008).

### **Catalyst-Clemente in Australia**

*Clemente* was first run in Australia in 2003 by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in collaboration with St Vincent de Paul (St V de P) establishing an initial site in East Sydney. Since 2005, eight sites have been established across Australia, in Surry Hills, Sydney [July 2005, Mission Australia-MA]; Brisbane [July 2006, MA]; Canberra [February 2007 - St V de P]; Campbelltown, south-west Sydney [August 2007, St V de P]; Perth [February 2008, MA with Edith Cowan University]; Melbourne [April 2008, MA]; Ballarat [August 2008, ACU and University of Ballarat with The Smith Family] and Adelaide [March 2010, Finders University and MA]. The sites are under the umbrella name of *Catalyst-Clemente*.

The program offers university-approved units in subjects such as ethics, literature, drama, art, philosophy and history with students studying one unit each semester. On the successful completion of four units, participants graduate with a university non-award qualification which can provide a pathway into an accredited university undergraduate degree or other tertiary education program. Catalyst-Clemente is distinctive in that this university education pathway is embedded in the community and is socially supported. It is offered in a community site that provides services to cater for the complex health, emotional and social needs of students. As indicated in preliminary research (Howard *et al*, 2008), many students experience problems with substance misuse and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, with co-morbidity (both substance misuse and mental illness) increasingly reported among disadvantaged Australians (Stockwell *et al*, 2005). Levels of mental health are key indicators of disadvantage and poverty and a critical element for cognitive and communication skills, learning, personal development, resilience, and self-esteem (AIHW, 2003; Johnstone, 2001). The community service setting facilitates participant access to the program and the agency support is crucial in addressing this complex array of student needs (Mission Australia, 2004; 2007).

The collaboration of community agency support staff, university lecturers, and learning partners are integral to the socially supported nature of the program as is the mutual support amongst the participants themselves. Learning partners, for the students, are recruited as volunteers through the community agencies and networks, to establish one-on-one learning partnerships with the students. Students and learning partners meet weekly over the duration of the course to work through the educational and learning issues facing each student.

## Methodology

The research reported in this paper aims to examine how participation in the Catalyst-Clemente program, a community-based higher education humanities program involving partnerships between universities, social welfare organisations and business, is demonstrating achievement in social inclusion outcomes of disadvantaged Australians.

The research project's *objectives* are to:

1. examine the impacts of community-embedded, socially-supported tertiary education on the pathway to social inclusion for disadvantaged Australians;
2. understand the factors and processes that assist or hinder disadvantaged Australians entering, progressing and completing community based tertiary education; and,
3. identify the costs and benefits associated with community-embedded, socially-supported tertiary education.

The project specifically attempts to respond to the following *research questions*:

1. What are the immediate, short term and longer term social inclusion outcomes from students' participation in the Catalyst-Clemente program?
2. How, and to what extent do the educational processes included in the program impact upon the pathway to social inclusion for disadvantaged people?
3. What social supports are fundamental to this educational process in providing an effective pathway towards social inclusion for disadvantaged people?
4. What are the costs and benefits of this community embedded, socially- supported tertiary educational pathway to social inclusion for disadvantaged Australians?
5. What are the social inclusion policy and program implications of the research project's findings?

This paper reports the first year of a 2.5 year ARC funded study [2009-2011]. Data collections include a survey of students across three sites at Sydney, Campbelltown and Perth; in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of students; focus groups of students from two sites and the program coordinators at each site; and a cost-benefit analysis of the program. Survey data is collected across five key domains: demographic; health and well being; social supports; program engagement and participation; and social inclusion. The study details the economic, social and well-being position of the Catalyst-Clemente student population on entry to the program and undertakes cohort comparisons with the Australian population from the subset of the 'disadvantaged' population from which the student population is drawn. This is achieved using the 2006 Census, other Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey.

A cost-benefit analysis will measure the extent to which the program improves the outcomes of participants relative to the net cost of delivering the program. Estimates of outcomes will be derived from completed survey data. Cost-benefit studies of this type are complex, but there is a growing body of research which is attempting such analysis (Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 2001; Access Economics, 2004; Flatau, Zaretsky, Brady, Haigh & Martin, 2008; Pinkney & Ewing, 2006).

Following the survey, semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of students and program coordinators is conducted across the data collection phase of the study. The interviews will focus on 5-6 key topics related to the project's research questions with the use of open-ended, follow up and

structured questions. Student interviews gather data on the individual's life journeys across the study exploring and providing insights to the student's perspectives on their home, school and employment experiences, social interaction, health and wellbeing and the impact of these factors on their studies. As the students progress in their studies, the interviews explore how their education is influencing all aspects of their life. Interviews will be 'guided conversations' which, while having specific topics, will be fluid, allowing backtracking, reflexivity, and diversions (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1992; Yin, 2003).

### **Emerging Trends from the First Year of Data**

Students who are studying through the Catalyst-Clemente program have overcome significant hurdles throughout their lives. We've been talking to them about their lives before they started studying and the impact of their study and the Clemente-Catalyst program on them today. Some have experienced traumatic childhoods, interrupted and unhappy schooling, unemployment and financial hardship, and ongoing physical and mental health problems, including long periods of serious drug and alcohol use. These shared painful experiences help to bond them:

"We've all had hardships, we all kind of understand each other; they might not go through what I've been through, but we're all struggling from one point to another" (Matilda).

Over August-October 2009, a baseline survey of the 25 participants in the Catalyst Clemente program was carried out. In the year prior to the commencement of the program, 20% were looking for work. Of the 25 people surveyed, 40% have worked in a job of 35 hours or more a week less than 2 years ago; 12% were working or on paid leave. Others were studying prior to this program, where 8% were doing a different course at TAFE, and 8% studying elsewhere. Addressing health issues was another activity the respondents were engaged in, with 16% were being treated for drug or alcohol problem, and 12% for a mental health condition.

### **Demographics**

With a male to female ratio of 13: 12, the majority of the participants are above 41 years of age (72%). Participants are mostly single, separated or divorced (80%), and the others are married, or in a relationship; 60% have children; 56% were born in Australia; 20% speak other languages at home; 8% are of Aboriginal or Torres Islander descent; 8% of the participants are caring for one or two infants, and 52% have dependents under the age of 12.

### **Homelessness history**

A majority of the respondents had experienced homelessness and states of precarious living. At one time or another, 64% had lived in crisis or emergency accommodation, 60% with relatives, friends or acquaintances because they had nowhere to live, and 32% had lived on the streets, camped in parks, toilets, charity bins or lived in squats or cars. As well, 28% have lived in boarding or rooming houses or hostels. Owing to shortage of money, at some stage, 32% could not afford their own place so stayed with relatives, and 12% could not afford their place so stayed on the streets.

### **Education history**

All of the respondents have attended primary or secondary school. Of these, 40% have completed Year 12 or equivalent; 52% have completed between Year 11 to Year 9 or equivalent; 4% have only completed Year 8 or below. Some of the reasons those who left school before Year 12 were: living

circumstances prevented, didn't like school, not doing very well at school, not given the opportunity to go to year 12. Since leaving school, 16% attained a post-graduate or graduate degree, 16% a Bachelor degree, and 40% a vocational qualification. Other attempts at study (19) have been disrupted due to health issues, having to care for children and the courses being too intensive, among other reasons.

### **Health history**

The main activity in the last 12 months prior to the program, among 16% of the respondents, was suffering from, and attending to ill-health or disability. Further, 12% were receiving treatment for a mental health condition, and 16% were receiving treatment for a drug/alcohol problem. A long-standing physical health condition, illness, disability or infirmity is experienced among 52% of the respondents. In response to the query on substance use at any time during their lives, 56% had tried Nicotine, 84% alcohol, 52% Marijuana, 28% Heroin, 28% Opioids, 36% Amphetamines, 28% Cocaine, 32% Tranquilizers, 36% Hallucinogens and 12% Inhalants.

### **Employment and finances**

The majority of the respondents have not been looking for jobs, with 72% saying they did not look for work in a full or part-time job last week and 68% have not worked at all in the last month. They mainly subsist on government pensions (76%). Others pay their way through working (24%), or from other sources. The survey queried the respondents with regards to their financial situation and their ability to make ends meet and 32% said they had just enough money to get by, and 28% said they had enough to get by, but not get back on track while 16% don't have sufficient funds to get by. Some participants raise funds to live by pawning or selling something or borrowing money, and 40% had to ask a welfare agency for clothes, accommodation or money at one time or other over the last 12 months.

Over the last year, insufficient personal funds were found to be creating issues with wellbeing and quality of life. Of the 25 participants, 32% had to go without food when hungry. The inability to pay bills was another issue, with 40% not being able to keep up with utility payments, and 28% getting behind the rent or mortgage. At least 32% could not afford their own place, and stayed with friends or relatives. 16% moved house because the rent or mortgage was too high. 12% lived on the streets because they could not afford their own place.

Shortage of funds was also affecting connection with other people, where 44% couldn't go out with friends because they were unable to pay their way, 24% being unable to attend wedding or funeral, and 20% not being able to go to an event because of lack of transport. Self-esteem and confidence issues may have also been experienced among the 24% who wore badly fitting or worn out clothes.

### **Sense of well-being**

Access to food, clothing, bedding, and medical treatment was not an issue among the respondents. They also had reasonable purchasing power to own a telephone. However, they faced other issues that were affecting their wellbeing owing to not being able to afford it. As well, 52% did not have a decent or secure home, and 36% of them said this was because they could not afford it; 40% did not have access to dental care, and 32% said this was because it was expensive; and 48% did not have a saving of \$500 for an emergency, and 32% because of not being able to afford it.

## **Service use**

The survey found that there was a very high usage of health and justice services among those surveyed.

Health: 72% had contact with doctors, hospitals, and health workers in the last year. They reported a total of 222 GP visits, 167 medical specialist visits, 129 Psychologist visits, 11 Nurse or allied health consultations, and 18 other allied health consultations. A total of 995 days have been spent in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation centre in the last year.

Justice: 20% had contact with the police, justice system our courts in the last 12 months. They had a total of: 11 visits from justice or police officers, 15 incidents of being stopped on streets by police, 9 instances of being in court over an incident, 1 apprehension, and 4 incidents of being a victim of an assault, robbery which resulted in police investigation.

## **Social isolation**

The survey also found that 88% felt they were treated with respect by other people, 88% accepted by others for who they are, and 72% had regular contact with family. Several of the participants in the Catalyst Clemente program have not felt connected to the rest of society over the last 12 months owing to various endogenous and exogenous reasons.

Expense 36% were not engaged in paid work, 36% lacked money.

Transport: 40% did not have their own transport, and 28% faced difficulties traveling because of irregular or expensive public transport.

Poor health: physical access due to disability isolated 20% of the respondents. 32% said physical health conditions, and 36% said mental health conditions prevented them from feeling a part of society.

Discrimination: 12% said racism 4% sexual prejudice, and 12% discrimination because of disability created a sense of isolation.

Unsupportive friends and family: 40% said lack of friends to provide support when needed, 48% said lack of supportive family members 48% said family related problems, and 12% lack of access to children created non-inclusion.

Caring responsibilities 12% had child care responsibilities which prevented them from getting out.

## **Participation in the Catalyst Clemente University Course**

There were several reasons why the participants undertook study in the program. These included motivation for betterment through: knowledge (68%), learning interest, personal satisfaction, to prove to themselves the ability to achieve (each 64%), to move on from where they were (60%); and additional skills were the primary reasons.

For most students, their circumstances meant that university study was usually not an option for them in the past, either because they didn't have the necessary entry qualifications, or because of their physical and emotional difficulties they lacked the confidence to tackle what they saw as a very

intimidating place. The more informal, community-based CC program provided them with a new start:

“The way we do the education here is a lot different...it’s very social and...you become less frightened, because it’s actually quite frightening to go back to university as a mature age student” (Millie).

## Reflections

Overall, the students had a very positive evaluation of the Catalyst Clemente program, and felt that they had been able to make several changes in their life as a result of it. 92% really liked life as a Catalyst Clemente student, 88% feel that the program has lived up to their expectations, 88% are satisfied with the overall quality of teaching, and 88% with the unit topics on offer. Students’ satisfaction with other various aspects of the program is as follows.

*Class atmosphere:* 20% really like the atmosphere in class. 88% found the supportive and informal nature of class helpful in their transition back to study, 88% liked the small class size, 80% felt formal structure of lectures would help transition back to further study, and 76% with feedback on progress.

*Access to services:* 80% were satisfied with access to university facilities such as the library and computers, 80% with access to support services, 84% with ability to access academic services, 76% with access to personal services, 88% with the personal support given, and 84% with the encouragement to explore new areas of knowledge

*Access to information:* 92% felt that the administrative staff were available to respond to student queries, 64% were aware of access to information on procedures for course withdrawal and unit exemptions, 46% on information on where to get financial aid, and 64% on information on health and other personal services.

*Pre-course information:* 94% were satisfied with information provided before enrolling in the course, 76% satisfied on information on what is expected as a student enrolled in the course, 80% found the admission requirements clearly identified, and 84% information that received before applied for entry accurately reflect the course

*Self-development:* 88% felt that the courses they were following was helping with critical thinking skills, 84% with development of writing skills, 80% with development of time management and planning skills, 80% with better communication skills, 72% with skills helping future employment, 56% with skills helping in coping with crisis, 84% with broadened horizons, and 60% with confidence to engage in further university study.

“I’m not a gonna anymore, I’m a doer, I’m doing it. So if I do stuff up somewhere down the line, well, I’ve done it, I’ve had a go, you know?” (Jordan).

*Broadened outlook and confidence to deal with life:* 80% report improvements in outlook on life and 62% in other areas of life. 76% find that they now look at challenges differently, and have found the confidence to make changes in their lives.

“... expands your thinking; it gets you to think about other things...like there is a life out there...there is something happening over there and it’s not just Big Brother on TV; you know what I mean?” (Jordan).

## Personal changes

“My outlook...is changing...has changed quite a bit...my perspectives are different...I’m a lot more optimistic” (Millie).

Overall satisfaction was reported by 52% of the respondents. The greatest improvements in life experienced after undertaking the Catalyst Clemente program are with regards to coping with serious

problems (52%), health (48%), inclusion in the local community (44%) and opportunities of employment (40%). The respondents felt that there was the least difference with regards to housing (60% same), finances (72% same), and the neighborhood they lived in (60% same).

### **Engagement with others in the program**

The survey assessed the experience of the participants with relation to their peers, lecturers, and the community.

*Other students:* 72% were satisfied with the quality of discussion with other students: 76% with discussions with learning partners, 72% with support from learning partners, and 76% with the opportunity to see people with similar backgrounds complete the course so they could have confidence to carry out further study.

*Lecturers:* 92% were satisfied with discussions with university lecturers, and none agree that communicating with academic staff has given the confidence to enroll in further university study.

*Future contacts:* 44% have established contacts to assist in future employment.

*The community:* 76% feel greater connectivity to the community, 28% have greater confidence to join drama groups because of their experience with public performance, and 48% more inclined to take part in various community groups.

### **Improvements in Health and Wellbeing**

Participation in the program to-date has resulted in several positive mental health outcomes. 64% of the respondents reported an improvement with overall health and wellbeing since they undertook the program. 20% and 28% of respondents reported much better, and somewhat improved health outcomes following the program respectively. All participants whose main activity in the previous 12 months prior to the program, was spent receiving treatment for ill-health or disability reported much better or somewhat better health outcomes. In the group, 40% were about the same, 8% reported feeling somewhat worse or much worse since they started. Of those who reported worse health outcomes experienced the health conditions which had lasted or were likely to last for 6 months or more. These included: sight problems, hearing problems, limited use of arms and fingers, limited use of legs and feet, and mental illness for which help or supervision is required. One person was restricted in everyday activities by these conditions, and reported that sight and hearing problems had got worse.

Prior to the program, 16% reported own ill-health or disability, 16% were receiving treatment for a drug/alcohol problem, and 12% were receiving treatment for a mental health condition as their main activity. All of these participants reported an improved outlook on life and an ability to look at challenges differently. The 12% receiving treatment for their own ill-health or disability who were unsure or felt their situation was worse than before may have felt this way because of the continued impact of physical pain on a daily basis, and requiring a great deal of medical attention to function.

### **Challenges**

University study is a challenge still for most students. Besides having to deal with ongoing health and social difficulties, they have to cope with problems common to students everywhere. They talk about needing to be more computer literate, learning to meet deadlines, and needing support when the system seems overwhelming:

“when you get your outline and you look it’s a bit daunting, you know what I mean?” (Jordan).

The participants reported several challenges they were facing with the program. The main difficulty was with managing study commitments (68%). Other challenges can be grouped around five areas.

*Internal motivational and self-esteem related issues* such as having the self confidence to make initial inquiries (48%), having the personal confidence to make a decision to start (44%), having the sense of competency to begin study (44%), and managing personal behaviors (32%) were challenges reported.

*Literacy and academic issues* such as having appropriate computer skills (48%), appropriate academic literacy skills (24%), appreciating what it was to be a university student (48%), and finding study harder than imagined (36%) were also limiting.

*Exogenous issues* that hampered progress were: caring for children (24%), caring for family members (36%), and traveling and being on time for lectures (28%).

*Interpersonal skills*, such as relating to other students (28%), making new friends (32%), relating to lecturers (28%), relating to learning partners (24%), and relating to agency staff (20%) were also challenges.

“Everyone is willing to help. Everyone wants to lend a hand” (Sam)

*Other issues*: finding time for other commitments such as voluntary groups (28%), and other difficulties (44%).

### **The Future**

“...it’s enabled me to cope at this point in time...I feel like I do have a life and ...like I’ve got something to strive for, for me” (Earlybird).

A majority of the respondents were of the view that graduation from Catalyst Clemente could get them a job, a promotion, a pay rise, or a more responsible job (60%). Of the 36% who responded if didn’t know if they could get a job at the end of the program, 16% had dependent children whom they had to support, 16% had long-standing physical illness, 12% were taking medication and receiving support for a mental health condition, and 8% had contact with the justice system over the last 12 months. The students mainly planned to do further study after the completion of the Catalyst Clemente program (64%), find a part-time job (40%), a full-time job (28%), volunteer (28%), and obtain long-term housing (28%).

### **Further Research**

In 2010 the research expanded to include a larger cohort of participants across three sites and the original participants from 2009 will continue in the data collection to enable the research to learn about their ongoing experience and outcomes of the program. To date, these early data indicate that for this group of higher education students, the circumstances of their lives have a strong capacity to influence their academic success. Conversely, their engagement in higher education is having a significant impact on their ability to establish control over their personal wellbeing and development, their capacity to gain and remain in employment, and their future opportunities including social, physical and economic success. Expansion of the data over the next 12 months will provide deeper and more valid and trustworthy evidence with regard to the many issues identified so far in the research.

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## **Building social capital among students in preparation programs—lessons from the UTAS University Preparation Program - *Dr John Guenther, Associate Professor Anne Langworthy***

### **Abstract**

The Cradle Coast Campus of the University of Tasmania was opened in Burnie in 1995. One of the reasons for establishing a presence on the north-west coast was to improve higher education participation rates within the region. However, given the low educational qualification status of the population in the region, the University needed to provide more than just a physical presence in the region. Thus the University Preparation Program (UPP) was established in 1996 at the Cradle Coast Campus as an enabling program to provide a bridge for students not able to meet traditional general entry standards and to support the University's community engagement agenda.

The need for UPP is as great now as it was in 1996. While the number of students enrolled at the campus has grown over recent years, the proportion of the population that completes year 12 is still about two-thirds the state average and just over half the national average. Other education statistics show similarly that the region is struggling to engage with education generally, and perhaps more specifically with higher education. This reflects a national trend of growing disparity in higher education participation between metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia—an issue highlighted by the Bradley Review and addressed in the Australian Government's response.

There is much work yet to be done in building a culture within the Burnie community that readily accepts the higher education pathway as a norm for year 12 students or higher education as an option for mature aged learners. Not only does the region face this aspect of cultural change but it also faces a further social capital deficit in that many of the region's students, and particularly UPP students, are and will continue to be first in their family to consider going to university and thus lack the family and social support structures that are recognised as critical success factors for university study. That said, UPP has had considerable success in engaging students on a pathway that leads to undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

One of the critical factors that contributes to this success is the creation of social capital within the student body. Students coming into UPP build a new set of social relationships that generates new knowledge resources and new identity resources, which in turn builds their social capital. UPP attempts to establish new norms and values in a safe and trusting environment. It offers personalised support that results in the creation of new 'bridging ties' that enable them to get on, not just get by. However, countering the potential impact of these new social relationships is a pre-existing set of relationships that may inhibit students' capacity to engage in this new—and somewhat challenging—learning environment. This is reflected in relatively high attrition rates (up to 70 per cent).

Drawing on the literature on social capital and learning, this paper attempts to articulate some of the lessons learned and from the experiences of UPP at the University's Cradle Coast Campus. The paper also draws on observations made by students. It provides examples of teaching and learning strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective in building social capital within the UPP student body—as a precursor to sustained engagement in learning at UTAS. While the paper reports

on success, it also raises questions about the costs of an approach that intentionally builds social capital. Given the Australian Government's intent to address inadequacies in the regional loading model, questions still remain about regional universities' capacity to respond to the social capital needs of students and communities.

**Keywords:**

Social capital, preparation, engagement, pathways, regional

**Introduction**

The Cradle Coast Campus of the University of Tasmania was opened in Burnie in 1995. One of the reasons for establishing a presence on the north-west coast was to improve higher education participation rates within the region. However, given the low educational qualification status of the population in the region, the University needed to provide more than just a physical presence in the region. Thus the University Preparation Program (UPP) was established in 1996 at the Cradle Coast Campus as an enabling program to provide a bridge for students not able to meet traditional general entry standards and to support the University's community engagement agenda.

UPP is now in its fourteenth year and has extended state-wide as a preparatory program for distance students and attending mode students at all campuses. It has grown from 12 students in 1996 to over 300 students in 2009. In addition, the Program has received accolades through a number of awards, most notably a University of Tasmania Teaching Excellence Award for "New Pathways" in 1999 and a Carrick Award (Programs that Enhance Learning) in 2006.

The development and growth of UPP has been influenced by changing needs, developing technology, student feedback and data collected from four major reports undertaken in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2009 and a formal review in 2005. The full year UPP program eight units of study designed to provide the basic academic skills and knowledge to ensure success at University (Study Skills, Written Communications/Academic Writing, Information Literacy, Using Technology, Communications Skills, Bridging Maths and /or Numeracy for Tertiary Study, Online Learning and a Capstone unit ). Capable students can undertake intensive versions of the program or smaller numbers of units depending on individual circumstances. Although UPP is not an award program its delivery is modelled on a typical year of university study and uses the same protocols as Degree level programs to provide the best possible preparation for studying at the University of Tasmania. Successful completion of UPP means that the student meets general entry.

The UPP foundations in Burnie provide particularly important lessons for the University as it seeks to engage the local community in higher education. One of the factors for its ongoing success has been the extent to which the program has been able to build social capital among a cohort of future undergraduate and postgraduate students, many of who describe themselves as the first in their family to attend university. The lessons learned have particular implications for UTAS, but may also be significant for other universities with a presence in rural or remote Australian communities.

**Background and context**

The importance of social capital in supporting students from low socio economic backgrounds and from families that have no higher education family tradition is becoming increasingly apparent.

Social capital requires co-operation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement and collective well-being. Putnam (1993) drew this conclusion from a longitudinal study conducted in Italy over 20 years from 1970. These elements of social capital are often used to explore the strength of a given community. Development of the concept incubated for a number of years prior to Putnam's (1993) discussion of social capital (Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; 1990; Bourdieu 1991), but his definition in terms of trust, norms and networks for mutual benefit remains well supported throughout literature (Woolcock 1998; OECD 2001).

Australian policy discussion has led to the broad understanding about the concept of social capital as the outcome of 'the social norms, networks and trust that facilitate co-operation within or between groups' (Productivity Commission 2003: viii; ABS 2004). The key hypothesis is that this co-operation can provide benefits and resources that help individuals, groups and communities to 'get by' and/or to 'get ahead'. Where this is the case, social and economic benefits can follow, 'reducing transactions costs, promoting co-operative behaviour, diffusing knowledge and innovations'. The strongest demonstrated benefit lies in a combination of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital. Bonds within and between groups can help group members to 'get by'. Where group members also have links with members of other groups, the benefits of these social contacts demonstrate the 'strength of weak ties' in building social cohesion and providing opportunities. Where groups are densely linked but homogenous, with few links to members of other groups, social capital can be detrimental (Portes and Landolt 1996) which according to Woolcock (2001:12) is an intuitive recognition that that 'social ties can be a liability as well as an asset'.

Research by Garlick, Taylor and Plummer (2007) and Taylor et al (2008) argue that access to human capital is the most significant driver of regional economic development in Australia and it is the growing unequal access to this human capital that mostly contributes to the growing economic disparity between high growth major metropolitan regions and the remainder of the nation. Commenting on the connections between social capital and human capital, Côté (2001) notes that 'human capital, networks and social relations can potentially be seen as helpful tools for individuals, groups, communities, regions and firms in their effort to adapt to change...' (p. 32).

The notion of a socially inclusive society is defined by the Australian Government as, '.... one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. Achieving this vision means that all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capability to learn, work, engage in the community and have a voice.' (Australian Government 2009a). However to achieve the aim of a truly inclusive community social capital needs to be built—underpinning access to these resources and the desire to take advantage of these opportunities.

Tasmania ranks as the second highest state in Australia in terms in terms of relative social disadvantage as measured by the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. Low socio-economic status correlates with educational status and nationally there is a trend of growing disparity in higher education participation between metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia (Stevenson et al. 1999; Cumpston et al. 2001) an issue highlighted by Bradley (2008) and acknowledged by the Australian Government's response (Australian Government 2009b), which indicates that regional loading as a mechanism to address the needs of universities in regional areas, is 'not sufficiently well targeted to meet the needs of regional Australia for high quality higher education' (p. 40). The Australian Government's Higher Education Partnerships and Participation

Program (HEPPP) goes some way towards addressing the issue of access but questions still remain about what kind of funding model would best meet the needs of aspiring students in rural communities (Department Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009). The Bradley findings have been reinforced by a number of reports and studies nationally. For example, the Outer Urban Higher Education Working Party established by the Victorian Government in 2003 found that this disparity was also found in outer urban areas. In 2001 the ratio of equivalent full time student university places to population in inner Melbourne areas was between two and seven times greater than the ratio in outer metropolitan areas (Langworthy 2004) and the On Track Project longitudinal research into the destinations of schools leavers consistently demonstrates lower levels of post-secondary educational engagement in outer urban and regional areas (Centre for Post Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning 2006). It can be argued that outer urban and regional areas in Australia are least likely to have the social capital to support student engagement in higher education because of factors such as the pull of close knit families and communities (Alloway and Dalley-Trim 2009).

In Tasmania, the north-west coast is typical of other areas in regional Australia where the social capital that supports student engagement in higher education is lacking. Burnie, the fourth largest city in Tasmania and the home of the Cradle Coast Campus typifies the challenges faced in engaging the community.

### **Burnie**

Burnie is a city that, on a number of measures, can be described as disadvantaged. The ABS Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index for Education and Occupation shows Burnie with a median range of 875-900 compared to 975-1000 for Australia (ABS 2008). National Economics (2008) in its *State of the Regions Report 2008-2009* ranks the north-west region of Tasmania ninth out of 58 regions in terms of the proportion of the population receiving cash benefits from Centrelink. The Report indicates that dependence on disability support and parenting payments are more than twice the national average.

Table 1 compares key characteristics of the Burnie Local Government Area (LGA) with Tasmania and Australia. The data (sourced mostly from the 2006 Census) represents some of the distinguishing features associated with the Burnie population. It is characterised by relatively high proportions of Indigenous persons in the population, high teenage fertility rates and high proportions of dwellings rented from state housing. It is also characterised by low levels of year 12 attainment (almost half the national average), low levels of pre-school attendance (less than half the national average for 3-4 year olds) and relatively low levels of post school qualifications and low levels of income (\$100 per week less than the national median for individuals).

**Table 1. Key characteristics of Burnie (LGA geographic areas), 2006**

	Persons aged 15+ (a)	Persons (a)	Persons aged 15+ (a)	Occupied dwellings (a)	3-4 year olds attending preschool (a)	Teenage fertility (b)
Region	Per cent of 15+ population completing Year 12	Per cent Indigenous persons	Per cent of 15+ population post-school qualifications	Per cent rented from state housing	Per cent 3-4 year old population attending preschool	Fertility rate per 1000 (15-19 year olds giving birth)
Burnie	22.5%	4.7%	31.1%	8.5%	26.8%	45.4
Tasmania	31.3%	3.5%	35.6%	5.7%	35.2%	36.8
Australia	42.2%	2.3%	39.4%	4.3%	61.6%	

Source:(a) ABS 2007a (b) Jenkins et al. 2009

Not surprisingly, the low participation trends are reinforced in Table 2 which shows the numbers and proportions of the population with bachelor qualifications. The Burnie LGA lags well behind the State of Tasmania and Australia as whole, though the increase from 1996 to 2006 exceeds the growth rate for Tasmania and Australia. The community is also experiencing significant economic dislocation as the economy shifts with the closure of major manufacturing industries including the paper mill and vegetable processing plants.

**Table 2. Bachelor qualification trends, 1996-2006**

	BACHELOR QUALIFICATIONS (Persons aged 15 and over)						
	Persons			Per cent of persons with bachelor qualifications			
	1996	2001	2006	1996	2001	2006	1996/ 2006 change
Burnie LGA	552	699	893	10.7%	13.2%	13.8%	29.0%
Tasmania	21,065	27,132	34,418	15.9%	18.3%	19.2%	20.8%
Australia	1076934	1,445,943	1,840,667	18.5%	21.1%	22.0%	19.3%

Source: ABS 2007b

Many north-west coast residents have not had formal education beyond Year 10 and thus their bonding networks are largely characterised by others who have similar educational backgrounds. Unskilled and semiskilled work has been predominant and educational expectations low. When families do not expect their members to complete their secondary education why would university even be on their horizon? Who in their local community would be encouraging them or even entering into discussions about education or career paths beyond the local experience? What can replace the dinner table conversations that support children of families who do have a higher education tradition? How can the fear of the impact of higher education ('will my son or daughter look down on me?') be overcome?

Almost without exception, UPP students are the first in their family to attend university and lack the supportive networks and resources of those who do have family members who have attended university. A regional and periurban study undertaken in Victoria highlights the issue of 'intent' (Golding et al. 2007). This study demonstrates that for many families that do not have a tradition of higher education, their young people will make a deliberate choice, aspire to work, see the benefits of university education as distant, delayed and marginal, have little understanding of university

educational experience and limited knowledge of options and support available. They may have also experienced lack of success at school or even found school a boring and debilitating chore (Golding et al. 2007; Sellar and Gale 2009).

Success at University does require social capital and a recent focus on transition and first year support emphasises the need to provide support and build capacity in first year students (Kift 2009; Wilson and Lizzio 2009). The importance of developing a sense of capability, connectedness, resourcefulness and purpose identified by Wilson and Lizzio (2009: 5) could be seen as building the social capital. In many ways, the approach of the UPP team does this and more. The development of UPP is a community engagement process—and one, it is hoped, that is moving towards the higher end of a continuum from consultation to inclusive community participation through to local community ownership (Brown and Keast 2003).

### **Case studies**

The following case studies are vignettes, based on a synthesis of real life stories of students. While they may be composite narratives, they are very real in that they represent feedback that comes regularly from students. These case studies are used to reflect on critical success factors and lessons learned.

#### **Michelle: single parent and aspiring teacher**

Michelle is a 35-year-old single parent who for the last five years has focused on parenting her two children, aged nine and 13. She left school at the end of year 10, initially working in the retail sector before taking an administrative position at a farm machinery parts manufacturing business where she worked until the birth of her first child in 1997. In the years to 2005, as time and support permitted, Michelle engaged for short periods in the labour market, on a casual and part-time basis in a variety of small business contexts. Following separation from her partner in 2005 she felt it was time to focus on bringing up her two children.

In August 2009 she attended an open day at the Cradle Coast Campus of the University of Tasmania. She was attracted to the idea of teaching as a career, partly because she recognised the importance of education for her own children but also because teaching offered a degree of flexibility, particularly as her children were still growing up. She was disappointed to learn that even as a mature aged learner she did not have entrance requirements that were needed to commence at university. However, the UPP coordinator talked with her about enrolling in the program.

At the start of 2010 Michelle enrolled in three UPP units. She immediately found a small group of like-minded students, who like her, were mature aged and looking for a career change—though unlike her, many were not sure what they wanted to do after UPP. She describes the learning environment as a ‘safe and secure place’. While initially feeling daunted by the prospect of being in a university, she soon found that lecturers were supportive, understanding and there to help her. Similarly, she found that the other students in her cohort formed something of an exciting and helpful social network. On the other hand, she found that many of her family and pre-existing friends didn't understand what she was talking about when she described the UPP program. One family member commented: ‘You think you're better than us’ and sadly she found that she had less in common with some of her old friends than she had thought. However, by the end of semester one 2010, Michelle found that she was capable of things that she had previously never thought possible.

### **David: redundant builder, turned nurse**

David is a 40-year-old qualified builder. Late in 2007, he was made redundant from a company he was working for because of the closure of a manufacturing plant in Burnie. While he could have found alternative employment, David took the opportunity that arose from the redundancy to consider his career options. Reflecting back on this time, David says 'I was sick of working outside in the freezing cold in winter and realised that my body couldn't hack it for much longer'. He heard about UPP at a careers expo that was organised in response to the plant's closure.

Hearing of the need for nurses, he decided to explore the possibilities presented by a UPP course as a pathway into an undergraduate nursing program. David was not particularly confident of his abilities—it had been 25 years since he left school—but he was encouraged by a UPP staff member (who he later described as 'someone who knew exactly what I was thinking and feeling—a warm and friendly person'), to give it a go. He enrolled in UPP in 2009 and successfully completed six units. He applied for entrance to nursing and was accepted for the 2010 intake. He attributes UPP to giving him the confidence he needed to achieve his learning goals. Towards the end of his year at UPP that the key factor that contributed to his success was the friendly and supportive environment of the Cradle Coast Campus: 'the lecturers were real people that seemed to care about me'.

### **Critical factors for success**

The discussion now turns to critical factors that lead to the success of UPP. The focus here is on the intersection between social capital and the learning environment. It is of course acknowledged that there are many other factors that contribute to successful outcomes for UPP students.

### **Personalised support and relationships**

There is a degree of hand-holding as students begin in the UPP program. While students need to become independent and self-directed learners for these students the transition into university can be daunting to the point of overwhelming. David's early discussion with the UPP staff member was pivotal in his decision to enrol in the program. Similarly, Michelle's experience of supportive, helpful and understanding lecturers helped her to overcome her early fears and concerns. It is not only that there is someone on hand for students to talk to, but it is the fact that they can relate to a staff member on a personal level. Over the years several UPP students have been employed as tutors and lecturers and these people in particular have been able to build a special rapport with students, having been in the same situation themselves. They act as models for new students. In terms of social capital, this relationship is a significant 'bridging tie' that opens up a range of networks to a whole new world for UPP students.

### **A trusting and safe environment**

The Cradle Coast Campus is a small and somewhat intimate campus. Students who come into this environment do not have the same initial feelings of being alone in a sea of unknown faces as they might in a larger campus. Michelle's description of the campus as a 'safe and secure place' is an acknowledgement of this intimacy. As a component of social capital, trust (expressed here in terms of 'feeling safe') is an important precursor, which leads to an extension of networks beyond those which could be typically described as 'bonding ties'. These bridges, as discussed in the literature, make it possible for people like Michelle to 'get ahead' rather than just 'get by'.

## **New networks and new identity resources**

Consistent with Falk and Kilpatrick's (2000) model of the social capital development discussed in the literature, David's case shows that UPP gave him the confidence to achieve his goals. Identity resources are about self-confidence, vision, trust, norms and values. Michelle's case also highlights the importance of new social networks as a vehicle for mutual support. To some extent these new networks and identity resources replace the old. They create new bonds and new bridges to a range of knowledge and identity resources that in turn build social capital among the UPP cohort. The students have a sense of belonging that did not previously exist.

## **The 'new normal'**

Michelle's comment about not being understood by members of her family and her existing networks of friends is frequently echoed by UPP students as they make the transition into university study. One reason given for this is a failure to place a value on university education—especially UPP. It is sometimes seen to be a road to nowhere. Working—in whatever capacity—on the other hand, has an immediate value. UPP students quickly recognise the intrinsic value of learning. This new norm, which places a high value on learning, is then responsible for comments like those offered to Michelle: 'you think you're better than us'. Within one semester in UPP they begin to put into practice their new found critical thinking skills—and they love it. However, this creates some tensions with their old friends and families who do not understand what has happened to the identity of the person they thought they knew. This is where the new networks become useful as a support mechanism. Their fellow UPP students *do* understand and share a similar set of values and norms of behaviour which they have all begun to acquire. As time goes by, the students are then able to build social capital within their old networks and thus University education becomes an achievable goal for other family and friends.

## **Lessons learned and implications**

### **Flexibility of staff**

Personal support in the context of UPP requires a somewhat different approach to teaching and learning practice than might typically be expected of a lecturer teaching an undergraduate course. Lecturers in UPP cannot expect the kind of results that have been discussed above if all they do is turn up to deliver lectures and mark assignments. UPP students at Cradle Coast Campus, making the transition to higher education, need flexible, understanding, available and responsive tutors and lecturers. In order to overcome the kinds of barriers described in Background and context, lecturers must be prepared to offer an empathetic and listening ear and acknowledge the often high degree of self-sacrifice that students make in order to enter the university learning environment. At the same time, UPP lecturers need to be mindful of the need to build independence, resilience and resourcefulness among students in order to better prepare them for their learning at undergraduate level. One of the key issues for UTAS as it continues to draw from UPP completers in its undergraduate programs, is the importance of unequivocal support for staffing, particularly at Cradle Coast Campus, where student numbers are relatively (some might be tempted to argue unjustifiably) small.

### **Small groups**

The cost of maintaining a program at Cradle Coast Campus where class sizes are typically less than 10 (the unit cohort including distance and flexible mode students is typically in the order of 50 to 70) is relatively high. However in the context of a small rural university campus, size does matter. It is perhaps only because of the intimacy created in the small group that a sense of belonging (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000), which leads to the kind of mutually supportive learning networks required for sustained engagement in higher education, can be created. The cost of not pursuing this approach at Cradle Coast Campus will do little to support the growth in higher education participation and completions that have been experienced in Burnie since the campus came into being in 1996 (see Table 2).

### **Engagement**

Learning engagement in the context of UPP at Cradle Coast Campus is much more than completing assessment tasks or attending classes. Engagement in learning also depends on the quality and quantity of supportive interactions with other students, lecturers, non-academic staff, work colleagues, family members and friends. Lecturers are to some extent responsible for facilitating the kind of engagement that contributes to the development of social capital with its attendant identity and knowledge resources—they therefore act as catalytic engagers. UPP Students respond well to teaching and learning strategies that facilitate the development of social capital.

Engagement in learning and engagement between students is one important element of a university community engagement strategy. However, more needs to be done to engage the north-west coast community to create a sense of ownership of the University by the community. Part of an integrated strategy to engage the community may require a more intentional cooption of a broad cross-section of the Burnie community.

### **Building social capital**

An intentional approach to building social capital is important. It requires building the identity resources of individuals so they can better engage with their learning and with their peers. In the Study Skills unit for example, identity formation is included as an aim of the course and builds assessment of identity formation into the assignments. Further, UPP specifically encourages mutual support and shared learning approaches. For example, in the Communication Skills unit, students are intentionally brought together in group assignments such as debates and joint presentations. This process intentionally increases the propensity of students to enter into something of a community of practice where ideas, knowledge and resources are shared. Trust is reinforced in this process, new bonds are created and new bridges are built.

### **Need for evaluation**

While the case for the creation of social capital among UPP students may be argued, there is a need for more research and evaluation to be carried out to determine to what extent the observations made about students translates into successful outcomes in terms of the university and in terms of the community. On the one hand it is true that attrition rates are relatively high (up to 70 per cent). On the other hand it is also true that a number of students have gone on to complete not only their undergraduate studies but also post graduate studies, including at least four who have gone on to

complete their PhDs. What needs to be understood more definitively is: a) what do students think in qualitative terms about the program; b) to what extent UPP success translates into lower levels of attrition in undergraduate programs; and c) to what extent UPP contributes to community well-being and social capital. These questions would require an intentional evaluation strategy that must be funded.

## **Conclusions**

In the context of rural north-west Tasmania, the University Preparation Program (UPP) has contributed to increased higher education participation. The context of this contribution is particularly important, as historically the proportion of people with bachelor qualifications in the Burnie area has been a little over half the national average. The gap is slowly closing. This is at least in part due to the way that UPP builds social capital within its cohort of students. It does so by creating a safe and trusting environment; by offering personalised support; by nurturing new supportive networks (bonds and bridges) and new identities; and by building new norms and values that value learning through the new networks.

While acknowledging that there is more to success than building social capital, it is an important factor that to date has not been fully articulated. Understanding social capital creation as a factor for success in UPP has some important implications for UTAS as it seeks to build its presence on the north-west coast of Tasmania. It may also have implications for other higher education institutions that work in rural communities.

The lesson learnt over 14 years experience of UPP at Cradle Coast Campus in Burnie, is that successful creation of social capital is dependent on a number of factors. These include the use of small class sizes; having flexible staff who are attentive to the needs of students; supporting engagement between students and between staff and students; and actively promoting learning and assessment processes that build identity and knowledge resources.

The Cradle Coast example can be applied to other regional universities attempting to engage students from rural communities in order to redress the disparity between metropolitan and regional/rural areas. The processes used in regional contexts to engage potential students will necessarily be directed at progressively shifting the prevailing culture to one that accepts university as part of a normal career pathway, particularly for young people. There are cost implications that result from the lessons described above. While the Australian Government's reform agenda, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Australian Government 2009b) does respond to the Bradley Review and allocates additional funding to support low socio-economic status (SES) participation, the finer details of additional funding is still under development. For example, the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations is currently examining the cost of providing higher education in regional Australia, in particular the appropriateness of regional loading. It is to be hoped that these examinations take into account the true costs of regional engagement as typified by programs like UPP and provide for the longitudinal programs required. Ultimately the question remains as to whether the new model provides the support required for rural and regional universities to adequately build social capital.

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## **The Episcopal Homeless Initiative (EHI) Partnership - *Marlynn May, Jane Peranteau, Celene Meyer***

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is a case study about a CBPR partnership involving three faith-based organizations, a grant making public charity and the academy. The partnership is unusual in that it was envisioned and guided from the very get-go by a grant making public charity – St. Luke’s Episcopal Health Charities (the Charities). At every stage, the Charities worked with each of the EHI Partners to realize the Partnership. This Partnership illustrates well the principles of CBPR because it is literally built from the inside out, built from working organizational relationships, but always reaching to new levels of participation among and between the partners. At every stage, the EHI Partners are provided new opportunities to grow, to share and learn from each other, to build equity in their individual and collective existence. The EHI Partnership represents a ‘best practice’ from which other funding agencies, community organizations, academics and the academy can learn.

### **THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONNECTION**

The story of the EHI Partnership connects to community engagement in the U.S. via two avenues: through changes in the grant making industry over the last 20 years and the evolution of a Community Based Participatory Research movement over roughly the same period.

Porter and Kramer (1999) highlight the call for a new agenda of community engagement among philanthropic foundations. They note four strategies by which foundations create value, the first two of which – selecting the best grantees and thereby signalling and attracting new donors by broadcasting their successes – have been commonly practiced. The other two – improving the performance of the grantees and assisting in advancing the state of knowledge and practice – have been less common in practice. These two call for greater constructive and proactive engagement of funders with their grantees. Increasingly, foundations are “[w]orking directly with grantees to improve performance...,” thus creating a greater breadth and depth of impact.(Kramer and Porter, 1999:124) They assert that “The more foundations are able to improve the performances of social enterprises, create new knowledge, and influence larger public and private sector efforts, the greater will be their impact.” (1999: 125) National examples of this transforming philosophy in the U.S. include the Kellogg Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trust.

About the same time, an article by Israel, Shulz, Parker and Becker (1998) served to synthesize and bring sharply into view another form of community engagement. Specifically focused on the history of ‘participatory research’ in the U.S. in various disciplines, their analysis was intended to facilitate “conducting effective community-based research aimed at improving the public’s health.” (175) Their article served as a kind of rallying call and served to undergird a movement to change the way academic researchers relate to the communities in which they conduct research. One significant outcome of this movement has been a rich integration of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) into the practice and funding of public health research in the U.S.

The CBPR movement placed its primary focus on changing the ways communities relate to the research process by providing new and more equitable means of participation. Little emphasis, however, was placed on how CBPR could change the academy. This focus is changing and broadening. For example, a major focus of the Campus Community Partnerships for Health is their initiative toward “recognizing and rewarding faculty for community engagement.” This initiative is designed to bring about changes within the academy to include more community engaged research and teaching in the criteria used to evaluate faculty for tenure and promotion. (<http://www.ccpd.info/>; see also Freeman, Gust, & Aloschen, 2009; Seifer, Wong, Gelmon, & Lederer, 2009). A forthcoming book entitled *Participatory Partnerships For Social Action and Research* (Harter, Hamel-Lambert, Millesen, 2010) includes case studies brilliantly demonstrating how CBPR can and does change the academic partners and the academic institution. And finally, we at the Charities noted that “CBPR’s focus on the transformation of the academy begged the following question...: ‘Can the CBPR transformative potential apply directly to CBOs in CBPR partnerships, and, if so, how and why?’ If balanced partnerships are to be created, the logic runs, both parties to the partnership (community and academy) are to expect transformation. When the academy reconfigures the research process and structure, collaborating CBOs need to change in order to better position themselves as a full partner with the academy.” (May, Williams and Peranteau, 2010; cf. Stoecker, 1999) The EHI Partnership presented in this article includes as part of its purpose and outcomes the transformation of the faith-based organizations that constitute the EHI Partnership.

## THE EVOLUTION OF EHI PARTNERSHIP

### **The Faith-Based Partners**

The faith-based partners are three Houston, Texas programs:

1. The Cathedral Health and Outreach Ministries – The Beacon
2. The Community of the Streets Ministries
3. The Palmer Way Station.

Faith-based organizations are started and supported by religious organizations. Prior to the creation of the EHI partnership, all three organizations had operated their own homeless ministries, albeit varied in size and operated as proprietary programs of the individual, sponsoring congregations in the City of Houston. All three are located on a ‘downtown corridor’ of Houston where homeless persons congregate and are operated within a mile to three miles of each other.

Each organization was familiar to the Charities, and vice versa, because each had received some portion of its funding from the Charities for these homeless programs. In addition, each organization had previous funding relationships with the Charities on a range of other health-related prevention programs. We mention this relationship because it is an important component in the Charities central role in forging the EHI Partnership (discussed in the next Section of this paper).

### **The Foundation Partner**

The Charities is a research-based grant-making public charity with 501(c)(3) status committed to assessing and enhancing community health and lifelong preventive health and well-being in underserved communities in Houston and the 57-county Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Its mission includes a commitment to carry out community-based participatory research (CBPR) to guide its

grant making. Through its *Center for Community Based Research* (the Center), the Charities has worked to advance community health through the training of and engaging community residents in CBPR research (St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities, 2003; 2008). As a health-related grant maker, the Charities champions a "community benefit" philosophy as expressed by Porter and Kramer (1999): "Foundations can create still more value if they move from the role of capital provider to the role of fully engaged partner, thereby improving the grantee's effectiveness as an organization" (p. 123). The Charities expects its health-related funding to make a difference, to have a *transformative impact on community health*. Over the past decade, under the vision and leadership of Celene Meyer, Director of Grants and Evaluation, the Charities has developed a series of capacity building initiatives focused on improving organizations' accountability, including five tools from which organizations can choose to best track their progress. When applying for a grant, applicants have to show how they are going to measure/evaluate what they do. Meyer has also created an organizational assessment tool to facilitate grantees' capacity to identify organizational needs and make changes.

### **The Academic Partner**

The academic partner is Texas A&M Health Science Center, represented by Dr. Marlynn May, a member of the faculty at the School of Rural Public Health. May is the Wimberly Scholar in Residence for Community Based Research at the Charities. Before coming to the Charities, however, May had contracted in 2005 with the Paso del Norte Health Foundation in El Paso, Texas, to develop a CBPR-based curriculum designed to build research capacity within community based organizations (CBOs). Over the course of three years, the Curriculum was created and implemented with four CBOs, revised, and then implemented a second time with three other CBOs. In 2008, the journal *Progress in Community Health Partnerships* published an article about the implementation of the curriculum. (May & Law, 2008)

The article featured the Curriculum design and recounted its successful execution with the seven CBOs, including lessons learned. Each participating organization learned the language and skills of research, designed and implemented a research project specifically relevant to their organization and community, and began applying their findings in their respective communities. The Charities, meanwhile, had heard about the Curriculum and come to observe it in action in El Paso. Subsequently to their visit, May was appointed the Wimberly Scholar in Residence for Community Based Research at the Charities, with the express purpose of embracing the Curriculum in the work of the Charities' Center. This Curriculum is being implemented in the EHI Partnership.

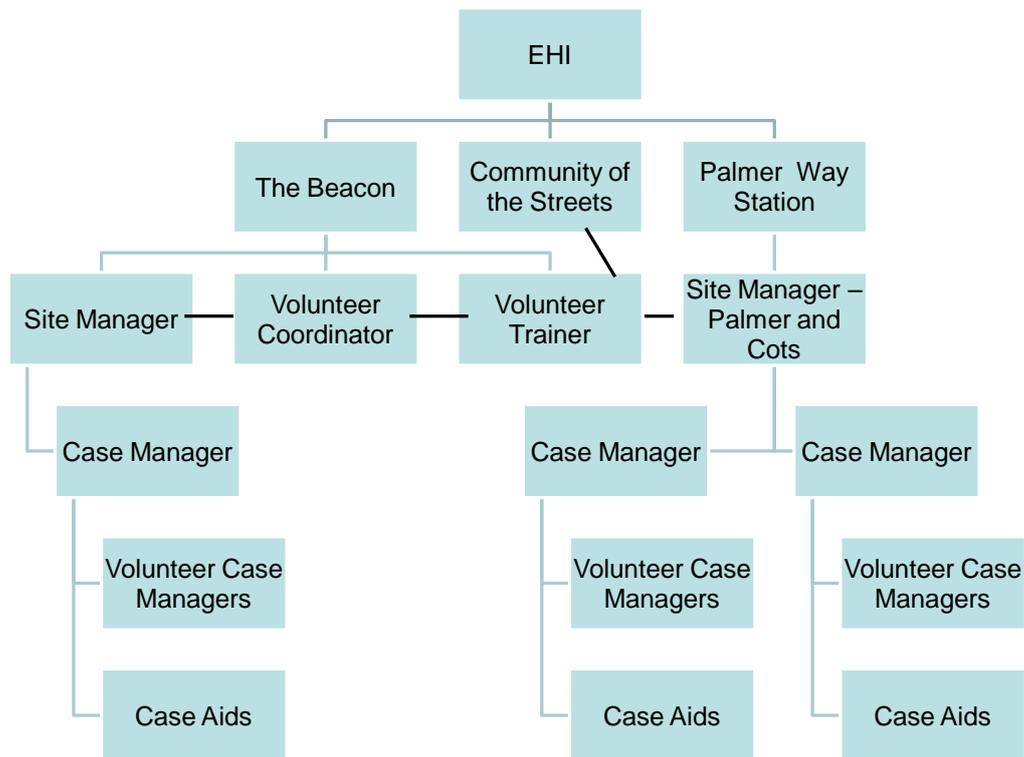
### **THE CREATION OF THE FAITH-BASED COLLABORATIVE – The EHI Partnership Core**

In the context of the Charities' expectation that its funding have a transformative impact on community health, it had set in place two strategies over the past 15 years. One of those strategies aims to create organizational collaboratives consisting of two or more of the Charities' delivering the same kinds of service. The idea is that by multiple organizations working together to form a partnership, more effective progress can be made in improving community health. This specific strategy played **the key role** in the formation of the EHI Partnership. Most often, grantees operate as if they are a single, self-determining, self-sufficient agency with their own proprietary program, funding, and staffing. The Charities intended to change that philosophy and organizational culture in initiating the EHI Partnership.

The process of bringing these three organizations together in a collaborative partnership was somewhat complex because they differed significantly in the size of each supporting congregation, in the size of the homeless program they operated, size of their program and operating budget and in their status each held as a religious organization throughout the community. Another way of stating it is that they differed in the degree of power each carried – economically, socially, and operationally – making the outlook for creating a collaborative Partnership unclear. The Charities, however, had several forms of influence by which to bring them together. One influencing factor is its role as a grant maker. Meyer, and her colleagues, were well aware of this as she moved the Partnership along its way. The Charities had other forms of persuasion it could count on. For one, the Diocese of Texas, under whose auspices the Charities operates, expressed its expectation for greater accountability through outcomes monitoring, which led to the capacity building initiative. In the city Houston, the Charities has a reputation of being a grant maker that “cares,” meaning it works closely with and for the organizations it funds. Finally, the Charities had worked with each of these organizations individually in other contexts, knew a fair amount about the organizations and had a reasonably good working relationship with each. This combination of influences worked well in forming the Partnership. Ultimately, however, one form of influence played an important role in coalescing the Partnership – the winning of a large grant to create an Episcopal Homeless Initiative. With some degree of awe, mixed with elation, the Partnership secured a \$1.25 million grant to establish a homeless case management program over 18 months. With this funding, the foundation of the EHI Partnership was secured. Nevertheless, the proposal writing process had in fact revealed to the participants the reality of unequal influences between and among the faith-based organization. Simultaneously, and under the tutelage of the Charities, it began to reshape those influences. While it would be incorrect to say that the three organizations currently operate with equal influence in the Partnership, it is certainly true that they have come to recognize those inequalities and are working together to bring a more equitable sharing of roles and responsibilities. Even more satisfying is the fact that the EHI Partners’ collaboration to hammer out the program design (see discussion below) is proving to coalesce of the Partnership and the development of a more equitable distribution of influences.

The homeless case management program design developed by the EHI Partners delivers services through an extensive network of licensed clinical social workers and intensively trained volunteer case managers. The volunteer case managers are trained by a professional trainer hired for the EHI – the Volunteer Trainer – and coordinated by a professional case manager – the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Trainer and Volunteer Coordinator are supervised and advised by two Licensed Clinical Social Workers, both specialists in homeless case management. The case management services will be provided at all three EHI Partner locations, with allocation based on the size and staff of each. The overall organizational decision making is the shared responsibility of all three Executive Directors, with the EDs agreeing that the ED from the largest of the EHI Partners is the “lead among equals.” Figure 1 identifies the general EHI structure, with lines of authority and supervision.

Figure 1: EHI Partnership Organizational Chart



Case manager services include, but are not limited to:

- information and referrals for housing;
- assisting clients to obtain official ID cards, needed for qualifying for many benefits;
- screening for SSI benefits, Gold Cards and food stamps;
- coordination of medical and mental health care;
- pastoral support and care;
- life skills training;
- access to the Houston Community Voice Mail Program so they can stay in contact with family, friends, and potential employers; and
- simple in-house activities like impromptu chess games offering a positive environment for self expression.

### **EXPANDING THE EHI PARTNERSHIP – Engaging the Academy**

The Charities defines itself as a research-based grant making foundation, meaning that, for the 15 years of its existence, research has taken a central role in grant making and in understanding and improving the access to health in underserved communities. The Charities, under the vision and guidance of Dr. Jane Peranteau, Associate Executive Director, created and currently features its own

Center for Community Based Research (the Center). The Center consists of a Research and an Education Division. Peranteau is also currently the Director of the Center.

Under Peranteau's leadership, with the encouragement and enthusiastic support of Dr. Patricia Gail Bray, Executive Director of the Charities, the Center from its inception adopted – and continues to vigorously practice – the CBPR philosophy and model as its research nucleus. The Center creatively and imaginatively applies CBPR in communities from the inside out. By that we mean that the Center always and only comes into play with an invitation from and the support of the communities with which it does research. Community individuals, groups and/or organizations, with the support of the Center staff, routinely choose the research topic and then participate equally in designing and implementing the research within their communities; thus it is always research that they are convinced will help them improve health conditions in their community.

In the Charities' rich history of practicing CBPR, it has been Peranteau's vision that CBPR could do more, be taken to a new level. To accomplish that, a second strategy was conceived and implemented, aimed at transforming the structure and culture of community organizations. "If research, as it does now, can produce evidence to help the Charities make funding decisions in these communities and improve community health," Peranteau asks, "then why can't some of the community organizations the Charities' funds learn the language and skills of research to help them help themselves?" The goal is for these organizations to incorporate the research language and skills as a part of their organization's program and thereby initiate better evidence-based practices and improved community health.

It was this vision Peranteau had dancing in her head as she learned about the Curriculum and visited El Paso to observe it in action. It was this vision that motivated her to take the lead in bringing the Curriculum to the Charities. It was this vision, shared over time with Meyer, that led to bringing May and the Curriculum into the EHI Partnership. A vision is one thing, however; making it happen is another. Although Peranteau and Meyer were convinced it would work, the complex process of bringing the faith-based EHI Partners into the vision was yet to be accomplished.

### **LINKING THE EHI PARTNERSHIP, THE CURRICULUM AND THE ACADEMIC**

Several factors facilitated the linking of the faith-based EHI Partners and the Curriculum. First, notice of the proposal's funding was received (September, 2009) as Peranteau and Meyer were thinking through and planning for the linking of the EHI Partnership and the Curriculum. Second, May and the Curriculum were already resident at the Charities. Third, the funds, though promised, were delayed in arriving, delaying (until February, 2010) the start of serious planning for the case management project and giving needed time for adapting the Curriculum for integration. Finally, for a variety of reasons, the funding for the case management program did not include funds for outcomes evaluation. This was particularly fortuitous, because it provided a primary rationale for integrating the Curriculum into the EHI Partnership and an excellent incentive for the EHI Partnership buying into its inclusion.

Meyer took quick advantage of these four facilitating factors. She invited May to 'sit in' on a couple of the early meetings in which the EHI Partners and Meyer were beginning to think through how they would implement the case management program. In one of these meetings, she asked May to discuss the Curriculum and discuss how it would advantage the EHI Partnership. The advantages for

the EHI Partnership were not difficult to convey, since the four goals and objectives of the Curriculum (Table 1a and 1b) are inherently designed to empower the organizations to achieve their research needs and interests. Based on these meetings and the discussion of the Curriculum's goals and objectives, the faith-based EHI Partners expressed interest. Yet, this was interest expressed verbally, on the basis of a verbal presentation. The test lies in the doing.

<b>Table 1a: Curriculum Goals</b>	
<b>Goal 1</b>	To <b>teach</b> CBOs research skills grounded in CBPR principles,
<b>Goal 2</b>	To <b>assist</b> CBOs in utilizing those skills to design, implement and complete community-specific research projects,
<b>Goal 3</b>	To <b>empower</b> CBOs to utilize research results in evidence based practice to improve health conditions in the community(ies) served,
<b>Goal 4</b>	to <b>enhance</b> a culture of systematic inquiry within the CBO.
<b>Table 1b: Curriculum Objectives</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Internalize the value of research for the CBO by creating its own Research Team.</b>	
<p>Each CBO selects 3-5 persons to constitute the CBO Research Team. The Team represents a combination of positions and stakeholders in the CBO (e.g. a service provider staff member, a board member, a para-professional working in the CBO, an active community member, a client, or a proposal writer). Involving Team members from a broad spectrum of the organization emphasizes multiple organizational perspectives and models the point that research and evidence based practice are important throughout the CBO.</p>	
<b>Objective 2: Integrate a representative of the academy as a regular member of the CBO Research Team.</b>	
<p>Criteria for selection emphasize that this academic member must support and practice CBPR in her or his own professional research and can model a constructive community-campus partnership model of learning and research to community partners who are often skeptical, even negative, about academia’s relationship with communities. The inclusion of an academic member of the CBO Research Team is essential because CBPR is built around the idea of community-academy partnerships and because an academic researcher’s knowledge of research language and skills constitutes one important contribution to the CBO Research Team.</p>	
<b>Objective 3: Provide periodic mini-workshops for specialized knowledge and skills needs.</b>	
<p>A CBO Research Team has need periodically during Stages 2-4 for specialized knowledge and skills, particularly once they begin implementing their research project, gathering data, creating a data base, and/or conducting analysis. Mini-workshops are offered on an “as needed” and “as asked for” basis.</p>	
<b>Objective 4: Assist in the organization and dissemination of research results.</b>	
<p>It is essential that each CBO Research Team develop a design for disseminating and applying the results. Each CBO Research Team is also encouraged to move toward writing funding proposals based on their research outcomes; assistance is provided, if requested.</p>	

[Source: May, Williams and Peranteau, 2010 (forthcoming)]

As a way to show his (the academic's) interest in and commitment to the EHI Partnership, May suggested that he work with them as they did the hard work of designing the case management program; they welcomed the suggestion. The EHI Partners agreed, and over the course of three weeks and three intensive, three-hour workshops, they had indeed laid out the program structure, processes and outcomes design in great detail, enough detail to make the eventual designing of the outcomes evaluation much easier. This engagement between the academic partner and the faith-based EHI Partners had two positive effects, with literally no downside. First, it provided the Partners an experienced program-designer to assist in modeling effectively and efficiently the case management program. This greatly facilitated their work and enhanced the building of trust and confidence between May and the EHI Partnership. Second, the program design process literally produced the outcomes to be evaluated. This was an 'aha' experience for the faith-based EHI Partners and gave them a new sense of confidence that they could, indeed, go to the next level and design measures for evaluating the outcomes. This program design collaboration, while continuing to build trust and confidence, added to the relationship encouragement and enthusiasm to move ahead in designing the outcomes evaluation from inside the EHI Partnership.

A new stage of EHI Partnership readiness had been reached (!) – a readiness to actually engage in learning the language and skills of research and apply those in designing their own outcomes evaluation. May and the EHI Partners seized the moment to begin planning for implementing the Curriculum. A Partnership Research Team (PRT) of four members was formed – one member each from the faith-based EHI Partners and one member from the homeless clients served by the EHI Partners. Each EHI Partner PRT member was appointed by the respective Executive Director, with a commitment to support the activities and time devoted to the designing and implementation of the outcomes evaluation research. The PRT member from the homeless clients was selected by consensus by the EHI Partners. The number of PRT members may change in the future for two reasons. The EHI Partners are of a mind that they should add at least one more, perhaps two more, homeless clients to the PRT. In addition, it is possible that one or more of the EHI Partners will select an intern to work in their program, with the PRT as one of their responsibilities.

With the PRT in place, the PRT members participated in an orientation session conducted by May. In this session, the PRT learned about the principles, ethics and philosophy of CBPR, gained a comprehensive overview of the work they would conduct over the next 15 months and developed and agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU spells out the commitments and responsibilities of the PRT members, the Curriculum trainer, and the EHI Partnership in conducting this CBPR project. (This is the stage in the CBPR outcomes evaluation project at which we have arrived as of the writing of this paper (May 2, 2010). The EHI Homeless Case Management project is scheduled to go into the field on June 1, 2010.)

## **Expected Outcomes**

### **The Faith-based EHI Partners**

The intent is that the faith-based EHI Partners achieve three outcomes, one of which is already observable and will continue throughout the EHI Homeless Case Management program and the others of which will be initiated but will take a longer time to achieve.

The first outcome is for the faith-based EHI Partners to learn and practice the language and skills of research. This outcome began at the very outset of the project and will continue to develop throughout. Three reasons underlie the significance of this outcome. First, the Charities embraces the principles of evidence-based practices as essential to designing and completing effective programs; therefore, it is committed to encouraging and facilitating the building of research capacity. Second, by building research capacity within, the faith-based EHI Partners diversify and strengthen their organizations for the future. As we stated elsewhere,

“Learning a new language invites and encourages organizations to think about who they are, to see themselves in a different way and to think about what research is, how it works, and specifically to assess where it fits in their organization. Learning a new language of research develops a new confidence in the language learner (the organization) to engage the other, to speak the other’s language in a meaningful, constructive and productive way, and assists in engaging the other more quickly and genuinely as a partner” (May, Williams and Peranteau, 2010: 14).

Third, building research knowledge and skills capacity within assists the faith-based EHI Partners to become “learning organizations.” Ideal would be “the creation of an organizational culture that legitimates research as a core part of the program (Hoole & Patterson, 2008; Senge, 1990; Torres & Preskill, 2001). (May, Williams and Peranteau, 2010: 3) Finally, all three reasons advance the likelihood of the faith-based EHI Partners’ sustainability, both in program development and in funding opportunities seized.

### **The Foundation Partner**

The Charities attains a new level of achievement in its “community benefit” philosophy and in the realization of creating partnerships. Increasingly, today, funding organizations are emphasizing, even requiring, that potential grantees either currently are, or show high promise of, working collaboratively. A clear example of this became known to the Charities. One of the top administrators in the agency that funded the EHI Partnership said that he been told directly that more attention should be given in the future to funding collaborative partnerships like the EHI Partnership.

Further, if the outcomes of this application of the Curriculum with the EHI Partnership prove positive, the Charities is committed to creating other collaborative partnerships in which it will be applied. In addition, the Charities is currently advocating the use of the Curriculum with other funding sources. For example, the Curriculum is presently included in an NIH proposal submitted by the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. If the proposal is funded, the Curriculum will be implemented with the Galveston Island Community Research Advisory Committee, a 13 member, all volunteer community organization. It is the Charities’ long-term strategy to not only make the Curriculum available to other organizations, but also, using a train-the-trainer model, prepare other community organizations to implement the Curriculum.

### **The Academic Partner**

Given the long history of contentiousness in community and academy research relationships, one outcome we seek is a comfortable working relationship between the faith-based EHI Partners and the academic partner. Progress toward this outcome is already observable in the program design

sessions leading up to the creation of the PRT and the development of the outcomes evaluation design.

A second outcome is the feedback to be gained from this replication of the Curriculum. Revisions and adaptations have already been completed prior to bringing the Curriculum to the Charities, based on its development, implementation and evaluation in El Paso. This utilization is in quite a different setting with different types of organizations. Therefore, an evaluation plan will be designed specifically for this replication by an evaluation specialist and colleague of May. The evaluation will be utilized to revise the Curriculum in preparation for other replications.

A third, and essential, outcome is learning from the EHI Partnership the qualities that underlie a sustainable, equitable CBPR partnership, among them humility and shared trust on the part of the academic partner. This is not an easy lesson; often the academic receives a kind of privileged presence and recognition in the community and in the larger culture. In the Partnership this privilege is moderated and placed in a larger context of shared privileges.

### **Summary**

The EHI Partnership (the Partnership) constitutes a positive model of a well-balanced CBPR partnership. Initiated by a community-based philanthropic foundation (the Charities), three faith-based community organizations – all grantees of the Charities – were invited and encouraged to come together to form the core of the Partnership. All three organizations have as their primary programmatic focus the care and of homeless persons in the city of Houston; thus, from the outset the Partnership emerged with a strong common interest. Then, as the Partnership found its feet, it reached out to integrate an academic partner.

Two factors make the Partnership unusual. The Partnership was not initiated by, or centered in, an academic context and culture. The Charities and the three faith-based community organizations form the core, the heart of the Partnership. The academic partner came on board after the initial community Partnership had emerged, at the invitation of the Partnership core, and was invited because, on the one hand, he brought a specific expertise needed by the Partnership and, on the other, he brought a proven history of readiness to share and learn equitably. Thus, trust was apparent at the outset. Second, the core organizations of the Partnership recognized the power of CBPR when turned toward building research capacity within and reached out to a partner with the expertise to help the Partnership. What the academic partner gains is the opportunity to practice and learn from a CPBR model that relativises the place of the academic partner. The academic partner is asked – required – to change the point of view normally brought by an academic. Supporting and underwriting the academic's taking a different point of view are four qualities of the Partnership: (a) the open, welcoming attitude and culture of the Partnership, (b) the programmatic confidence and competence brought to the table by the core Partnership organizations, (c) the readiness and commitment of the core Partnership organizations to devote the time, energy and resources to building research capacity *and* the Partnership's understanding that they have a duty and a right to educate the academic partner about their communities, programs and policies.

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## Engaging the community in social inclusion via community food projects in North-West Tasmania - *Robin Krabbe*

This research contends that engaging the community as partners in social inclusion first and foremost requires an understanding of why social exclusion occurs. This paper is based on the view that social exclusion results from the pursuit of dominant values in society, and that initiatives such as those related to community food have the potential to promote more humane values, which it seems may be more likely to engender our survival and thriving as human beings.

Our culture constructs the poor, the disabled, the unemployed, the mentally ill and even the elderly in terms of focusing on their 'deficiencies' in order to protect our dominant values in society. These groups are seen to not conform to our values of progress and growth, perceived as the only and the 'right' way to live, and as a result are marginalized and socially excluded.

This 'right way to live' rests on values that are predominantly materialistic in nature, aimed at progress and growth, despite the substantial evidence of non-materialist values in society. The ideal of progress, that all human endeavour should be directed towards economic growth, has become a goal in itself, obscuring the alternative of questioning the ends that we can aspire to. The enduring myth that has evolved is of progress inevitably improving the condition of human beings. Myths in turn reinforce our deepest values and aspirations.

The corollary is that human systems grow in the direction of their deepest and most frequent inquiries. Rather than pursue inquiry based on the assumption that growth inevitably improves the human condition, however, a discourse is emerging regarding inquiry being more rationally directed towards ways of bettering the human condition that are more holistic and that privilege human-centred values.

Simultaneously many avenues for social inclusion are emerging that involve the community in engaging with more human-centred values, as will be indicated by a case study of current community food projects in North-West Tasmania. A concept being explored for this research implicit in social inclusion is that of a participatory worldview. The basic concept of the participatory worldview being explored is that all human endeavour could rationally be aimed at not only our survival, but our thriving and flourishing. Community food projects provide one possibility for alternative structural conditions conducive to our survival and thriving, partly by the gradual emergence of community through small frequent events centered on community food systems. >

### **Keywords:**

social inclusion, community food systems, values, participatory worldview, thriving and surviving

### **The values of our culture**

Myths emanate from our past, forming patterns that reinforce our cultures deepest values and aspirations (Wright, 2004). Their power is such that we live and die by them. While the myth of progress has generally served many of us well, for many others, in particular the disadvantaged and socially excluded, it has been devastating. Myths create our values, with the importance of values

being noted by Stapp (2009), in terms of our beliefs about our relationship to the rest of the world underlying our values, and our values in turn determining the sort of world we strive to create.

Jamrozik and Nocella (1998) and Sayer (2001) among others claim that social problems arise from the pursuit of the dominant values of society. They see the motivation of society to shift the blame for social problems being that social problems “threaten power structures from which they logically emerge (Jamrozik & Nocella, 1998)p. xi”. Social and political problems are then transformed by society into personal and technical problems (ibid). Since interventions are based on the belief in social deviance or deficiencies in particular groups of society, interventions are not generally effective since they do not address the source of the problem, and therefore further entrench it. In the case of unemployment, when a persons worth has a tendency to be measured by their contribution to the economy, and when alternatives to unemployment are undervalued and under provided, the inevitable result is a devaluing of the unemployed. The resulting experience of the unemployed tends to be characterized by poor quality of life, for example depression, poor physical health, suicide, and family breakdown (Wisman, 2002). The cost to society is then significant when measured conventionally in terms of lost output and tax revenue, erosion of human (and social) capital, increased welfare, crime and health care costs. Unemployment in capitalist economies however plays a functional role, being seen as necessary for price stability and the alternative of full employment being perceived as too expensive (ignoring externalities) (ibid). Unemployment is then rationalised as an inevitable and fully acceptable feature of Western societies, with the blame for unemployment being shifted to the unemployed themselves.

This trend was detected almost 30 years ago by Albee (1982), who wrote that the high rate of “mental disturbance” among the disadvantaged in terms of defects was covertly perceived as being less costly to society than attributing it to social failure. He states that the traditional methods of addressing the issues are relatively inexpensive, since they are based on the view that certain people are defective. This is opposed to the huge costs of reform which would result from an acknowledgement of the significant contribution “dehumanizing social influences” make to emotional distress and mental disturbance in our society (ibid). This can be traced to an inherent contradiction of capitalism itself, that it is not actually designed to meet human needs, instead its logic is to maximise profit (Gough, 1979).

The repercussions are that, according to Harvey (1996), the basic rights of private property and of profit maximisation are not fundamentally challenged. The only serious question society sees as necessary to inquire about is how best to manage the environment (and each other) for capital accumulation, economic efficiency and growth (ibid).

In contrast, Goldsmith (1988) notes that society in the past was based on values that related to the extended family and the community, with individuals being bound by a strong set of reciprocal obligations towards each other. This provided the basis of their 'economic system', namely the production and distribution within local communities of the food and other goods and services that they required.

### **Social inclusion**

Our (Western) culture constructs the poor, the disabled, the unemployed, the mentally ill and even the elderly in terms of focusing on their ‘deficiencies’ in order to protect our dominant values in

society. These groups are seen to not conform to our values of progress and growth, and as a result are marginalized and socially excluded. While these groups are commonly seen as ‘disadvantaged’, their main disadvantage is that they are the victims of our culture, a culture from which many of us gain significant advantage. Our denial of this basic fact, our relegation of the problem to the helping professions and to government acts to further entrench the problem, and is a prime example of the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of public life. This in turn is driven by rationalisation, which has been constructed by our culture as the only way and the right way to live.

The dominant values of our society therefore can be seen to give rise to social problems such as social exclusion, for which social inclusion is seen as the antidote. Social inclusion can be defined as “an ongoing and reflexive process of full and engaged participation by all interested or affected social actors, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural resources ... premised on respectful interactions between different groups and a focus on mutual empowerment “ (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002). Similarly Oughton et al (2003) note that inclusion arises from civic, economic, social and personal integration into society.

Economic justice is a central aspect of social inclusion, which Sayer (2005) notes is often based on ‘unconditional recognition’, that is, issues of distribution are based on perceiving all human beings (by virtue of their humanity), as of equal worth, equal neediness, or more generally by virtue of their standing as citizens.

Opportunities for self-actualisation and empowerment for the least powerful is a vital component of social inclusion, for which changing the structures that limit human agency and building the capacity to act of those disadvantaged by our culture are deemed necessary (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002; Shucksmith, 2000).

### **The participatory worldview**

The participatory worldview (PWV) is a concept implicit in social inclusion; at its most basic level this has been described as a concern with the notion of all people being equal participants in society, implying that they must have equal opportunities for education and employment, sharing in access to goods and services, and participation in both public and private decision-making (Boog, 2003).

Reason (1998) goes further to state that the participatory worldview includes “an ontology of the outer world as objectively given and as subjectively represented in the human mind; an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical ways of knowing; a methodology based on cooperative relations between coresearchers; and an axiology that affirms the primary value of practical knowing in the service of human flourishing” (pg 9).

This research takes the following as fundamental to a conception of the PWV:

1. Our existence depends on both our environmental support systems, and our social support systems, ie our survival depends on how we relate to our environment and how we relate to each other. Whether the dominant belief is that we have currently already done irreparable damage both to our environmental and to a lesser extent to our social life support systems

or are heading towards irreparable is still part of the current discourse. What is emerging however is the view that the way forward can involve positive experiences such as joy, and fulfilment, by reconnecting with coherent meaning in life.

2. The need to practice value-rationality is becoming ever more urgent, that is, to prioritise values and give priority to human endeavours directed to our collective thriving and surviving, since tendencies to privilege knowledge inquiry without ethical guidance are at a minimum contributing to our environmental and social problems. A 'philosophy of wisdom' is suggested by Maxwell (1984) in terms of the need for "genuinely rational, socially active thought" towards the personal and social problems encountered in everyday life as we strive to realise what is of value in life.
3. The human condition includes the concept of human flourishing/thriving which can logically be linked to the achieving of a prosperous future. Major themes contributing to human flourishing are self-development, social development and environment/people relationships.

An important implication for the participatory worldview is with regard to structure/agency duality, whereby structure is said mould agency, while agency reproduces structure (Jackson, 2005) is that of enabling versus disabling environments. This extends from the recognition that our dominant values and interests drive our structures, which in combination with human agency dictate the kind of world we create. If we do want to create a different more humane world, this research suggests that one logical place to start is with one of our most basic needs, the need to eat nutritious food, and to take care of the environment on which we depend for all our basic needs.

### **Alternative values?**

It has been discussed how established patterns and structures can lead to social exclusion, however Kendall states that these can be transcended, bypassing or subverting by groups of people acting collectively (2004). Community food systems are likewise defined as collaborative efforts to build more locally-based, self-reliant food systems and economies (Peters, 1997).

Holism, participation and integration are seen as vital for any form of community development (Chodorkoff, 1990). Feenstra identifies three important themes in relation to community food systems, public participation, partnerships, and principles relating to social, economic, and environmental justice, which she calls the three 'p's' (2002). Other general values attributed to community food systems are related to democracy, and environmental sustainability and well-being in general (Pelletier, Kraak, McCallum, Uusitalo, & Rich, 1999; Wilkins, 2005). The specific forms of community food projects relevant to this paper will now be discussed.

### **Community supported agriculture & community gardens**

Community food security (CFS) is one example of a concept that can contribute to an enabling environment directed towards human survival and flourishing. It extends the notion of ensuring that all members of society have access to sufficient nutrition, to concerns regarding economic and social rights, community self-reliance and the sustainable production of food. This research will utilise a case study of a disadvantaged group involved in a project focusing on community food security, to explore this as an enabling environment, and explore the concept of the participatory worldview.

The values of participation, partnership and social, environmental and economic justice are prominent in the ideal of community supported agriculture (CSA). This concept involves a

partnership between farmers and consumers where consumers receive a regular box of fresh, often organically grown produce, in return for committing to support the farmer for the full season. Ideally consumers contribute to one or more of the many tasks involved, such as delivering the boxes, collating and distributing the newsletter giving information on the produce in the boxes, recipes and news from the farm, and/or on-farm work such as weeding, planting or harvesting. CSA is based on the premise that farming (and care of the environment) is everyone's responsibility, that both the rewards and the risks should be shared, and that it also has to be accessible to everyone (Groh & McFadden, 1997). Furthermore CSA can promote social responsibility and enhance feelings of connectedness to the environment and an understanding of the generative quality of nature (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Hinrichs, 2000).

Associative economics is also claimed as an important ideal of CSA, which involves all parties attempting to listen to the needs of all other parties in the interests of maximising the benefits of all involved (Groh & McFadden, 1997). Associative economics opposes competitive or market economics, instead it focuses on people working together to find solutions that meet their mutual interests and the interests of the rest of society and the environment (Budd, 2003). Attempts at social justice by CSA farms include providing working shares, a reduction in the price of the box in return for assistance on-farm or with administrative tasks (Goland, 2002), and subsidised shares, whereby those with higher incomes agree to subsidise those with lower incomes.

Proponents of CSA believe that values relating to both social and ecological sustainability are equally important to the movement (Reynolds, 2000). Their view is that farming is socially sustainable when its practices are embedded in social systems that promote the underlying values of ecological sustainability. Ecological values include consuming only what you need, replacing what you take, ensuring that waste products can be naturally recycled, and that products used in one place are not derived from extractive industries somewhere else.

One downside of some community food initiatives is that they mainly involve white, well-educated and upper-middle class individuals (Macias, 2008; Slocum, 2006) and therefore fail to live up to their claim for achieving social and economic justice. Furthermore the motivation for many of those involved as consumers is the desire to access fresh, organically grown produce, thus pointing to utilitarian values (Oberholtzer, 2004). Also of note is that while there are many cooperative CSA farms in the USA, the potential of cooperation among community farms (arguably stated as the key to transforming regional food systems), has not been substantially realised to date (Reynolds, 2000).

Community gardens (broadly defined as land gardened collectively) are “a means to provide employment, build job skills, generate income, educate youth and adults about nutritious food, and in some cases, bring people together across difference” (Slocum, 2006). At a more basic level, the overall health and well-being benefits of gardening and food production have been widely documented (Armstrong, 2000; Kortright & Wakefield, 2009; Malakoff, 2001). According to Bjornson (in Malakoff, 2001, p 19), community gardens have the ability to reduce social isolation, and may even allow “formerly marginalized urban residents (to) ... gain access to public policy, economic resources and social interaction.” Even small events such as community gardening meetings can bring together political activists, generally greening advocates, and gardeners, not only reducing social isolation but also leading to a valuable cross-fertilisation of ideas. The potential of community gardens to engender social inclusion is indicated by the emerging concept of “entrepreneurial

community gardens” (Feenstra, McGrew, & Campbell, 1999) where they are increasingly seen as strategies for community development.

### **Community Food Projects**

The first community food project initiated by the North West Environment Centre was a community supported agriculture (CSA) project in 2008. This commenced with three farmers, two certified organic and one not certified but who grew using organic principles, and 20 families. In 2010 it has two farmers and still approximately 20 families. Funding was then received from the Federal Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry for a project called Women in Sustainable Environments Network which combined the CSA project with a series of workshops aimed at enhancing skills for rural and regional women in sustainability and home production. The premise of this project was the recognition of the benefits of women collaborating to develop their capacity to provide for their own basic needs, which can trigger sustainable new local economies.

The second initiative resulted from funding received from the Department of Premier and Cabinet for a project entitled “Produce to the People”. This project commenced in February 2010, to collect and distribute backyard produce to people in need. At present the produce goes to the Salvation Army, however other institutions such as the University of Tasmania and Centrelink are now becoming involved. The emphasis is on the values of healthy food and healthy people, and connecting individuals to their community. To date, psychological benefits have been anecdotally commented on by staff at the Salvation Army, who state their clients are calmer and are interacting more positively with staff since receiving the produce.

The third initiative is a project involving the Federal Government’s employment program, the National Green Jobs Corp, to train 20 unemployed 17 to 24 year olds in conservation and land management and horticulture, and provide work experience while establishing a sustainable living centre and a number of community gardens in North-West Tasmania. The gardens will be based at two community houses, one emergency accommodation facility and the sustainable living centre, with the possibility of including other community gardens as the project progresses.

The research that this paper is based on will focus on using this third initiative as a case study of action research to build an expanded participatory worldview (PWV). Both case studies and action research are congruent with the PWV, in terms of their congruence with value-rational inquiry, that is, intellectual inquiry towards our common values and how to best achieve those values.

The action research will include focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Two co-researchers will assist with the research, who will both conduct the interviews and be subject to the interview process, which help improve and validate the interview process.

This intervention is based on views such as those of Maton (2000), who contend that environments “that allow individuals and groups the opportunity to develop key competencies, carry out socially valued roles, and enlarge personal networks” engender “key psychological expectancies and competencies linked to economic mobility, psychosocial adaptation, and social activism ... in individual members of disempowered populations” (p 34). In turn the claims for action research range from its ability to facilitate participation and empowerment by opening up communicative spaces, to the much more ambitious ideal of “changing practices, social structures, and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice, and unsatisfying forms of existence” (Reason 2001).

In line with the intention of this research to privilege value-rationality, the field research will focus in the first instance on values, in terms of firstly identification of values that are held within the group, and secondly exploring how the behaviours and actions of the participants reflect their values, and what constraints and opportunities exist to living more aligned with their values.

### **Potential for social inclusion**

The three community food initiatives as discussed show varying levels of capacity for social inclusion. Engaging the community in social inclusion in CSA while a definite ideal, is proving problematic for the CSA movement. The CSA project reflected the findings of the majority of the CSA farms in other countries, in terms of a distinct lack of community, and lack of values reflected beyond ecological values. De Lind refers to the main problem being a 'pervasive market mind set' (1999) whereby CSA tends to be framed as an alternative market arrangement rather than an attempt as an alternative to the market economy.

On the positive side however, also congruent with findings in other countries, all participants in the CSA project increased their consumption of vegetables, and some at least indicated satisfaction that they were directly supporting sustainable agriculture. This project will however need further commitment to realise some of the aforementioned ideals of CSA.

The Produce to the People project is still very much in its infancy, but is satisfying a basic need of many disadvantaged people in terms of having access to fresh produce, presumably reducing their reliance on processed high calorie, low nutrient food. The values however relate more to "arms length caring", where the community donates their excess produce to the Produce to the People project, which then delivers the produce to the Salvation Army, who then give the food to their clients. To date there has been a significant 'feel good' factor explicit in the project, which can largely be attributed to the members of the community who donate their produce gaining satisfaction from the fact that what may have become waste, that is their excess garden produce, is being turned into something of value, and is supporting the disadvantaged in our community.

While, however, there is an intention in the future to engage with the people who receive the food, to date this has not been possible due to funding and time constraints. In the future, for example, it is hoped that the Produce to the People project can commence cooking classes for people in need, to enable them to better utilise the produce they receive.

As the NGJC project has not commenced, it can only be discussed in the context of what it hopes to achieve. First and foremost, in interactions with the participants, their status as valuable 'assets' and self-determining agents will be explicitly honoured. The aim is then generally to provide aspects of an enabling environment, that is a collaborative intervention that provides "a motivational structure, developmental opportunities, multifaceted support system, and empowering leadership likely to enhance the personal empowerment of the disenfranchised" (Maton, 2000).

One future planned outcome of combining these community food projects is to extend them into social enterprises as a way of particularly disadvantaged people satisfying their own needs while being supported by the community. These have emerged as a pathway to social inclusion, which are often characterized by values other than individual attitudes, motives and behaviour (Oughton et al., 2003). It is this engendering of alternatives to dominant values such as individualism that support

economic growth to values that support community, equality and environmental justice that this research seeks to explore.

## **Conclusion**

This research seeks to argue that the three community food projects being conducted by the North-West Environment Centre show promise in combining to provide an 'enabling environment' for social transformation, partly due to the focus on groups who currently suffer from a major form of social exclusion in our society. The NGJC project is to help establish a Sustainable Living Centre, and a number of community gardens in North-West Tasmania. The project is linked to two other community projects, a Community Supported Agriculture project, which aims at partnerships between farmers and consumers, and the "Produce to the People" project, which collects and distributes backyard surpluses to people in need. All these projects are aimed at improving community food security, in terms of increasing access of community members to sufficient nutrition, building economic and social rights, community self-reliance and the sustainable production of food.

The significance of this approach is that it is contended to be important for both our surviving and thriving; that producing food in a way that doesn't compromise our environmental support systems and our social support systems, and ensures equitable access to food is a basic need of society. While community food systems are not a silver bullet to deeply entrenched dominant values in society, it is contended that community food systems do show promise for engaging the community in social inclusion. Most importantly, they show promise for changing the relationship we have with ourselves, each other and the environment.

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## **Giving Birth to a Dream: The Conception, Development and Introduction of The Bachelor of Education - The Early Years – *Dr Jillian Trezise, Jane Warren, Judy Daunt***

### **Abstract**

This presentation will focus on a recently launched Bachelor of Education –The Early Years program at the University of Wollongong, NSW Australia. The four-year innovative degree for educators of children under five years of age breaks down the physical, cultural, time and space barriers between teacher educators, student teachers, professionals in the field and community members. The degree was developed through active collaboration between University staff in The Early Years program, professionals and community members in a variety of diverse social, cultural and educational services in the Illawarra region of New South Wales. The ongoing aim is to create an open and collaborative real and virtual space for developing and sharing knowledge, skills, problems and solutions between students, community members and the academic staff of the University.

A crucial component of this degree is the Professional Partners Program (PPP). Each student is matched to a service where an educator who has been trained in mentoring by the University is employed. The students attend the ‘mentor service’ regularly throughout the four years of their degree. Research on the boundary crossing and knowledge transfer of participants is being undertaken to support a long-term and ongoing collaborative learning relationship founded on reciprocity.

**Keywords:** community, partners, early years, situated, mentoring.

### **Conceiving the baby: A Shared dream for an Early Years Education degree.**

In February 2008 our small academic team was given the opportunity to develop a new early childhood degree focused on developing graduates who would specialise in working with zero to five-year-olds and their families. This was a change from previous early childhood degrees, which had focussed more on preschool and young school-aged children. This opportunity came about because of several factors in the broader landscape for early childhood education. There was the influence off a shift in direction by the federal government in Australia, and indeed a renewed interest in very young children and their families right across the globe. Greater recognition for the importance of properly qualified professionals to work with very young children and their families was reflected in government policy and increased spending of public monies. Closer to home, a new Dean had been appointed to the Faculty who had a very strong commitment to quality early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged and underrepresented populations. Furthermore it had long been discussed in the local early childhood community that the early childhood profession needed a dedicated zero-to-five years focused degree that recognised the hybrid nature of the early childhood profession. These factors combined to open a window of opportunity for the conception of an innovative niche degree focusing specifically on broadly recognized concerns, issues and possibilities for working with young children and families.

Having been given this opportunity to develop such a degree our small team of academics quickly moved to involve local members of the early childhood profession in the creation process. We formed a formal advisory committee consisting of representatives from training, employment,

government and non-government agencies, support groups and the local Aboriginal and multicultural centres. In addition we met informally with individuals who would otherwise have been excluded, because they could not attend the meetings of the advisory group. This ensured that members of the Aboriginal community from surrounding areas were included. We enlisted the support of the Aboriginal educator in the faculty. We also called on Alumni members: Graduates of the existing zero to eight Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and students who were enrolled in the final two years of that degree, to give their contributions and reflections on the direction that we might need to take. We were also ably assisted by an admin officer who guided our paths through the maze of University administrative processes. Involving so many people in this process could have been overwhelming were not for the fact that we had a strong shared vision. In a way the conception of the degree had taken place over several years during ongoing discussions with the local Early Childhood professionals and feedback about reforms desired in student exit surveys and interviews.

### **The Vision Splendid.**

Early childhood professionals conceive of the very young child as embedded in a family and community with whom they collaborate and cooperate. EC professionals are committed to ensuring that all children receive an early education that benefits them from living in a rich and resourceful country and provides them with a foundation for their future in both formal education and informal lived experiences. This was our starting point.

Based on feedback from students and graduates, we wanted to provide students opportunities to benefit from regular and ongoing contact with practical experiences in the field and with the support of committed and passionate professionals in all sorts of early childhood services. Skills developed working in, with and for community are transferable. We believe that once students are immersed in a community environment and have a support mechanism to enable them to develop self confidence, to accept responsibility for their actions and live with the consequences of decisions made and actions taken, they will emerge from the University better equipped to join the profession and stay in it. They would have a better understanding of why and how what is learnt at University is important to our profession. Students should be engaged with their local community services throughout their studies and it is for that purpose that the Professional Partners Program (PPP) was created. To establish the PPP we advertised for participants and required them to complete a thorough written application. We prepared questionnaires for students and devised a formal mentoring program structure informed (Rolfe) as the basis for PPP.

The project is embedded in the degree and has both Situated Learning and Mentoring goals. It engages the students, academic staff and other professionals in a reciprocal learning program. We therefore needed to be sure that the services we partnered with knew and valued what we were doing as much as we knew and valued what they were doing. We planned to do this by acknowledging and valuing the expertise of practicing professionals in the field, and to show this by having them contribute to the formal program at the University as sessional lecturers and tutors as well as being mentors in the field. This would also enable the academics to mentor these practitioners and provide career extension and revitalisation.

Based on our conversations and feedback sessions with our colleagues in the field, we developed a number of key notions to be represented in the content of the degree. In order to prepare graduates

for this challenging profession we need to prepare them to be team workers and to model and make visible our own team working. They need to have exceptional inter- and intra-personal knowledge and communication skills. They need to be knowledgeable about a wide variety of theories and methodological approaches and be critical thinkers. They need to be able to value, understand, apply and engage in research of their own. In a global context, they must be able to embrace diversity in all its forms and be committed to social justice. We also believe that they need to be as well educated about Aboriginal history, culture and pedagogy as they are about the traditional European foundations of education. By being involved in our program we aimed for graduates who would be comfortable in their local community because they will have learned to liaise, negotiate and listen to community members throughout their studies and learn to be advocates for children and their families.

These ideas emerged in the formal documentation for the degree as the stated aims and appeared in the course proposal documentation. The Bachelor of Education \_ Early Years seeks to develop graduates who are:-

- committed to social justice through ensuring that all children receive an early education that benefits from living in a rich and resourceful country and provides them with a foundation for their future in both formal education and informal lived experiences.
- willing to embrace diversity in all its forms .
- team workers able to work with other educational, health, legal and social professionals as well as families and the broader community.
- aware of the importance of inter and intrapersonal knowledge and communication skills.
- knowledgeable about a wide variety of theories and methodological approaches and critical thinkers so that they are able to choose among them to best serve the needs of children, families and communities with whom they work.
- able to value, understand and apply research and engage in ongoing research of their own.
- as well educated about aboriginal history, culture and pedagogy as they are about the traditional European foundations of education.
- comfortable in their local community because they have learned to liaise, negotiate and listen to community members throughout their studies without abrogating their responsibility as advocates for children and their families.
- prepared to work in rural and remote locations.

Together with our community we had dreamed of a new early childhood degree program unlike anything else that had been attempted. The ideal is that we can create an open and collaborative space for developing and sharing knowledge, skills, problems and solutions between students, professionals in the field and academic staff of the University. It is an exciting new approach to professional preparation in the early childhood sector, with a high level of practical community engagement work embedded in the course. In addition there is the usual professional experience requirements for education students. It requires a long term and ongoing relationship between students, selected services in the field, and The Early Years staff of the University. It requires mentoring at all levels, and in reciprocal fashion. That is, centre staff will mentor students, act as peer mentors for each other and in turn be mentored by members of the university staff. Students will be peer mentors for each other and in some cases for members of the centre staff. In keeping with the sense of reciprocity in this program, centre staff and the community will provide mentoring

for university staff as well as students, particularly on issues such as Indigenous culture and current issues and concerns for all types of early childhood services in the field.

Based on our academic research and reading, we felt that the academic program and the PPP working together should reflect four simple guiding principles.

- Support and give recognition for the contribution made to children, families and communities by early childhood educators.
- Demonstrate excellence in early childhood practice achieved through reflective Early Childhood Educators.
- Promote the belief that to truly value growth and development of children, we must value our own growth and professional development as early childhood specialists.
- Develop and exemplary PPP where mentoring relationships are based on honour, trust, respect and modesty.

### **A Speedy and exhilarating birth**

With a consensus on what was to be included in the degree, we moved quickly through the processes of preparing documentation for the university and for the state Community Services Department which assesses and approves early childhood qualifications. At several points we met with our community committee for advice and to inform of our progress. This proved to be one of the more straightforward aspects of the whole process. At the time it was consistent hard work but nevertheless there were strong guidelines and a certain sense of camaraderie that sustained us through those months of preparation. This was completed between February and September 2008 and was celebrated in October for Children's Week with a gala launch and public celebration. There were stirring speeches by the Dean and the vice Chancellor, and a great deal of support from our community partners. In my own speech on the occasion I made the observation that these festivities were a bit like a wedding breakfast and while the party was great, the important part, like the marriage, was in what followed. In our case it would be the delivery and development of the degree and the PPP that would require our ongoing commitment and hard work.

### **Post Partum Exhaustion and then Depression sets in as reality hits.**

During the time between the launch and the first intake of students in February 2009, we worked hard on establishing the PPP with enthusiastic and overwhelming support from our community partners. However this proved to be a much bigger project than had been dreamed in the imagining of the program. We were quite overwhelmed by the interest from the sector but many services indicated that they would be unwilling to take more than one student at a time and that meant for the 35 or 40 students we were expecting that we required 35 or 40 different services to be involved. This added up to a lot of training campaigning and negotiation. In the original planning of the PPP it was envisaged that we would partner with ten or twelve services into which 3 or four students would be placed. In the end there were 27 services involved across all the extremes of the region. We undertook training for Lead Mentors for a full day in both November 2008 and February 2009. This was a very rewarding and satisfactory collaboration with our community partners. There was a very strong sense of commitment from everyone involved and when our energies flagged their enthusiasm kept us afloat.

We introduced the incoming students to the new degree and to PPP in Orientation Week of 2009. There were many students who were as enthusiastic and excited as our community partners and us. However there were those who had enrolled unaware that the degree no longer prepared them for working in the public school system and was now totally devoted to working with children in the zero to five age group and their families and communities. This group of students in the main was not committed to the degree or the PPP and very soon there were indications that several had applied for transfers into the Primary Teaching degree or other courses. This was somewhat discouraging but not entirely unexpected. Although we had advertised as widely as we could and informed applying and enrolling students about the changed direction of the degree, we fully expected that there would be students who were still operating from the previous year's information as well as those who had deliberately used the Early Entry scheme to gain access to the university, while not intending to complete the Early Years degree.

Matching and placing students into the PPP services took longer than had been anticipated and it was not until after the Easter recess that students were all finally in place in the services and attending regularly. Nevertheless the degree and PPP continued to be embraced by the community partners and the students were warmly and strongly supported by their mentors. Teaching in the academic program, training the students for their protégé role, visiting the services to introduce students and undertaking all staff training sessions, as well as dealing with the somewhat reluctant students was very demanding. At this time we were also asked to commence development of a postgraduate course to serve the needs of our PPP mentors. When we were not involved in these activities we were actively recruiting and advertising the new program to prospective students. The exhausting reality of nurturing our neonate hit hard.

Our commitment at the beginning of the entire process was to undertake regular evaluation of the degree and research the PPP. Through this process we will find new ways to improve the degree and how we operate the mentoring program. To this end an Honours student, Mikylla Cook, was deployed in 2009 to undertake research on a small number of students' perceptions of their involvement in their mentor services. There were students involved in this research who were unhappy in their mentor placement or who found the logistics of attendance very difficult. Their reasons and perceptions were fully recorded in the detailed case study research process and included lack of reliable transport, illness, and timetable changes for the Spring Session of University. Financial and family issues impacted on the time available for study and PPP attendance, which also exacerbated weak links with mentor services. For those students who were less committed, the one-day a week of expected attendance at the mentor service was seen as a burden rather than a learning opportunity. Some of these students were disgruntled because they saw this placement as preventing them from participating in a full day of paid employment. We lowered our expectations of 50 days a year of PPP involvement several times in response to this feedback and eventually arrived at 30 to 36 days as a realistically attainable goal. There were also student perceptions of at least one mentor as inflexible, uncaring and overly demanding. This was a very confronting experience, as it seemed to suggest that the project was not proving as successful as had been hoped and that further or different training of the mentors was indicated. Depression threatened.

However these negative results were highly visible due to the small number of participants who volunteered for the research. There were very positive accounts by participants in the case study and informal feedback and evaluation from the majority of PPP services and students were very

positive. One of the positive outcomes indicated by the research was that there was perception of considerable learning taking place with strong links made by students between classroom experience on campus and mentor service context. However, students found the mentoring relationship hard to understand and very slow to develop. For some of the mentors too, the focus was on attendance and day-to-day activities rather than on building rapport with the students and meeting their needs for personal support and development. It gradually became clear that the Situational Learning component of the PPP was very successful, however the mentoring relationship was less of a focus for most participants. In the cases where rapport had developed well and supportive mentoring conversations had been taking place, the students' attendance for PPP was above average and participation very enthusiastic.

We had chosen to use Mentor Coaching (Nolan) as a definition to cover the full range of relationships and roles in both Situated Learning and Mentoring, however this did not clearly distinguish the two components of the program.

**Mentor coaching** is the facilitated structured process whereby an experienced person(s) (mentor coach) introduces, assists and supports a less experienced person (protégé) in a personal and professional growth process. This process, in order to be effective, must occur over time: sufficient time must elapse for the mentors and protégé to develop action plans, dialogue about issues, and practice and reflect. It is an individualised learning and change process that effects both the parties. Both benefit and learn from the process. They learn and develop within a symbiotic process, but the process is not formulaic. The process is also multi-directional with role reversals and shifts occurring as knowledge is identified, explored and shared. Mentor coach skills can be learned to support a quality relationship.

We were able to recognise in retrospect that the misunderstanding and confusion for both students and mentors was understandable. Because of this information we decided to review the information and training for the PPP to better explicate the dual aims of the program. On reflection and further reading it became clearer that there were some tensions between these two aims for the program. Situated Learning is learning that takes place in an authentic setting and involves doing, thinking and all of one's senses. It is 'situated' with an experienced practitioner as a guide to scaffold the novice in their learning. In mentoring, people develop a synergetic relationship through a conversation that enables them to set and achieve goals, make decisions and solve problems to help a novice develop as a reflective professional. The comparison is summarised in Table 1.

## Situated Learning

## Mentoring

Requires novice to be onsite for it to happen.	Does not require as much on site contact
Expectation that novice will be shown how to behave and told what to do by guide(s)	Expectation that protégé will take the lead and engage the mentor in conversation
Has immediately visible benefits for both parties	Operates internally and does not have immediately visible payoffs
Takes the focus off the learner or novice onto what they are doing	The focus is entirely on the protégé and gives them the responsibility to 'make it happen'.

Table 1 Tensions between the dual aims of the PPP

In recognition of these tensions and to better support the next group of students to enter the program, we decided that from now on the focus in the first year of study should be more squarely on Situated Learning. This would enable students to gain practical skills, develop relationships in the service and form a foundation for the mentoring aspect that we expect to develop as a stronger focus in the remaining years of the degree. The attendance at the mentor service would also be better justified with clearer links in Subject Outlines between on campus work and PPP.

### The Second Year – Taking Stock and Moving Forward

Second year has begun very positively. New students are well aware of the structure of the new degree; it's changed focus and the role of PPP in professional and academic learning. Our procedures were more highly refined and established and a number of the continuing partners elected to take an additional student this year. We were able to expand our partners to include sufficient places for a greatly increased intake of students. We have 46 first year students and 25 second year students placed in approximately 38 different services. In some services more than one staff member has now undertaken the Lead Mentor training program and some students who are in the second year of the degree have acted as peer mentors and guides for the incoming students.

A second Honours student, Emma Sylvester, has been deployed to focus more squarely on student perceptions of the Situated Learning element. Preliminary results from her surveys and interviews indicate that both second year and the first year participants are very clear about the learning benefits and professional opportunities of participation in PPP. A doctoral student will commence in Spring Session to examine the experiences and perceptions of mentors about their own learning through involvement in PPP. A case study research of two of the most successful student service partnerships from last year and one of the more troubled partnership arrangements is being undertaken by the authors of this paper.

All students had been allocated their PPP services by the end of March this year. In contrast to last year, only one student has indicated that they may be applying for transfer to a different degree. During last year and also this year we have conducted networking and feedback social meetings with mentor partners. This year for the first time we have followed up student training with a mid session social evening and informal forum for all students involved in the program. We are still working with some of the second-year students to build stronger mentoring relationships and to show how these practical and supportive opportunities relate to positive outcomes in academic work.

The involvement of students and academic staff in the local community acts as a promotional strategy for recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students. The postgraduate coursework – Graduate Certificate and Masters Specialisation has attracted a great deal of interest and there is potential to develop further in this area with conversion options for teachers who wish to move to The Early Years from other areas of education. In the undergraduate area student interest is high and there is potential for further growth. We now seem to be over the first difficult year of parenthood.

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## **The Establishment of a Regional, Multi Sector Careers Information Centre Through Collaboration and Partnership - *Dr Pierre Viljoen, Richard Ward***

The Gladstone Region in Central Queensland is surrounded by natural resource-rich areas and is currently a diverse and major processing centre for the region and state. Gladstone has also been identified as an area for some major future developments, particularly in industry which brings with it further demands for more skilled and appropriately trained employees across all levels of the workforce.

One of the ways Central Queensland University (CQU) is responding to address the diverse education and training needs of this region is through the development and management of a broad based education, training and career pathway information centre – the Gladstone Careers Information Centre. This information centre works in conjunction with other regional initiatives to attract and retain workers. The aim of the Careers Information Centre is to work in partnership with the various educational, commercial, industrial and service groups within the Gladstone Region to provide a central facility that provides not only information about the many and varied education, training, employment and career opportunities within the region, but also easy access and seamless pathways to these. The Centre provides a focal point for the varied education, training and career opportunities available within the Gladstone region. It allows both the Gladstone community residents and the community partners to have access to this information in one central point.

In establishing the Careers Information Centre the intention was not to replicate or replace services that currently exist within the Gladstone Region, but rather to create a service that will link visitors to the centre with the appropriate partners and agencies participating in the centre. To achieve this, a series of distinct, yet effective, partnerships were developed.

Through this initiative, the Centre attracts young people as well as mature aged learners engaged in furthering their career prospects through education. It provides opportunities to those who traditionally might never have visited the university campus. It rightly establishes the university as a leader in building collaboration and partnerships across different educational sectors. The community in turn has easy access to a centralized, well-serviced careers centre that can address individual needs at any time.

From this case study it became apparent that there is value in developing mechanisms that seamlessly link across the educational sector, including schools, vocational education and training and higher education. Regional universities can play a facilitating role in the establishment of such mechanisms by having a strong relationship base with all education and training providers, and a willingness to make financial and other resources available to support non-traditional entrepreneurial activities.

By positioning the Career Information Centre within the Gladstone campus of the university and enlisting the support of various community partners, it not only encourages more members of the local community to visit, but also provides an avenue to break down existing barriers and preconceptions. It opens up opportunities for more people with current trade qualifications and experience to further their careers with the assistance of the university.

From a community engagement perspective, universities are well-positioned to provide neutral ground where the emphasis is not on competition, but rather on collaboration with the aim of working towards the greater public good.

**Keywords:** Careers information centre, education pathways, partnerships, collaboration

## **Introduction**

The Gladstone Region in Central Queensland has developed enormously over the past three decades since Gladstone was declared a City in 1976. The region is surrounded by natural resource-rich areas and is currently a major processing centre for the region and state. In addition to the major city of Gladstone – which has been termed ‘the Engine Room of Industry’ – the region is comprised of 17 towns including the major urban centres of Tannum Sands, Boyne Island, Calliope, Miriam Vale, and Agnes Water (Gladstone Regional Council, 2009). Indeed, diversity is a major feature of the region. Whilst major industrial facilities dominate Gladstone and Boyne Island, the region also features coastal towns and rural farming areas. More recently, Gladstone has also been identified and recognised both nationally and at a state level, as an area for some major future developments, particularly in industry (GAPDL, 2008).

The Gladstone region has a high proportion of residents in ‘what could be considered the prime working age’ group of 20-39. The number of young people leaving school and immediately entering the workforce is 73% including apprentices 19.8% and those actively seeking work 9.8%. The number of people going on to higher education is 19.5% (Gladstone Regional Council, 2009).

Within such a diverse and growing community as Gladstone, the provision of a central point in which existing and new community members can access education, training and career information is essential. One of the ways Central Queensland University is responding to address the diverse education and training needs of this region is through the development and management of a broad based education, training and career pathway information centre – the Gladstone Careers Information Centre. This information centre works in conjunction with other regional initiatives to attract and retain more people in the region, as well as enhancing the prospect of building a skilled regional workforce.

## **Background to initiative**

The Gladstone Region is a centre of major minerals processing and exports. As such, the Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board focuses on the city’s exporting capabilities and promotes Gladstone as being ‘the global location of choice’ for large manufacturing, resource processing and chemical companies and exporters (GAPDL, 2008). This industrial development is also feeding a burgeoning retail sector. The Gladstone Region’s economy is dominated by the resources sector, specifically minerals and energy. Current and emerging industries include coal and metalliferous mining and processing; alumina refinery; aluminum smelting; coal seam gas; liquefied natural gas processing; power generation; chemical processing and manufacturing; shale oil mining and processing; nickel refinery, and product export through its port facility.

The Gladstone Regional Council’s Transition Action Plan (2008) clearly states that a key component of the region’s economy comes from major industrial development, and that Gladstone is home to Queensland’s largest multi-commodity port. The Local Government Reform Commission’s amalgamation rationale paper predicts that significant development over the next 20 years is

expected, with respect to port, road and rail transport infrastructure; processing smelters and refineries; power stations; gas pipelines; the region's oil shale deposits; explosives; and tourism, particularly around the coastal towns and islands (Local Government Reform Committee, 2007).

The rationale paper also provides key information on the economy of the Gladstone region and how it currently functions. Gladstone City is considered the future major centre for the lower Surat Basin due to it being the rail head and deep water port for the coal and gas fields as well as for alumina. The rail network for the entire lower Surat Basin terminates or commences at Gladstone. Gladstone City is seen as a hub for employment in the region's commercial, industrial, banking, retail, and government and health services sectors. Recent figures compiled by Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited (GAPDL), in its Gladstone Region Project Status Report (July 2007), show that over \$32 billion of projects are under construction, recently completed or under investigation.

As the community continues to grow with the addition of future projects in the region, it also brings with it further demands. This includes not only the immediate need for more skilled and appropriately trained employees across all levels of the workforce, but also importantly for the future as well. In turn, the call for information around education, training and employment becomes paramount as more families move into the region. The aim of the Careers Information Centre is to work in partnership with the various educational, commercial, industrial and service groups within the Gladstone Region to provide a central facility that provides, not only information about the many and varied education, training, employment and career opportunities within the region, but also seamless access and pathways to these. To these ends, a variety of education, business and industry groups from the Gladstone Region have signed up as corporate partners to this project. The partners in the Centre includes Rio Tinto Alcan, Gladstone Ports Corporation, Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, Queensland Energy Resources (QER), Queensland Curtis LNG (QGC), Education Queensland, Catholic Education- Diocese of Rockhampton, Gladstone Area Group Apprentices Ltd (GAGAL), Education Queensland & Industry Partners (EQIP), Gladstone Observer, Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA), NRG GOS Power Station, Skilled, MRAEL (GTO + AAC), NEATO Employment Services, and Skilling Solutions Queensland.

The facility caters for a range of users including students, parents, workers and employers. Visitors to the centre are encouraged to browse through the Career Information Centre. They can either do it at their own leisure or there is also a provision to get some pathways advice from dedicated staff members, who are located adjacent to the centre. A telephone facility is also made available, linked to all participating partners, facilitating quick and easy access.

### **Structure and activities**

In establishing the Careers Information Centre the intention was not to replicate or replace services that currently exist within the Gladstone Region, but rather link visitors to the centre with the appropriate partners and agencies that are provided already. In doing so, a series of distinct, yet effective, partnerships is being developed. For example, visitors to the centre who are seeking employment in a new vocation are able to be linked with appropriate education or training providers in order to gain suitable qualifications prior to contacting particular employer groups. Hence, employer groups, many of whom are corporate partners in this initiative, are provided with a suitably trained and 'healthy' applicant pool. Human Resource Departments of the corporate

partners are provided with a 'filtering' mechanism and importantly local and regional education and training providers, including the university, are able to be linked with more clients.

Currently, the more predominant vocations in the Gladstone region are trade based. As has been reflected in the previously mentioned trend data of secondary students moving into the tertiary sector, higher education has not always been as sought after in the past (Gladstone Regional Council, 2009). In particular, the Gladstone campus of the university is frequently utilized by several of the larger employer groups as a venue for their training. The challenge has then been to change the mind set of existing workers in our community in terms of how they perceive the university. That is, the university is not just a place where one go for training, but a facility which can provide further training and educational opportunities to assist in furthering one's career.

As the proposed industrial development takes off, not just within the local region but nationwide, there will be a critical requirement for more appropriately skilled and trained personnel. The decision to position the Career Information Centre within the Gladstone campus of the university and enlisting the support of various community partners not only encourages more members of the local community to visit, but also provides an avenue to break down existing barriers and preconceptions. It opens up opportunities for more people with current trade qualifications and experience to further their careers with the assistance of the university. One such area where this is growing is within the engineering sector (GAPDL, 2008).

In terms of additional marketing and promotion, there is much talk about 'word of mouth' these days. When questioned, consumers most frequently cite personal recommendation as a top influence on purchase decision and they consistently say it's more trustworthy than other forms of communication. They also say it's twice as valuable as traditional marketing, according to the Keller Fay Group, a market research firm focused on word of mouth. New research recently conducted by Keller Fay confirms the value of word of mouth as well as its ties to face-to-face (Keller, 2007).

With this in mind, in terms of the marketing and promotion of this center to the Gladstone Community, those involved have been mindful that it is seen as a community facility that is available to all residents of the Gladstone Region and that not all visitors to the centre are interested in higher education. As a way of encouraging more people to visit the centre and 'spread the word', a number of initiatives in collaboration with other community partners have also been coordinated in and around the centre. These have included a 'Schools, Business and Industry Forum' and an 'Apprentice Information Night'. The aim of these events is to attract more people from across the community to the facility so that they may see and experience first-hand what is available and hopefully share their experience with others.

As a consequence of this, more people in the community will be exposed via the Careers Information Centre to the many varied opportunities and pathways that higher education can bring, in turn widening participation and importantly, improving university community partnerships. In the future it is envisaged that there will also be a provision for community members to access much of this information and advice remotely or online via a Career Information Centre website so that an even greater percentage of the region can gain access to this facility and the opportunities that it can provide.

## **Opportunities and challenges**

This case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance, such as multiple partners; diverse target audiences, complexities of working across different educational sectors (i.e. schools, vocational education and training, and higher education). According to Stake (2005), readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with a case through the researcher's narrative description. Thus, what the reader learns from this particular case study could be transferred to similar situations and contexts (Erickson, 1986).

From this case study it became apparent that there is value in developing mechanisms that can seamlessly link across the whole educational sector, including schools, vocational education and training and higher education. Regional universities can play a facilitating role in the establishment of such mechanisms by having a strong relationship base with all education and training providers, and a willingness to make financial and other resources available to support non-traditional entrepreneurial activities. These resources include human-, financial-, and physical resources.

In terms of human resources, strong local, senior leadership is fundamental in gaining high level support from different institutions. At the operational level, it is fundamental to have dedicated staff with good experience and knowledge of the complexities of working across different educational sectors and providers. Furthermore, these individuals should have a well-developed understanding of the relevant regional issues that impact on education, including industry- and employer-demands. These individuals should also be able to work internally across different areas of the university in building a clear understanding of how an initiative like this will benefit the university in the longer term. These benefits are normally not short-term and relate more to building a whole-education sector, rather than just building the higher education sector, i.e. not only increasing the higher education slice of the pie, but increasing the whole of the pie.

From a financial point of view, the initial setup costs for the Centre posed a real challenge. Although all partners who were approached was supported of the idea, very few was willing to put money up front for the establishment of the initiative. The university played a leadership role and made money available up front for the establishment of the Centre. Once this was communicated, partners were quite willing to come on board and fund the continued operation of the Centre which, due to the amount of partners, will actually refund the cost of the establishment to the university over a three to four year period.

Universities occupy a very privileged place in society and it has, as their major roles, research and innovation; teaching and learning; and community service. Universities are well-positioned to provide neutral ground where the emphasis is not on competition, but rather on collaboration with the aim of working towards the greater public good. As such, the university made available space for the establishment of the Centre.

## **Conclusion**

There are several tangible benefits for all concerned. From a university perspective, the Centre draws in young people, as well as individuals involved in life-long learning that might traditionally never have visited the university campus. The university is presented within the Careers Information Centre as an option equal to all the other options available. It rightly establishes the university as a leader in establishing collaboration and partnerships across different educational sectors.

The community benefits include having a centralised, easy-access and well-serviced permanent careers centre available that can address individual needs as, and when, they arise. It is important to remember that people are ready to make a choice on resuming further education and career opportunities, not necessarily when the careers fair come to town, but rather when the need arise and the decision becomes prominent for them.

Partners stand to benefit in the knowledge that their products are on exhibition 24/7/365 and accessible at a venue that overtime will become established as 'the point of contact' if you are interested in engaging with either an education, or new career opportunity. Furthermore, the direct dial telephone service to different partners linking prospects instantly with the correct internal source of information in the organisation, allows quick and accurate responses. This limits the frustration sometimes experienced by prospective clients in engaging with different partners at different locations at different times. Initial verbal feedback from both community members and partners has been positive. Formal feedback and evidence will be gathered and reported on as the initiative matures.

The Gladstone Careers Information Centre is a case study in multi sector collaboration. It is hoped that over time it will support the development of reciprocal relationships between different education sectors as well as between education providers, business and industry. Ultimately, the Centre aims to break down some of the artificial barriers that exist and offer community members a permanent, well serviced, effective, and easily accessible integrated careers advice service.

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## **Problematizing the Faculty Evaluation Process: A Canadian Story - *Fay Fletcher, Katy Campbell, Lois Gander***

There is an emerging trend in the literature on community engagement and the scholarship of engagement, spurred by the recognition of engagement as not only beneficial but critical to universities in the 21st Century to integrate engagement into the institutional structures and to reward the community engagement efforts of their faculty (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Brukhardt et al. 2007). While engaged scholarship is encouraged and has been successful in many universities, the related evaluation of performance for salary, tenure and promotion purposes challenges the prevailing academic culture. In fact, in Canada the Faculty for an Engaged Campus (Community Campus Partnerships for Health, 2010) has invited participation in a three-year multi-institutional study that aims to explore persistent challenges in faculty members' review, promotion and tenure. The following, in particular, will be dealt with in detail:

- Peer reviewers in a given faculty member's discipline or profession who can understand and assess the rigor, quality and impact of their CES [community engaged scholarship] are not readily identifiable
- There is no accepted method or vehicle for peer reviewing, publishing and disseminating products of CES that are in forms other than journal articles (e.g. technical reports, resource guides, handbooks, policy briefs, etc.)
- There are no clearly defined or accepted roles for community partners in the faculty development, review, promotion or tenure process.

Additionally, the report of the Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions (2005) identified the following challenges in valuing community engaged scholarship, some of which echo those above: the scholarship hierarchy, i.e. discovery is valued over other forms of scholarship; time involved in developing community-academic partnerships; the journal hierarchy, i.e. "top tier" journals often do not publish works of community-engaged scholarship; diverse dissemination pathways and products, i.e. some scholarly products of CES are not journal articles; diverse measures of quality, productivity, and impact; the central role of peer review; and the limited involvement of community partners in the review, promotion, tenure process.

The challenge to reform the traditional peer review process for a more appropriate understanding and application of peer evaluation for engaged scholarship (typically inclusive of a broader array of inputs, and outputs) introduces "cognitive dissonance" into the process. Scholarly review has been based in good part on product measures, while the criteria for review of engaged scholarship must also include process measures (Calleson, Jordan and Seifer, 2005) and consider longer-term outcomes and social impacts, which are socially situated, complex, evolve over several years, and can rarely be attributed to the scholarly contributions of a single academic. Review committees are unaccustomed to evaluating scholarship within this context, and the documentation may be presented in unfamiliar forms. Michigan State University's Committee on Evaluating Quality Outreach (1996) noted a third difficulty related to traditional peer-reviewed forms such as refereed

papers, i.e. transferability to other locations and times. For example, because community-engaged scholarship usually includes a set of activities as opposed to a single product, the quality of the scholarship may also require alternate forms of documentation, such as community impact, sustainability, policy development, informal learning opportunities, or public awareness. Despite proactive efforts, at the level of the institution and faculty to recognize community engaged scholarship, the case study presented here demonstrates the extent to which the traditional measures of performance are embedded in the institution. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU, 2002) recommend actions institutions may take in order to promote more and better public engagement. The following initiatives, in line with recommendations from the AASCU, were taken in preparation for faculty evaluation with the goal of promoting public engagement through the evaluation process.

AASCU Recommendation: Formally recognize responsibility to the community/region in the institution's statement of mission and vision (AASCU, 2002: p. 33).

In 2008, the University of Alberta's Provost and Board of Governors approved the Faculty of Extension's new academic plan, *Engaging our Communities*, in which we proposed to renew 100 years of community outreach with the emerging intellectual domain of the scholarship of engagement (SoE). A process of realignment has followed and rationalization of research, academic programming, administrative systems, and academic policies and procedures, including annual faculty evaluations and annual increment required by the University's collective agreement with academic staff. The academic staff of our Faculty has engaged in theory-building and has problematized faculty evaluation guidelines and the related annual reporting process.

AASCU Recommendation: Align the scholarship of public engagement with the scholarship of discovery. In other words, public engagement needs to have academic legitimacy if it is truly going to be one embedded in the culture of the institution (AASCU, 2002: p 33).

We have revised our *Standards for Faculty Evaluation, Tenure and Promotion* to emphasize a cycle of integrated scholarship through which community engagement, social action and community impact are required and assessed. Guiding questions were adapted from the Clearinghouse and National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement (2002) and include:

- Are the staff member's teaching, research, and service appropriate to the academic plan of the University of Alberta and of the Faculty of Extension?
- Does the staff member's research, development, and scholarship reveal continuity and a developing focus?
- Are teaching, research, and service activities intellectually rigorous, vital, and timely?
- Are methods and technologies used by the staff member appropriate to the goals, questions, and context of the community?
- Do teaching, research, and service contribute beneficially to the community?
- What are the formative evaluations of the staff member's work? Is the staff member's work based on an integral relationship with a community?

AASCU Recommendation: Improve the alignment of faculty roles and incentives [promotion] within engagement initiatives (AASCU, 2002: p. 33).

The Faculty of Extension's *Standards for Salary Increment, Promotion and Tenure* (June 2008) provide relatively broad definitions of teaching, research, and service. To meet their teaching obligations faculty members are expected and encouraged to "engage in a range of roles that initiate, stimulate, support, or facilitate the learning of others" including "performing such roles as instructor, tutor, community/organizational developer, mentor, and educational counselor wherein the staff member is directly involved in the delivery of educational or informational activities or the production of informational activities or resources.... [T]eaching also includes providing academic leadership and administrative direction to the development of educational and informational programs, services, and resources" (p. 3).

Research includes "creating, interpreting, and mobilizing knowledge and developing technology in fields of study and practice relevant to adult and continuing education, extension, engaged scholarship, and the scholarship of engagement" (p. 5). While research can be discipline-based, it may also be interdisciplinary and capable of contributing to policy development. Staff members work collaboratively within and outside the academy, identifying and securing resources from many sources to support their work" (p.1).

Service includes "leadership that encourages capacity-building in external communities, the Faculty of Extension, across the University, and other organizations and institutions. Activities that encourage citizenship are an integral part of the cycle of scholarship" (p. 6). In all instances indicators of performance include processes, outputs, or outcomes.

Our policy explicitly recasts these categories as "learning, discovery, and citizenship" and staff members are expected to embed their scholarly work in community issues. However, even though the language of engagement is explicit in the University's vision document *Dare to Discover*, the categories of teaching, research and service carry much institutional meaning. Moreover, because they are used explicitly in the *University of Alberta Faculty Agreement* (2006, amended 2007 & 2008), we were legally obligated to retain those terms in our *Standards* (2008).

Faculty members are expressly expected to undertake "[e]ngaged scholarship", i.e. "constituted by teaching, research, and service that responds to the aspirations and concerns of community members who are external to the traditional boundaries of university campuses, excluded by academic disciplines, or without access to funding agencies" (p. 1). But they are also expected to undertake the scholarship of engagement, which we see as being "the study of the processes and practices of engagement. Its purposes are to improve these processes and practices or to contribute to scholarly and professional understanding of them" (p. 1). Furthermore, "an integrated cycle of teaching, research, and service is therefore expected to develop over the years" (p. 2)

While the preamble to the document also states that the Faculty values community-based participatory research and its many forms of dissemination, it also provides that peer review will be prominent among these forms. This was the item that would put the Faculty's commitment to community university engagement to the test. In 2009 the first tenure case under the new *Standards* was considered, challenging the Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) to deeply consider the meaning to be given to several sections of the policy, making apparent the mismatch between university goals for engaged-community research and the university culture and structure that typically do not value and nurture such research (Scott, 2007); the multiple culture clashes between traditional and emerging conceptions of scholarship; the neutral, detached academy and the socially engaged;

diverse ways of knowing within and external to the academy and its communities; and accepted evidence of scholarship and meaningful community outcomes.

The story of the candidate's application for tenure and review of that application speak to the outstanding challenges to promotion and tenure for community-engaged scholars regardless of the formal recognition through statement of mission and vision, the perceived academic legitimacy within the institution and the alignment of roles and incentives.

### **The Candidate's Perspective**

I present my tenure story as I did my tenure application, as a blend of narrative and facts that, if successful, will capture the critical aspects of my preparation for tenure and the outstanding challenges in securing tenure despite steps taken by my colleagues to reward community engagement. I begin with some context of my work with the University and communities. As a doctoral student, I taught and served on curriculum and graduate committees. As a result, I built networks and was mentored by colleagues in senior administrative positions. I also embraced the community-based participatory approach in my research, which had me physically and relationally embedded with immigrant and Aboriginal communities. I developed a comprehensive understanding of the University environment and a commitment to the communities where I had lived and learned my entire life.

Having been immersed in academia prior to accepting a tenure track appointment with the Faculty, I was well aware that the University of Alberta was a research-intensive university that put great value in securing research grants and publishing text-based peer-reviewed journals and manuscripts. I was also aware of the recognition (or lack thereof) that my approach to research and teaching may receive in this environment. I can recount several deliberate decisions regarding research and teaching that were made with tenure in mind, and several that were made with my commitment to community in mind. As much as possible, the two were aligned.

The first of these deliberate decisions was to choose an academic environment that would support community engaged research and learning. The Faculty of Extension, though in a period of transition, remains true to a history of "find(ing) out from the people what the University can do for them beyond the classroom and laboratory".<sup>1</sup> We believe, and intend to foster and put into practice, the idea that transforming societal communities and organizations (including the University) into learning communities equips us all for effective citizenship, including a capacity for social action. This commitment was demonstrated in Faculty-funded community-based research, the recognition that building relationships with community required time, the allocation of human resources within the Faculty (for example, the provision of expertise in the faculty to work collaboratively with research and teaching teams), and in the recognition of "non-traditional" forms of teaching and knowledge dissemination.

The next two very deliberate actions on my journey to tenure are directly related to the communities I work with. My colleagues from First Nations and immigrant communities often speak of the need to "walk in two worlds." As an academic who is immersed in the communities I work with, I often feel I am compelled to walk in the world of academia and community (though, ideally,

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<sup>1</sup> Corbett, E. (1957) *We Have With Us Tonight*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.

academia is one of the communities). As a result, I deliberately chose to focus on the questions posed in the Faculty Evaluation Committee documents (and the broader goals of the University) that would allow me to align my personal academic goals with community goals; to walk in both worlds. I began to make decisions based, in part, on how each activity (be it research, teaching or service) would contribute to continuity and focus. Fortunately, the Faculty's Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) values scholarly work that contributes to community. I, in turn, was constantly considering how our collective accomplishments could also contribute to the Faculty's academic plan.

Early on, I recognized the benefits of holding an academic appointment, both personally and to the communities I work with. I also learned the importance of being transparent with my community colleagues about those benefits and the potential of our collective voice in tenure review and processes. A specific example, or two, may be helpful. My work has been predominantly with First Nations communities in the region. There is a history in Canada that has led to a great deal of distrust on the part of First Nations people when it comes to research. As a result, it is important to make your motives for working with community, as well as your expectations and commitment, very clear. My colleagues and I explain the University and the review process (in particular as it relates to peer review and grants) so that there is a shared understanding of the outcomes we are expected to deliver. However, we also express our commitment to the individuals and communities we work with; our relationships and projects are enduring and substantive. Unknowingly, this transparency would manifest itself in the form of unfamiliar tenure application materials as colleagues wrote letters of support that were, in fact, "evidence" of engaged scholarly work that was contributing to the community as well as to the intellectual domains of community-based research, health, culture, and adult education.

In addition to peer-reviewed journal publications I took every opportunity to produce alternative forms of evidence that would prove intellectually rigorous and timely (as per the *Standards*) and that would have relevance to community. This included video productions through Community Campus Partnerships for Health's CES4health (2010) and the planning, delivery, and evaluation of community based educational programs.

In retrospect, I learned two significant regarding tenure and promotion. First, that while universities broadly, and faculty reviews boards specifically, may speak of the importance of community engagement, the vocabulary precedes concrete actions. I do say this with caution, as I was successful in achieving tenure.

While this story shows progress, promotion and tenure for engaged scholars continues to be problematic. I continue to believe that the onus remains on the individual to work through the system – to be strategic *and*, as is noted by Stanton (2007), to systematically understand and articulate the outcomes of our work. However, I also know that success was dependent on finding an FEC that "walks the talk" and champions that supported my approach and practice of scholarship. The stories of the two champions in the Faculty of Extension follow below.

### **The Dean's Poststructuralist Interpretation of the Evaluation, and Value, of the Scholarship of Engagement**

In this section, I attempt a very limited preview of a deeper, more critical and thoughtful deconstruction of this story, using a feminist, poststructuralist lens. My assumptions are that:

- community-engaged scholarship, by virtue of its emphasis on agentic practice, reflects the concerns and methodologies of the social sciences
- the social sciences are the site of contested discursive practices
- social sciences take up the issues of communities on the margins, communities with which engaged scholars are often involved
- the modern comprehensive university reflects the values of liberalism and privileges the dominant discourse of science
- given legal and economic realities of a publicly-funded sector the modern comprehensive university is a hostage to neo-liberalism; a site of contested politics

In the urban Western world the engaged scholar's work confronts a dominant liberal discourse of self-determination and individualism that has excluded alternative ways of knowing. Social institutions are shaped by power relations defined by centuries of access to knowledge production and representation, processes from which the poor, the rural, the ethnic, the undereducated, the unemployed, the female, the indigenous, and the Other have been excluded. By honoring the co-creation of knowledge that originates in the lives of community members rather than the curiosity of the individual the engaged scholar in the public research university challenges the social relations of knowledge--where it is produced--and form--how it is shaped and communicated. In other words, we must "tackle the fundamental questions of how and where knowledge is produced and by whom, and of what counts as knowledge. It also requires a transformation of the structures which determine how knowledge is disseminated or not" (Weedon, 1997, p. 7).

Poststructuralist theory centers on language as the site where social constructions and their political implications are both constructed and contested. In the university's practices of faculty evaluation, tenure and promotion the language, or discourse, of quality, rigor and social value is embodied in the term "peer review." From within the dominant academic discourse of objective rationalization which emanates from scientific and medical models, "peer" signifies a particular social relation to power, authority; trustworthiness. "Peer" review is understood, in the higher education community, as an objective process in which an unemotional, equitable relationship exists between author and reviewer; there is a shared sociocultural context of graduate study, apprenticeship, and access to validated evidence; and the pursuit of truth or reality is untainted by the personal or political. Leaving the academy's criticisms of peer review aside, (see, for example the struggle over open access journals in which the sacrosanct "double-blind" peer review process is made transparent), the social power relations in which academic texts are located effectively neuter community authority over what is and is not meaningful, useful, or impactful.

In the tenure case described in this essay, both authorship (knowledge creation, for whom) and mobilization (knowledge representation, by whom) were challenged. For example, working with Aboriginal communities requires negotiation with, and permission of tribal elders who are in trust of the community's knowledge. Knowledge is neither discovered nor defined by the university researcher but is co-created within social relations in the community and in forms that may not be textual. The faculty member and her Aboriginal research partners in this story felt that research outcomes were best represented in story form in video, a type of representation, or way of knowing, not easily understood in traditional peer review. Similarly, authorship reflects social, or power relations that are culturally defined within the community, and does not parallel the academy's tradition of single or "ordered" authorship. The concept is foreign, disrespectful, and confounding.

Detaching dissemination from creation would be seen as a betrayal of trust and a display of hegemonic power. Finally, peer review is really the social meaning which is produced within a social institution, in this case, the Aboriginal community. In the next section, the Chair of FEC picks up on this theme.

### **A Test of Commitment: The Chair of FEC**

As Chair of FEC my job is chiefly to be the “traffic cop” – to solicit references, to make sure materials are available to Committee members in a timely and appropriate fashion, and to ensure a fair hearing of the application for tenure. Our rules require us to solicit at least four referees external to the Faculty, of whom one is external to the University and at least one is internal. The rules are silent as to whether the external referee must be a member of another university. While in most instances, our practice has been to solicit referees from other universities; we have often solicited a reference from someone in an organization with whom the candidate has worked. In the case discussed here, soliciting references from community partners was not controversial. One external referee was associated with a post-secondary institution but not a university with whom the candidate had worked; the other was a member of the community served. Internal and external referees were also solicited from within our University and from two other universities. One referee had no knowledge of the candidate other than through materials submitted by the candidate. A total of five references were solicited and all were received. No problems were experienced with that part of the process nor with getting materials to the Committee.

Indeed, the candidate was viewed extremely favourably by everyone on the Committee who knew of her work. She was generally seen as being exactly the type of academic we need in the Faculty. However, we ran headlong into the classic issue of publish or perish.

The primary issue that arose in the discussion of this application for tenure related to the candidate’s formal publishing record. While our Faculty does not have an explicit rule as to how many peer-reviewed articles or book chapters must be published in any particular time period, some members of FEC felt the candidate’s record was light. Her curriculum vitae revealed only four peer-reviewed articles in the four years leading up to her application. Of those, she was sole author of two, first author of one, and fifth author (of nine) in the other. She had a number of peer-reviewed presentations at academic conferences and two peer-reviewed video productions. She had presented at a number of other events. While she also had a substantial track record of attracting grants (one of almost \$4 million), her grants were chiefly for developing educational resources rather than for research. Several of her projects had not reached the stage where they might lead to publications.

A structural factor complicated our deliberations. The evaluation of faculty members at the University of Alberta is Faculty-specific – territory jealously guarded by faculties. But the President of the University was concerned that the standards across the University were sufficiently varied as to represent a state of inequality that could not be justified. As a result and through negotiations with the University’s academic staff association, she initiated the “President’s Review Committee” (PRC) to advise faculties on “contentious” cases. A member of the PRC serves as an external member of every FEC in the University. This tenure application was our first experience with the member of the PRC assigned to our Faculty and it added a measure of tension to the deliberations. It was my sense, and one I believe was shared by other members of FEC, that what really mattered to our

representative (hailing from the Faculty of Science) was the number of peer-reviewed articles in top-tiered journals. This seemed to bring out more extreme reactions at both ends of our own continuum on this issue.

It is always difficult to know what is actually going on in the process of deliberation. What is said is not always representative of the positions that are actually held. But clearly in this case, FEC members were called on to test their commitment to community-university engagement – to weigh the importance of working with a community against the traditional measures of academic achievement. For the most part they appeared to recognize the considerable challenges the candidate faced in working with Aboriginal communities and the significance of her successes in doing so. In the end, the FEC supported the application almost unanimously. We did hold our breath for a time, in case the “contentious” case provisions were invoked by our PPRC representative. In the end, the Dean was called to account in the Provost’s office and committed to appearing in front of the PRC if summoned. However this opportunity to engage in a discussion of academic excellence did not arise. A sympathetic Deputy Provost reassigned the PRC member, replacing her with an internationally-respected researcher in the social sciences who has contributed a moderated mainstream university perspective to our FEC while suggesting strategic adjustments to our plan to challenge and transform the University’s, and the Faculty Association’s, discourse.

Despite this first successful challenge to our new policies, the issue of the significance to be accorded to peer-reviewed publications is still alive and well in the Faculty. Much as everyone would like it resolved, we are still a long way from achieving a consensus.

## **Conclusion**

We intend to “change the game” of faculty evaluation within our own university and potentially in collaboration with a number of Canadian public research-intensive universities. On our own campus we have begun to pull together an activist community of engaged scholars who want to challenge the discourse “who determines whose account counts the most?” and have found that an impassioned debate rages in various health-allied faculties with traditions in both clinical and social sciences. The process of review, promotion and tenure will be improved upon when we more honestly value the co-creation of knowledge, more articulately align expectations with measures and educate those outside the discipline of its approach and value to the academy and communities to which we belong. Weedon (1997) provides a construct that helps us move forward with what we feel is moral authority in this project, “How we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning to the material social relations under which we live and which structure our everyday lives, depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests that they represent” (p. 26).

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## Engagement and Autonomy - Catherine Burnheim

### Abstract

This paper examines the interaction of universities with other sectors of society, and the relationship of that interaction to academic and institutional autonomy. The changes associated with the knowledge economy have challenged the boundaries between higher education and other fields. As higher education has become less sheltered from external influences, the interactions between universities and other organisations have moved from the periphery to the centre of higher education.

The research investigated the external connections of universities: to whom they connect, how the connections are formed, and what results from those connections. This paper focuses on the question: How does external engagement change academic autonomy and capacity of the university to function as a space of reflection? This question is explored using data from case studies of three Australian universities' external relations activity.

**Keywords:** Community engagement, regional engagement, autonomy, Australia.

### Introduction

This paper examines the interaction of universities with other sectors of society, and the relationship of that interaction to academic and institutional autonomy. The changes wrought by the knowledge economy have challenged the boundaries between higher education and other fields. As higher education has become less sheltered from external influences, the interactions between universities and other organisations have moved from the periphery to the centre of higher education.

This paper focuses on the question: How does external engagement change institutional and academic autonomy and capacity of the university to function as a space of reflection?

### Context

Knowledge is now central to the global economy in every sense. Higher education has become more important, yet less autonomous, as intellectual effort and human capital become increasingly important elements of capitalist production. Withdrawal of public funding, increased government regulation and expansion of higher education systems have transformed the role of university and rewritten earlier social contracts between the State and higher education. The outcome has been a higher education field that is more stratified and fragmented, and less able to refract issues into academic terms.

Numerous commentators have argued that these changes have effectively destroyed the civic role of the university as a 'point of view on points of view' (Bok, 2003; Readings, 1996). Others have advocated for a new civic role based on 'engagement' between universities and society (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2003; Watson, 2007). These writers argue that far from being subsumed in global standardisation, universities can construct meaningful locally-based roles. Watson argues that civic engagement is central to the research university (Watson, 2007, p. 25*italic in original*). Benson et al, drawing on Deweyan tradition, contend that civic responsibility continues to be central to the US university and is a basis for institutional renewal (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007).

There is a strong consensus in the literature that the nature of the higher education field has changed significantly over the past thirty years, and that the central element of that change is the disruption of the 'contract' between higher education and society. As early as 1973, Bell posited that the development of the knowledge economy would transform the role of the university into that of an 'axial structure', integrated into the economy (Bell, 1973). This prediction has been realised: the nature of knowledge production and dissemination, and the role of knowledge in economic production and social life, have been transformed (Kenway, Bullen, Fahey, & Robb, 2006; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1996; Peters, Marginson, & Murphy, 2008, p. 4). For universities, these changes have included the rise of more complex, multi-actor forms of knowledge production, the expansion of higher education access, and myriad aspects of globalised movement of people, resources and data. At the same time, national policy in Australia has reduced public funding and instituted new accountability regimes.

Another dimension of the transformation of the field of higher education in the knowledge economy is its development as a global space. The core work of research and teaching now crosses national borders and is integrated and linked globally in new ways. Globalisation brings increasingly complex flows of ideas, power, knowledge, and people across borders:

The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries). (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32)

This framework gives a basis for understanding complex interplays between the global and the local.

The complex expansion and multiplication of sites within the higher education field does not do away with principles of selectivity and ordering. As Marginson argues, adopting a Bourdieuan analysis, the global field of higher education is hierarchically structured (Marginson, 2008). The peak of the field is the US research universities, which perform a normative role, concentrating cultural and economic power.

An influential theorisation of the impact of these changes on academic autonomy, particularly in the US context, is that of 'academic capitalism', first developed by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and elaborated by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004). The earlier book focuses on changes to academic work and the movement of academic careers from the shelter of institutional autonomy into the marketplace (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In the later book, Slaughter and Rhoades argue that a 'public good knowledge/learning regime' has been replaced by an 'academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime', with implications at every level of academic practice.

Others paint a more complex picture of ongoing conflict rather than complete transformation. In Considine's terms, universities are engaged in 'a struggle over borders between knowledge and other things' but other systems such as the economy and religion, 'each of which owns a powerful, coherent, and internally robust value distinction' (Considine, 2006, p. 257). Deem questions the construction of globalisation in the education literature as a totalising phenomenon, suggesting that local factors remain important, and that cultural change is not necessarily total (Deem 2001). She argues that the adoption of managerialist language and tactics may be a form of 'bi-lingualism' and later 'hybridisation', that public sector workers 'may thus retain their existing values about the

importance of the services they provide, whilst accepting the necessity of talking about markets, performance indicators and other business metaphors in certain settings.’(Deem 2001, p 10).

Henkel argues that autonomy and academic freedom are terms with different meanings; institutional self-determination and individual scope to inquire are two different things (Henkel, 2007). In a related argument, Karl Maton (2005) distinguishes ‘positional autonomy’ from ‘relational autonomy’:

1. Positional autonomy refers to the nature of relations between specific positions in the social dimension of a context or field and positions in other contexts. ... 2. Relational autonomy refers to relations between the principles of relation (or ways of working, practices, aims, measures of achievement, etc.) within a context or field and those emanating from other contexts. ... In short, the distinction asks ‘Who is running higher education?’ (PA) and ‘According to whose principles?’ (RA). (Maton, 2005, p. 697)

He argues that these two dimensions are not always ‘in sync’: Maton gives the example of changes in higher education in Britain from the 1960s to 2000. In the 1960s, ‘universities enjoyed higher positional autonomy; they were managed, staffed, funded and administered by agents located firmly within the field’ (Maton 2005). Their relational autonomy was also higher, with the field able to refract issues like ‘the new student problem’ into educational rather than social terms. However, in the 1990s onwards, relational autonomy has reduced, even while the governance of the sector has remained stable. Control of both positions and discourse continues to be important in both individual and institutional dimensions of autonomy.

## Engagement

‘Engagement’ can be seen as a strategy adopted by institutions to assert their value in an increasingly complex environment. By systematically engaging with industry, government and community, higher education seeks to contribute to the knowledge economy and shape the terms of its development. There are several distinct strands of engagement literature, including policy texts from the UK, OECD and USA. Throughout, the reinvention of higher education through external engagement is a theme. In an early version, Burton Clark argues in *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities* (1998) that developing an ‘expanded developmental periphery’ and achieving a ‘diversified funding base’ are key strategies achieving sustainability and independence from government.

This paper distinguishes ‘external relations’ as a broad term encompassing all interactions between universities and other sectors, from ‘engagement’ which implies purposeful and systematic action. Although the universities in the study did have strategic approaches to engagement in certain areas, there were other activities which were not framed in these terms.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities policy collection *The Idea of Engagement* identifies the drivers of change in the knowledge economy as largely external to universities:

... to call it a ‘knowledge society’ is to move universities absolutely centre-stage, where academics’ fellow-citizens not unreasonably load them with the highest expectations. ... it is not universities’ own sense of their importance that is in question here. (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2003, p. 4, italics in original)

The risk for universities is that they are unable to meet these high ('unrealistic') expectations, with the result that '... if universities are not seen to be doing their very best, both academic freedoms and funding levels may quite soon come to be at risk' (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2003, p. 5). This is the paradox: to defend the boundaries of the higher education field and to preserve its autonomy in both cultural and economic terms, universities must cross those boundaries and selectively transform them.

The literature on university regional engagement, predominantly British, European and OECD, addresses the contribution of universities to economic, social and cultural development in the framework of the knowledge economy. It takes university-regional engagement as an unequivocal good (Gunasekara, 2006) and its focus is on the practical challenges to increasing university involvement in regional development. An early articulation of this emerging role for universities was the OECD report *The Response of Higher Education Institutions to Regional Needs*, which drew on a series of international conferences and on case study material drawn from the UK, Finland and Australia. The OECD report places regional engagement at the centre of transformation of higher education: 'For many universities, regional engagement is ... becoming the crucible within which an appropriate response to many of the challenges [of the sector] ... is being forged' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1999, p. 10).

In the United States, university-community engagement grows out of both the more variegated and regionalised HE sector. The US discourse features pedagogical issues, for example Ernest Boyer's model of four integrated scholarships (Boyer, 1997). A democratic agenda is also more explicitly present, for example in the extended polemic in favour of university-community engagement in the US form is presented by Benson, Harkavy and Puckett in their book *Dewey's Dream* (Benson et al., 2007), as well as other works including Thomas Ehrlich's *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* and Frank Newman et al's *The Future of Higher Education* (Ehrlich, 2000; Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004).

More critical analyses question the assumptions of the transformation narratives about both the external environment and the institution-as-field. Power and Malmberg challenge the proposition that the benefits of university research and engagement can be locally captured. Harding (Harding, Scott, Laske, & Burtscher, 2007, p. 9) and May (May, 2007, p. 124) highlight the ongoing conflict between managerialist and scholarly approaches to university work, and suggest that the reconciliation of independence and entrepreneurialism proposed by Clark is in fact impossible.

## **The study**

The empirical component of the study comprises case studies of three Australian universities. The universities are all members of the Group of Eight association of research-intensive universities: Monash University, the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia. Research-intensive institutions were selected to test the strength of university autonomy at the more powerful end of the field. A sample of a single institutional type assisted to isolate the impact of other factors like geography and internal management. Data collection included interviews with 58 people including staff from the universities and their partner organisations in government, industry and community.

The case studies commenced with a desk review process to examine the major activities of the selected university and to highlight key aspects of external relations. University websites, news publications, and Annual Reports formed the basis of the analysis. Fifty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted across the three case study sites. Participants were sought in 'internal' (university-based) and 'external' (non-university based) categories. From within the universities, participants involved in external relations were selected in four categories: (1) senior executive, including the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy/ Pro Vice-Chancellors, Vice-Presidents; (2) academic leaders, including Deans, Heads of Department, Directors of Research Centres, (3) academic staff, from lecturer to professor level; (4) professional (non-academic) staff, including staff from operational to senior level with responsibility for different aspects of external relations (eg alumni, industry). External participants were sought from organisations with which the university had a current relationship. Government and organisations with a civic role were prioritised. At each site, participants were sought in five categories: (1) local government, including elected officials and managers; (2) state government, including elected representatives and staff from operational to Director level; (3) community/ non-government organisations, from small local groups to large national and global organisations; (4) other educational institutions, including schools, vocational education and training, and adult and community education; (5) industry, including small-medium and large enterprises, regional development bodies, and industry groups.

## **Findings**

The three case study universities conduct a very wide range of interactions with organizations and informal groups. These range from incidental contact to small projects, to substantial long term partnerships and jointly funded and managed entities. The universities' leaderships are concerned with their broader relationship with and perceptions held by the 'general public', in particular alumni and prospective students, as well as their ability to influence government and industry. Research activities include short-term research projects for specific clients, long-term extensive research programs, dedicated research centres with associated infrastructure, and research commercialisation. Teaching and course-related activities include the development of programs for industry, external input into degree and course development, and work-integrated and service learning programs. There are also student equity programs, providing special admissions and university preparation courses. In service or engagement activities, the universities are involved in regional development, act as a broker between other agencies, and provide expertise on a general and particular level, as well as establishing and conserving resources like galleries, museums, and sporting facilities.

Participants agreed that external engagement was increasing, and that interaction with other sectors was of increasing importance, but had divergent views about the effects of this interaction on institutional and individual autonomy. Some participants identified that the weakening of boundaries between universities and other organisations compromised academic integrity:

I think that the role of universities in modern society is kind of confusing now and the way that they are funded has made them different beasts from what they were when I was an undergraduate. I think the drive to seek funding from outside the university has driven behaviours that didn't used to be there. ... This might be some romantic notion of what the past used to be like, but I think that they were able to speak out. They were able to do really good research on important social issues

without having to worry whether they would get the funding. My suspicion is that academic standards have dropped. (Senior manager, government-owned enterprise)

That is, the autonomy of the field has been reduced, and with it the authority of scholarly capital ('really good research') has been subjugated to external consideration ('the drive to seek funding from outside'). Versions of this theme were addressed by numerous participants, both internal and external. It echoes the perspective of scholars of higher education, in particular the concept of 'academic capital' as presented by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) and Slaughter and Leslie (1997). In this quote, the participant refers to 'the way [universities] are funded', offering a resource-dependence theory of the changes.

Some of these concerns about restricted freedom of inquiry were borne out in the case studies, particularly in the effects of limited funding on priorities for research. However, the case studies show a complex picture of engagement and autonomy interacting in a number of dimensions including governance, academic mission and the nature of academic work. Throughout, there is a tension between ideas of 'relevance' and 'independence'.

### **Institutional autonomy**

Senior executive participants from each institution tended to emphasise the role of positive external relations in institutional sustainability. One strongly repudiated the 'ivory tower' mode:

People are keen to engage with [this university]. They weren't for a while because the university sent the message – the universities of Australia sent the message – that they weren't interested. (Vice-Chancellor)

This observation above contrasts an 'old' standoffish attitude with a 'new' openness to engagement. As in the previous quote, the Vice-Chancellor appears to agree that universities are now 'different beasts', but rather than 'some romantic idea of what the past used to be like', this version refers to the 'bad old days' of universities being aloof and, by implication, irrelevant. In this criticism, the Vice-Chancellor allies himself with forms of authority referenced outside the higher education field.

Another Vice-Chancellor echoed these sentiments, emphasizing local engagement:

I think it is just perhaps very fundamental that the University won't thrive without the strong support of its communities; and conversely some universities are the – in all sorts of ways – the drivers of success in the community both in economic terms and social conscience terms. (Vice-Chancellor)

In this comment, the objectives of the university and of society are seen as strongly and directly interrelated. In many ways the proposition that universities should respond to social needs is unexceptionable; the more complex issue is the mechanism for translating these social needs into university priorities and action. For example, one university leader explicitly rejected the interests of geographic communities as driver for research:

I deal really not with geographic regions, partly because [the University] has got research stations ... all over the place. I deal with research topics, programs and projects. (Senior executive). This definition of an engaged approach to research sees the university engaging with ideas and problems rather than with stakeholders or communities expressing those ideas or experiencing those

problems. In Gibbons' terms, the research is only weakly contextualized, and the framing remains with researchers (Gibbons, 2005).

The governance – or 'positional autonomy' – of the majority of external relations activity within the case studies was strongly university-based. Most, like alumni and research centres are managed within the main university structure of faculties and central groups, subject to all university policies and procedures, staffed by university employees and accountable through the Vice-Chancellor to the University Council or Senate. If external agents are involved, it is in an advisory capacity only. There are a more limited number of activities and entities with low positional autonomy which are accountable to a non-university organisation, or have a hybrid university-external governance structure. Although such entities or activities may be accountable in the last instance to the university's governing body, they may be managed outside the main university structure (eg established as a company), staffed by non-university employees (or a mixture of university and non-university personnel), and be exempt from some or all university policies and procedures. This finding is in contrast to other studies, notably in the US, which focus on structural arrangements (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

The sources, level and nature of revenue available affect support for different initiatives. As one participant reported:

To put something into new developments in the Bachelor [degree program]... would take quite a bit of selling. Whereas [an industry-backed research centre] doesn't take a lot of selling. (Dean)

In this participant's view, priority in the deployment of university funds is given to areas on which the financial return is either direct, or matched by external contributions. At each of the case study universities, priority investment was focussed in research that would improve the institution's ranking in global league tables like the Times Higher Education Supplement rankings and the SJT Academic World Ranking of Universities. For example, at UQ, research effort was increasingly concentrated into six major Research Institutes, including the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, the Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI), and the Queensland Brain Institute. UQ had attracted almost \$300 million investment into infrastructure and personnel for these Institutes, concentrated largely on biomedical and advanced engineering research. The returns of these research centres are measured in scientific prestige as well as income.

The kind of engagement evident in this large scale scientific research has particular characteristics. The large research institutes tend to partner with other large, powerful organizations – most frequently individual enterprises or government departments. In these partnerships, there is parity in expertise, size and resources. Much of the literature on knowledge dissemination and 'Mode 2' research discusses these kind of partnerships (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001). A primary negotiation here is between different language and ways of working:

I think [improving partnerships in research] is probably about going out there and asking [what partners want]; quicker turnaround; using different language, using the partner's jargon rather than our own jargon; instilling confidence that this is going to happen on budget and within the project scope. (Senior Executive)

In some cases, this involved restrictions on use of the data collected:

A lot of the funds are now coming either from government departments or from former public sector activities that have been privatised, and in both cases they think they own the data. They are often contractually insisting that the academics don't comment. (Senior manager, NGO)

However, some researchers found that over time they were granted more access:

Every time we do a client job we learn something more, and frequently that develops us a relationship that allows us to get more data. ... So as a spin off, client work definitely has a spin off in terms of access to information and connections when we are doing academic work. (Academic)

This kind of partnered research involves negotiation and compromise in a number of dimensions, including control of data and process.

In other forms of engagement the university is the leading agent, and there is less negotiation. Each of the case study universities was very active in providing 'town and gown' events, public lectures, continuing education (eg UWA Extension), university galleries and museums (eg Monash Museum of Art, UWA's Berndt Museum). These provide public access to university expertise or resources (cultural capital in its various forms). The power of the institution and its particular forms of capital is at the forefront. For example, each university in the study is investing substantial resources in improving their contact with alumni, with a primary aim of translating the cultural capital of the alumni relationship into economic and political capital.

The case study universities also provide a range of projects and groups that were working to engage stakeholders as well as ideas, often with less powerful and smaller organisations and communities. Leading examples include the UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre, as well as the Allied Health Clinics at UQ, the engagement programs of Monash Gippsland and UWA Albany, and student equity and access programs at each university. These programs seek to engage locally, and draw their criteria for success from a number of fields.

Participants in community engagement work framed their approach to partnership and scholarship in a broad social context:

Communities have been researched and researched and researched, and nothing much has changed for them. And quite often it's not the quality of the research; it's whoever commissioned it isn't there anymore, or the government has changed, or it wasn't their prime agenda anyway. (Academic)

Informed by this experience of disengaged research, this academic asserted an approach which involved regional community members in the design, data collection and reporting. Similarly, the UQ Boilerhouse and others use an 'action research' method with the ultimate aim of co-creating knowledge with community partners including local governments, ethnic communities and non-government organisations. This form of working could be described as 'strongly contextualised' in Gibbon's terms (Gibbons, 2005). Also at UQ, the Allied Health Clinics blend (low cost) clinical service with undergraduate training, research and commercial projects. The different strands of work are anchored in the day to day work with patients in the clinics, but result in a wide range of research publications and clinical tools.

These examples show the varied interaction of engagement and autonomy. The universities in the study are large and have considerable financial and cultural assets. Some of the traditional 'service'

activities make these resources available to the public, cementing the role of the university in the cultural life of its state and city. These activities bolster rather than compromise institutional autonomy by increasing the symbolic power of the institution. In the 'big science' examples, there was a negotiation between organisations of relative parity in size and status, with the main barriers being language and culture. There was more variance in control related to funding than to governance, with the universities retaining high levels of institutional control while accepting a multi-actor (Mode 2) research process. In more complex examples of community engagement, the partnership spans greater differences of social power and resources. Keeping the knowledge and perspective of the community partner in focus is a key priority, resulting in a deliberate de-centring of university authority.

### **The nature of academic work**

Participants' views about the nature of individual academic autonomy contrasted the value of autonomy with the value of relevance and responsiveness:

I think there's this notion of academic freedom; being able to do whatever you want to do. Someone said to me just the other day, 'Well of course the danger with external funding is that we'll have to [take direction from others] ... People want to research what they want to research and nobody wants to be told what to research.' And I thought 'Yeah but don't you want to research things that are of interest to people and the people actually want to know what you're finding out?' (Dean)

The work of many research centres at the case study universities was largely funded from short term contract income, which meant that research leaders spent much of their time sourcing funding. For some of these staff, the limitation of what work is funded was a frustration:

The other part of it is that we rarely get the chance to do curiosity driven stuff; we get to work on the research that people want to pay for. (Academic).

Staff in another centre, however, found satisfaction in the applied nature of their work, despite lack of autonomy in setting the research direction and security in tenure:

If you go round and talk to the people who work in the centre they will grizzle about working on short term problems, they'll grizzle about not be able to do true curiosity-driven stuff, they'll grizzle about being out of the academic mainstream. Then on the other hand they are absolutely passionate about making a difference in practice. What really gets them going is that the research they do has a real impact out in the real world and that's a real driving force, and why we keep people here when all we can offer them is one year fixed term contracts. (Academic)

Other staff saw a continuing commitment to academic values and ways of working within the university:

I just love the sense of the University, that it really is a place of building knowledge, and then disseminating knowledge, and having debate; and the respect that people have for each other sometimes completely opposite views, it's good, it's great. (Professional staff).

### **Conclusion**

The study found that each university had a wide range of connections, across very different fields. The interaction of the university's engagement activity with its institutional autonomy and the

autonomy of its staff was related to the scale and nature of the partnerships. Most traditional 'service' activities reinforced rather than challenged the status of the university. University research, in partnership with organisations of comparable size and power, involved compromise and negotiation in the development of contextualised knowledge. In other cases, particularly in engagement with less powerful groups, the university's authoritative status was challenged by the inclusion of partner perspectives in the generating of deeply contextualised knowledge. From an individual perspective, participants reported a range of frustrations with having their work circumscribed by funding and other constraints, but also reported ongoing strong connection to curiosity-driven inquiry.

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## **Sustaining community engagement through service learning in a unique public sector-university-community partnership program - Denise Wood, Alice Dodd, University of South Australia**

This paper explores the benefits of service learning as well as the challenges in sustaining a service learning program involving a complex cross-sector partnership between the public sector, university and community organisations. There has been growing interest in recent years in service learning as an approach that can strengthen the integration of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and community. Such programs are not without their challenges given the complex interaction of students, intended learning outcomes and the nature of differing service activities involved in such programs. This paper explores these challenges through a case study of a cross-sector service learning program, the Sustainable Online Community Engagement (SOCE) program, which is a joint initiative of the State Government of South Australia, Office for Volunteers, and the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages at the University of South Australia. The program was established in 2001 and since that time more than 300 South Australian community groups and 400 students have participated in the program. The case study describes key issues associated with developing and delivering a service learning model in partnership with government and in collaboration with volunteer community organisations that harnesses the power of innovative technologies to both engage learners and provide a more sustainable community engagement framework. The findings from evaluations of student and community stakeholder satisfaction are reported and several areas for improvement identified.

**Keywords:** service learning, community engagement, scholarship of engagement; volunteer sector; third sector

### **Introduction**

By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined.... Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity....We believe an engaged university can enrich the student experience and help change the campus culture (*Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*, 1999, p. 27).

More than a decade has passed since the Kellogg Commission's report on the future of the state and land-grant universities (*Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*, 1999) challenged universities to "invent quite different institutions" to reaffirm three primary ideals: 1) institutions should become genuine learning communities; 2) such learning communities should be student-centred and committed to excellence in teaching; and 3) learning communities should provide teachers and learners with the supports required to make such a vision reality (pp. 1-2). The report further suggested that an "engaged university" is one in which teaching, research, extension and service learning functions have been redesigned to become more productively engaged with their communities.

Service Learning is regarded as an effective strategy for integrating service and academic learning through community engagement, while helping students develop "knowledge, skills and cognitive

capacities to deal with complex social issues and problems” (Hurd, 2006). As Cohen and Yapa (2003) argue, service learning is more than active learning. What is critical is that students learn the integration of scholarship and civic engagement and that it is through this engagement with the community that new knowledge is generated.

Despite the passage of time, as Brukardt, Holland, Percy and Zimpher (2004) have asserted “engagement has not become the defining characteristic of higher education's mission nor has it been embraced across disciplines, departments and institutions” (p. ii). Research undertaken by Sandmann and Weerts (2008), in which they compared the institutionalisation of engagement at two types of public research universities, suggested that differences in institutional history and setting can impact on the extent to which engagement is institutionalised as an innovation with universities. There are, however, a range of other potential barriers associated with community engagement programs (Kolenko et al, 1996) that also need to be addressed if the benefits for communities, universities and students (Blouin & Perry, 2009) are to be fully realised.

This paper explores these challenges through a case study of a cross-sector service learning program, the *Sustainable Online Community Engagement (SOCE)* program, which is a joint initiative of the State Government of South Australia, Office for Volunteers and the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages at the University of South Australia.

### **Scholarship of engagement**

The scholarship of engagement has its roots in Boyer’s (1990) framework in which the scholarship of teaching, application and integration are considered essential for quality teaching and learning. Boyer later extended this framework to include the scholarship of engagement (1996), which involves a reciprocal relationship between students, teachers and the community. Barker (2004) asserts that the interest in the scholarship of engagement has emerged in response to three related trends: 1) increasing specialisation of academic knowledge into discrete disciplines, which produces highly complex and technical knowledge that is not effectively communicated to the public; 2) reaction to the dominance of “a positivist epistemology, which emphasises value neutrality and objectivity” (p. 125) rather than effectiveness of the application of knowledge; and 3) growing concerns about the corporatisation of higher education and a desire to engage in public participation with a focus on addressing community issues through the integration of the scholarships of teaching, application and integration.

Another reason for the increasing attention to the scholarship of engagement is the concern about increasing levels of student disengagement and high levels of attrition arising from the lack of involvement of students in campus life due to the competing demands of longer working hours (Krause et al, 2005; Langworthy, 2007). Service learning programs, particularly those which provide flexibility and make effective use of online technologies to engage learners, have the capacity to increase student perseverance, improve retention and success (Janke, 2006) and re-connect disengaged students with the university learning community (McInnes, 2003). As Langworthy (2007) argues, “students must be engaged and this purpose is one of the most powerful arguments for the development of service learning”.

## **Benefits of community engagement**

Numerous studies have documented the benefits of service learning for communities, universities and students (Blouin & Perry, 2009). The benefits are said to include: gains in students' self-esteem, career knowledge, social responsibility and academic performance (Howard, 2003); an increase in the level of student insight, their ability to apply academic skills and a greater understanding of social issues (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008); as well as the capacity for such programs to advance the goals of social justice and contribute to the public good (Harkavy, 2006).

Universities provide a unique opportunity with their pool of young adults who are developing professional skills that are applicable to the volunteer sector. Increasingly, teachers are seeking opportunities that enable their students to develop "real world" experience within the learning environment. A clear synergy exists between the needs of universities and the needs of the community sector. This alignment provides a real win-win situation for students who are able to learn in an "out of classroom environment" and gain an appreciation for a sector previously unknown to them. On the other hand, the community sector receives a free and tangible product aimed at supporting their organisation as well as gaining an opportunity to impress upon younger individuals the benefits of volunteerism, which may in turn lead some to become volunteers themselves.

## **The challenges**

According to surveys commissioned in 2006 and 2008, approximately 50% of South Australia's population is engaged in formal volunteering. However, when including informal volunteer activity (for example assisting neighbours) the participation rate is measured at over 70% (Harrison Market Research, 2006, 2008). Volunteering contributes to stronger communities resulting in improved health, increased social cohesion, reduced crime and enhanced earning and career capacity (Mayer, 2003).

Within the formal context, over 600,000 of South Australians volunteer annually in every sector (Harrison Market Research, 2008) contributing well in excess of \$5 billion annually to the State's economy (Ironmonger, 2002). Many services would simply cease to exist without the volunteer sector.

While enjoying high levels of volunteerism, some industries are expressing difficulties about a decline in participation. A consistent emerging trend centres on preferences towards shorter term and less formal/structured volunteer activities (Harrison Market Research, 2006, 2008). This is particularly true of younger generations and replicates trends found within the labour market. While some areas of the volunteer sector could potentially benefit from this trend, many of the significant and traditional areas will face future challenges.

Community engagement programs that contribute to and enhance capacity building in the volunteer sector are also not without their challenges. Such challenges arise from the complex interaction of students, intended learning outcomes and the nature of differing service activities involved in such programs (Furco, 2003). The barriers to service-learning integration including faculty resistance, negatively perceived program outcomes, workload issues, personal agendas of academic staff and potential resistance from the community organisations (Kolenko et al, 1996). There are additional

barriers associated with service-learning programs involving community-based research (Stoecker, 2008), which need to be addressed as universities respond to “an academic environment that is changing rapidly under the combined pressures of policy, technology and community demand” (Zubrick, Reid & Rossiter, 2001, p. xi).

In this next section we explore these benefits of service learning and community engagement, and outline a series of strategies designed to address the identified challenges through an illustrative case study involving a unique public sector-university-community partnership program.

### **Case study**

In recognition of the significant social and economic contribution of the volunteer sector (also referred to as the not-for-profit or third sector), the State Government of South Australia sought to support the sector through the establishment of the Office for Volunteers and to include a target within the State’s strategic plan to maintain volunteering at 50% participation or greater. The Office for Volunteers recognises that government’s greatest impact can be achieved through programs that create new relationships and deliver outcomes that continue to assist an organisation well beyond participation in a program, and which tap into the grass roots nature of the sector’s various threads.

The Office for Volunteers has initiated several programs aimed at developing the capacity of the volunteer sector through greater engagement with the higher education sector. One such initiative was the establishment of *the Sustainable Online Community Engagement (SOCE)* program, which brings together students enrolled in courses offered by the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages at the University of South Australia and community groups recruited through the Office for Volunteers. The program was established in 2001 and since that time more than 300 South Australian community groups and 400 students have participated in the program.

The *SOCE* program was set up to with three main objectives designed to benefit all stakeholders associated with the program. These objectives aim to: address barriers such as lack of access and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills among non-profit organisation members; provide experiential service learning opportunities for students; and build relationships between students and organisations in the context of the ageing volunteer sector.

The program involves recruiting volunteer organisations via the *SOCE* website that are seeking the design of a Website or other multimedia services. Students from nominated courses, including the *Electronic Publishing on the Internet* course described in this case study, are matched to the organisations and work with their allocated community group throughout the semester. Interaction between community groups and students is done online throughout the website building process. As Marriott and Patterson (2004) noted, such a strategy was believed to be a key factor in the long term success of the project since it provides an alignment with the capabilities and preferences of the students while also introducing the community groups to online technologies. Ongoing support to community groups is provided online by a project officer with funding support from the South Australian Government, Office for Volunteers. Face-to-face training has also been provided by the project officer and contract staff to ensure that community groups are able to maintain and develop their websites after the student(s) have exited the relationship (Marriott, 2007).

## **Institutional priorities**

The University of South Australia places considerable importance on student engagement, which derives from the institution's commitment to student-centred learning. Student engagement is said to involve the active contribution a student makes to his or her own learning, combined with institutional provision of educational opportunities that are empirically linked to quality learning outcomes in order that students move successfully into professional employment or enjoy enhanced career mobility and personal achievements as citizens (*UniSA student engagement statement, 2010*).

The University's teaching and learning framework emphasises: student engagement through experiential learning (including practice-based learning, service learning and the teaching-research nexus); graduate qualities (discipline knowledge, skills and personal attributes); flexible learning environments (formal and informal; face-to-face, online and print) and a quality improvement cycle (*University of South Australia, teaching and learning framework, 2007*).

Within this institutional context, the scholarship of engagement is highly valued and supported. Service learning as one dimension of experiential learning is aligned with the University's equity mission and regarded as a particular application of practice based learning, which fosters graduate attributes that encompass personal attributes and value positions as well as work-related capabilities. As the University's statement on service learning and the teaching and learning framework states:

In service learning, students use their developing professional knowledge in practical settings that are directed to the support of other people, whether as individuals or in groups. Service learning has a 'public good' dimension. It recognises the orientation to citizenship in the Graduate Qualities and reflects an understanding that the benefits of an individual's education in civilised societies are not simply those of self-interest, but admit an element of mutuality; a recognition that the societal support of higher education for some carries an expectation that the community as a whole will benefit (*University of South Australia, statement on service learning and the teaching and learning framework, 2007*).

## **Description of the course**

*Electronic Publishing on the Internet (EPI)* is a final year course for students undertaking a major in either interactive media or web design. The course provides the foundations for understanding the principles of electronic publishing on the Internet. The course places emphasis on applying the principles and elements of design to the creation of Web pages, communication skills, team work, and designing a portfolio for online delivery. The aims of the course are as follows: 1) understand the nature and formats of electronic publishing via the Web; 2) understand the factors affecting the electronic publishing industry; 3) critically analyse and create effective online publications; and 4) understand and discuss critical issues such as accessibility, copyright and security.

The topics covered combine theoretical information presented through a series of readings and reflections on theory, with the applied skills required to design and develop Websites. Over the thirteen week semester students complete a range of topics addressing the social and ethical responsibility of designers, design concepts for Web, coding in XHTML and CSS, interactivity in Web design, search engine optimisation, usability testing and client handover. Students undertake 3

assignments: a design proposal outlining target audience and design specifications; design of a prototype of the final Website design; and the final Website publication.

The first author has been coordinating this course since 2002. Over the last eight years the course has been redeveloped to strengthen the link between the activities undertaken through the assignments with their application in solving “real world” problems. The coordinator has varied the focus of assignments in response to student and community stakeholder feedback in an effort to address issues identified in the formal evaluations undertaken each semester. The methods employed in undertaking these evaluations are described in the next section of this paper.

## **Method**

Several sources of evaluation data have been used to determine student and stakeholder satisfaction with the *EPI* course and the *SOCE* program overall. Ethics approval was obtained prior to conducting formal evaluations involving the stakeholders involved in the program. The evaluation sources include anonymous online course evaluations conducted at the conclusion of each offering of the course, bi-annual anonymous online surveys completed by the community groups participating in the program, and customised online surveys completed by students at various stages over the last eight years.

### *Course evaluation*

The anonymous course evaluations are based on the standard Course Evaluation Instrument (CEI) mandated by the University. The CEI comprises a series of 10 5-point Likert Scale items ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Qualitative comments fields are provided to enable students to elaborate on any issues they would like to raise. The findings from these course evaluations are reported in the results section below.

### *Anonymous online student survey*

An anonymous online student survey was conducted in 2006 and again in 2007. This custom survey was designed to provide more specific feedback on students’ perspectives on the benefits and challenges of working with “real clients”. Questions address: problems and concerns with communication methods employed; the extent to which students felt comfortable and confident in their interactions with clients; strategies that could help students gain increased confidence in their dealings with clients; and the benefits (if any) students gained from their experience. Student responses to these two surveys are reported below.

### *Community feedback*

Anonymous online surveys were also completed by members of the community organisations in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009. These surveys were designed to elicit both the benefits and challenges experienced by the community members participating in the program. Their qualitative comments are reported in the following results section.

## Results

### Course evaluation

Students undertook community engagement projects in Semesters (S) 2, 2002; S1, 2003; S2, 2006 and S1, 2007. Revisions were made successively to the course over the 2004-2005 period aimed at strengthening the alignment between professional practice and the activities undertaken in the course. Students were given the option to create their own choice of website in S2, 2003; S1, 2004; S2, 2004; and S1, 2005 offerings of the course. In S2, 2005 and S1, 2006 they created simulated projects for hypothetical clients and their own portfolio in S1, 2009.

Table 1 focuses on the findings from the 2006-2009 offerings of the course following revisions to the curriculum in 2005. There is no comparable data available for the 2008 offering of the course.

Table 1: Student ratings for course evaluation criteria (scores range from -100 to +100) for the 2006 to 2009 offerings of Electronic Publishing on the Internet

Course Evaluation Criteria	2006 S1 n=9 21%	2006 S 2 n=5 29%	2007 S1 n=10 17%	2009 S1 n=25 32%
1 . I have a clear idea of what is expected of me in this course.	39	80	80	50
2 . The ways in which I was taught provided me with opportunities to pursue my own learning.	61	80	55	60
3 . The course enabled me to develop and/or strengthen a number of the qualities of a University of South Australia graduate.	50	80	70	36
4 . I felt there was a genuine interest in my learning needs and progress.	72	90	55	40
5 . The course developed my understanding of concepts and principles.	61	100	65	42
6 . The workload for this course was reasonable given my other study commitments.	44	90	50	32
7 . I have received feedback that is constructive and helpful.	61	100	55	36
8 . The assessment tasks were related to the qualities of a UniSA graduate.	44	90	50	42
9 . The staff teaching in this course showed a genuine interest in their teaching.	72	90	55	36
10 . Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this course.	61	90	55	25

The highest ratings across all of the criteria were obtained from the Semester 2, 2006 offering of the course with an overall satisfaction level of 90. The offering of the course that scored the least favourably overall was in Semester 1, 2009 when students created their own portfolio websites. While one must be conservative in interpreting the findings given the low response rates (response rates ranging from 17% to 32%), the qualitative comments provided by students to the free form text fields in the course evaluation suggest that students enjoyed the experience of working with a “real client”. As one student noted, “The way of dealing with real client for the assessment [sic] provide me more opportunities to learn”. In contrast, several students were critical of the assignments when the focus was on a hypothetical client as this student comment suggests, “...stop making up pretend scenarios disguised at real situations...”. The lower overall satisfaction score for the 2007 offering (55) in which students created sites for community organisations as group assignments compared to the previous offering (90) when they were allocated clients on an individual basis, may have been a reflection of the group activities that were assigned in this offering. Further evidence of this is a comment by one student who stated that it “was not fair when other members had a low quality of work”. Several students also expressed concern about the challenges in having multiple students working with the one client organisation. It was apparent from analysis of all of the data over eight years and eleven semester offerings that student satisfaction was significantly improved in latter years in response to revisions to the curricula and at its highest in the offering when students were able to work autonomously with an allocated client organisation.

#### *Anonymous online student survey*

Students who completed the online surveys in 2006 and 2007 noted the benefits of creating a website for a “valuable cause”; the skills gained in learning to “deal with a real client” and the relevance of the service learning experience to their future career aspirations. Several students noted the difficulties in communicating with clients via email. As one student commented “...sometimes this communication is not very effective, as I may need to wait for the reply”. Another student noted that “The group was based in a country town and it would have been good to have visited them in person to have a clear picture of their expectations earlier in the process”. On the other hand, the mediated communication suited one student who commented “If my only form of communication to the organisation was by telephone or face to face, then I guess I would feel a little uncomfortable and not as confident. This is generally because I am shy and less confident around people I am unfamiliar with”. That same student suggested that “... to overcome these difficulties [I] would probably make time to meet these people first hand, get to know them a little before getting stuck into business”.

#### *Community feedback*

Respondents to the surveys of community members commented on the benefits of their engagement in the project. As one community member suggested “...it was good to be involved with a student from Adelaide and made me think about our association and what might be interesting to other people”. Several respondents noted the value they derived from having a website prepared for them, while also commenting on the reciprocal nature of the service learning relationship; “The fact that students are being encouraged to use their skills and assist others” said one respondent. Another respondent stated that the benefit for them was “...being helped and helping the students with their learning”.

The challenges expressed by community members mirrored some of the student comments in relation to maintaining regular communication with the student assigned to work with their group. As one respondent stated, "The major problem was communication with the student. It was mostly done via e-mail, occasionally on the phone and all rushed and 'completed(?)' at the last minute". Another respondent suggested "It would have been great to meet and spend some time with the person who actually was producing the web site". Several respondents also expressed concerns about the quality of student work noting "A lack of understanding of our requirements and our district".

## **Discussion**

The case study reported in this paper demonstrates both the benefits and challenges associated with service learning in an online community engagement project. The students' responses suggest that students gained an increase in their confidence in dealing with real clients and enhanced knowledge about how to apply the skills gained in the course to solving real world problems. The community member responses emphasise the reciprocal nature of the service learning relationship, whereby community organisations gain from having the support of students trained in particular activities that can benefit their organisation, while also acknowledging the benefits gained by students in the process. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting students' benefit academically from undertaking service learning projects (Howard, 2003), are better able to apply the academic skills learned in the course to "real world" problems and gain a greater understanding of social issues (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008). It was also evident from community members' responses to the surveys that service learning programs such as *SOCE* can contribute to the public good (Harkavy, 2006).

While several challenges associated with conducting a service learning program such as *SOCE* have been identified, many of the concerns reported in the literature such as faculty resistance, negatively perceived program outcomes, workload issues, personal agendas of academic staff and potential resistance from the community organisations (Kolenko et al, 1996) were not apparent. The factors that have contributed to the success of the model that address these concerns are: an institutional commitment to student engagement through service learning; the commitment of the teaching staff concerned with the program; the overall support of the State Government of South Australia, Office for Volunteers in providing both the resources and the endorsement of the program; the perceived benefits gained by the community groups participating in the project including access to "free" multimedia services, website hosting and the belief that they are in turn contributing to the education of future designers.

There were, however, a range of other issues identified that are not as widely reported in the literature. The most significant issues for both students and community members were found to be to the lack of regular and timely communication between students and clients, and the challenges associated with mediated communication in an online environment. Other concerns noted by community members included not being assigned a student or students not completing the project. The most common request from community members was for ongoing training and a student to assist with getting the group started in maintaining the site.

In response to these identified challenges, the following initiatives have been introduced into the 2010 offering of the course: 1) increased focus on developing students' business communication skills; 2) introduction of measures to enhance the engagement of students and community members such as hosting student-community events, establishing a community consultation committee and providing the means by which students can visit their clients on location; and 3) re-developing the SOCE program website as a Web 2.0 enabled environment so that students can communicate with their clients and vice versa on a regular basis, and a content management system enabling community members to maintain their site more easily after handover by the student.

## Conclusion

The case study reported in this paper demonstrates the benefits as well as the challenges associated with service learning in an online community engagement program. While one must be conservative in interpreting the significance of the findings given the small sample size, our findings are consistent with those reported in the literature. The outcomes from our stakeholder evaluations show the benefits of the reciprocal relationship that characterises the service learning relationship. The findings also highlight barriers that can limit the potential of community engagement programs to reconnect disengaged students with the University learning community.

The initiatives outlined in this paper have been implemented to address the identified challenges. Further student and community member surveys will be conducted mid-semester to determine whether the initiatives are found to be effective. It is argued that the community engagement program presented in this paper provides a model of the way in which the University of South Australia, with its commitment to student engagement and experiential learning, rises to the challenge posed by the Kellogg Commission over a decade ago by reshaping teaching, research, and service learning in ways that enable the University to be more productively engaged with the community. In this way, The University of South Australia, as an "engaged university" provides a learning environment that aims to enrich the student learning experience" (*Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*, 1999, p. 27).

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## **Rationale and Model for an Online System for Tracking and Assessing Community Engagement - *Dr Leonid Grebennikov, Professor Barbara Holland***

**Key phrases:** monitoring university engagement partnerships, on-line, interactive, tracking, reporting.

### **Abstract**

Universities making a commitment to community engagement must be able to track and provide a consolidated picture of projects and partnerships in order to document activity, inform the measurement of impact and outcomes, and contribute to program improvement. To date, persistent confusion about definitions of engagement as a mode of teaching and research, as opposed to other forms of university interaction with communities, has made efforts to measure engagement clumsy at best and, at worst, confusing. This paper outlines the key concepts, general design, functionalities, parameters and data sources of a new, comprehensive online system for tracking and improving community engagement developed at the University of Western Sydney. The conference presentation of this paper will include a demonstration of the system and explore the range of ways in which it can be used to improve engagement practices.

The area of university-community engagement performance requires specific attention given rapid changes in the current policy context of Australian higher education, including an increased focus on collaboration with communities for engaged research and learning purposes. This paper will begin with a description of the challenges of tracking engagement activities especially in regard to gathering data that would inform improvement and provide a review of literature regarding different views monitoring community engagement. Then, the authors will outline the challenges of monitoring and evaluation community engagement activities across a large university, and demonstrate the value of formal data collection as a strategy for increasing overall staff understanding of engagement concepts and best practices – what is measured is what is valued. In particular, the paper will explore how an online data collection system can be used to promote an understanding of the distinctions between community engagement as a form of academic scholarship and other external activities that fall in the realms of community service, professional or public service.

### **Introduction**

A review of the literature on university-community partnering suggests rapidly growing interest amongst Australian universities in becoming more “engaged” with a wide range of non-university communities, organisations and groups (Alvarez, Badenhorst, & Burnheim, 2005; Birch, 2005; Galligan & Roberts, 2005; Gervasoni, 2005; McDonald, 2005; Nugent, Delaforce, & Harding, 2006; Penman & Ellis, 2003; Ralston, 2006; Scott, Bell, Jackson & Holland, 2007; Wiseman & White, 2005, etc.).

Various definitions of university-community engagement provided in the literature share two key points. “Engagement” entails: (a) purposeful collaboration of universities with the non-university world and particularly with their surrounding communities; and (b) mutual benefits from such collaboration. As defined by Scott (2004), “a community is a group of people sharing a common

location, set of activities, purposes, interests or heritage. Communities can, therefore, be geographical, cultural, linguistic, religious, generational, national, social, economic or professional” (p. 1).

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) has defined engagement as “strenuous, thoughtful, argumentative interaction with the non-university world in at least four spheres: setting universities’ aims, purposes and priorities; relating teaching and learning to the wider world; the back-and-forth dialogue between researchers and practitioners; and taking on wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens” (ACU, 2001, p. i).

The Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA), in its 2008 position paper, described community engagement this way:

“Community engagement is a form of academic endeavour where external sources of expertise and wisdom are seen as essential to advancing knowledge and understanding. Community engagement is not a separate or distinct activity within a university but is a shared enterprise between universities and their community partners that involves an exchange of knowledge and expertise that produces mutual benefit. Engaged research, teaching and learning produce knowledge outcomes and products that are valuable assets for both academia and the public interest” (AUCEA, 2008, p. 1)

The two different definitions have obvious differences in that the ACU approach sweeps in all ways that universities might interact with communities. This might include property development, purchasing agreements, sporting events, traffic decisions and the like as well as connecting teaching, learning and research to “the wider world.” The AUCEA approach takes a more specific view of engagement as partnerships driven by an exchange of knowledge – intellectual work that connects the core academic activity of the university to community through the exchange or co-creation of knowledge that is intended to lead to mutual benefit. This definition positions engagement as scholarly work, and distinguishes from other important, but non-academic ways that academic organisations interact with the public, which is sometimes called public service, outreach or community service.

These distinctions are essential in creating any approach to measuring and documenting engagement activities in any university. Engagement is growing rapidly among universities around the world and as each university begins to implement engagement strategies or even merely consider the relevance of engagement to their institutional mission or strategy, the first challenge is: how do we know what kind of engagement is already going on in the university, and how will we monitor future engagement activity and measure or improve its quality and outcomes?

The aims of universities focused on community engagement and the benefits from such collaboration are quite complex, and make measurement and assessment a challenge. University benefits include the opportunities engagement provides to involve staff and students in real-world learning experiences (Ostrander, 2004; Ralston, 2006); to better manage competition through developing links with industry and attracting students with the relevance of programs (Nugent, Delaforce, & Harding, 2006; Ralston, 2006); and to foster democracy and prepare active and engaged citizens (Alvarez, Badenhorst & Burnheim, 2005; Brukardt, Holland, Percy & Zimpher, 2004; Ostrander, 2004). For communities the purposes and benefits of collaboration include the

application of intellectual property, resources and academic expertise provided by universities to local problems and needs (Charles & Benneworth, 2002); the enhancement of regional economic competitiveness through raising the stock of knowledge and skills (Charles & Benneworth, 2002; Garlick, 1999; Garlick, 2000; Ralston, 2006); and the enrichment of their social and cultural life (Brukardt, Holland, Percy & Zimpher, 2004; Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997; Magrath, 1999; McDonald, 2005; Penman & Ellis, 2003).

In this context, it is important for universities to develop frameworks for quality management of community engagement, including mechanisms for systematic monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and promotion of university partnership activities, implementation of “good practice” models and addressing areas requiring improvement. However, the design of any such system must reflect institutional conceptions and definitions of engagement, as well as capture data relevant to institutional goals and strategies for engagement outcomes for the university and for the community. Many universities have launched attempts to measure engagement, largely through one-off surveys that suffer from unclear terminology and simple designs that produce inconsistent responses (Holland, 2009). Only a few universities currently have ongoing data collection systems in place (Holland, 1997; Scott, 2004; Watson, 2007). Even though examples of engagement databases can be found in some universities (e.g., Arizona State University, 2004; Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2002), a comprehensive and interactive system that reinforces definitions and principles of engagement while providing robust reporting capabilities for ongoing monitoring and improvement has been unavailable.. The calls for a more efficient and effective system are numerous (e.g. Watson, 2007; Hart, Maddison & Wolff, 2007; Furco & Miller, 2009).

A few studies, though not numerous (Bringle, Phillips & Hudson, 2004; Gelmon, 2003; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring & Kerrigan, 2001; Holland, 1997, 2001; Scott, 2004; Scott & Jackson, 2005), suggest methodological and conceptual directions for creating an effective and useful system for tracking and assessing university-community engagement. They highlight that university staff, students and community partners have different concerns and expectations from partnerships, and thus, any approach to the documentation of these partnerships needs to reinforce institutional conceptions of engagement in key areas: definitions of terms and models; institutional strategic priorities and goals; staff experience and their research and teaching objectives, objectives for student learning and experience; and community needs, expectations and impacts. Most of the above research suggests that there are core questions to consider as universities strive to develop appropriate tools and resources to monitor and evaluate their community engagement activities and partnerships. These questions are (based on Gelmon et al., 2001):

- What is the purpose of the monitoring and assessment system?
- What will be measured?
- How will we collect the data?
- How will we analyse the data?

How can we ensure the results are used in ways that promote improvement in key strategic outcome areas such as project performance, staff performance, student learning, research and teaching quality, and community benefit?

These questions were used to frame the online community engagement assessment design at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). The system, now in use, is called "Tracking and Improving Community Engagement" (TICE).

### **What is the purpose of the monitoring and assessment system?**

UWS is known as a "university of the people". From its inception the university has been "committed to working in partnership with its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people and organisations of Greater Western Sydney" (UWS AUQA Performance Portfolio, 2006, p. 47). This goal is being achieved through a diverse range of partnership programs with government and non-government organisations, community groups and individuals, industry and business.

However, until 2005 the University did not have a consolidated picture of various engagement activities in which it was involved. A 2005 whole of university review of engagement, including review by an external expert panel, sought to capture all the ways the University interacted with community using an evidence-based template. A major recommendation from the review report was that more strategically focused agenda was needed for engagement, monitored by an efficient and useful ongoing engagement activity data collection strategy.

In 2006, the review of UWS by the Australian Universities Quality Agency affirmed the University's focus on engagement as a core academic strategy and suggested that the university develop a whole-of-university strategy for engagement to help focus and monitor the institution's performance and capacity.

In 2007, the University appointed a full-time senior leader for engagement and a University-Community Engagement Strategy Committee was formed representing key decision-makers in academic and administrative units. This group developed a Community Engagement Strategic Framework (Scott, G., Bell, S., Jackson, J. & Holland, B., 2007; UWS, 2010) which identified areas of focus for the University's partnership agenda: schools partnerships, sustainability, cross-cultural understanding, and small-medium enterprise economic development. The Framework also spells out key principles and practices to promote quality and mutual benefit in the design and operation of engagement activities.

With this new and more strategic approach to engagement, the Committee recognised the need to update the University's existing data collection strategy to align with the principles and goals of the Framework. A new tool was created (TICE) that would reinforce good practice and a focus on improvement by the kinds of questions it asked of the staff providing the data. Most importantly, the new instrument drew a clear distinction between academic partnerships (joint research and/or student learning activities) and public service activities. This responded to internal confusion over terminology, established the academic nature of engagement as a research or teaching and learning activity, and ensured that staff would be able to report different kinds of interactions with external communities and be recognised for achievement.

Thus, for UWS the primary purposes of the assessment were to develop and maintain a accurate, comprehensive record of activity in order reinforce good practice, monitor impact and progress, and create an evidence-based framework for planning, decision making and quality management of the engagement area.

## What is measured?

To clarify the academic nature of engagement while also recognising other types of University involvement in communities, it was decided to organise TICE around two major activity areas: academic partnership (AP) and public service (PS). Both activities are beneficial to the University and community, but they are recognised and evaluated differently in academic promotion policies. A separate instrument for each category helps reinforce the distinctions and improve recognition for academic engagement with communities as a component of teaching, learning and research work. The data from both instruments are stored in the same repository but with different activity codes and separated search, entry and edit functionalities. The definitions of AP and PS, as well as a brief user-friendly test for identifying a specific activity in these terms, are provided on the TICE homepage.

Academic partnerships are defined as collaborative interactions with external public communities for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources. Partners are involved in planning, delivering and evaluating project activities. Knowledge and expertise are exchanged in ways that produce measurable scholarly benefits for the University (direct learning and research benefits) as well as measurable benefits for the community as defined and measured by the community partners.

Public service focuses on the application and provision of institutional resources (facilities, events, services, general information) for community use. Public Service uses a variety of delivery strategies to make the intellectual expertise of University staff accessible to the public (speeches, media interviews, professional development, adult education, public information materials, exhibits, other events, etc.). The public is the recipient and beneficiary of public service and is not usually involved in planning or delivering the activity. Academic knowledge is conveyed or delivered to the public community without expectation or intent that any knowledge or expertise flow back to the university. The primary benefit to the university for public service is good will – positive image, reputation and visibility. Public service differs from personal service and volunteerism in community in that public service draws on intellectual expertise and represents the university's interests. For the purposes of data collection we also include service to academic profession and societies in this section.

The two data collection instruments within the TICE system are designed to collect data in a way that clarifies, reinforces, and recognises the distinction between the two types of interaction with community. This distinction is key to informing quality improvement and gaining an accurate portrait of engagement's impacts on the academic performance and goals of the University while also documenting the services and benefits we provide to communities more generally. The paired instruments reinforce best practices and ensure that staff can report and be recognised for different types of community-based interactions.

The elements of the instruments are conceptually grounded in key works of literature establishing effective principles and practices of engagement, including the *Framework for Effective Quality Management of Community Engagement* (Scott, 2004; Scott & Jackson, 2005); the "Holland Matrix" (Holland, 1997, 2001); and the instruments and models presented in *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement* (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Kerrigan and Spring, 2001).

### **How do we collect and analyse the data?**

A spectrum of methods for collecting and analysing information on university-community engagement activities offered in the literature (e.g., Charles & Benneworth, 2002; Garlick & Langworthy 2004, 2006; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring & Kerrigan, 2001; Scott, 2004, Weerts, 2005, 2006) can be grouped into three broad approaches according to the type of data and their analysis. They are: (a) qualitative data collection and analysis. These data are usually provided in guided self-evaluation assessments, interviews and focus groups (run with staff and target communities) and analysed either manually or using a specially designed software, such as *CEQuery*; (b) quantitative assessment of a defined set of variables. The data are typically collected using closed-ended survey / inventory questions. Statistical methods are used to explore and scale the data, to further validate the items, and to determine the nature and strength of patterns in response; and (c) a combination of (a) and (b). Determining the relative advantages and limitations of the first and second methods, Gelmon et al. (2001) and Garlick and Langworthy (2006) argue for a “hybrid approach”, based on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information. Scott (2004) suggests that, first, a set of key tracking measures have to be identified and refined through the analyses of all quantifiable (qualitative and quantitative) data for the area. Second, once such variables have been decided and given priority, they should be used to systemise the data into a comprehensive, university-community engagement database. Third, it is necessary to determine how best to gather further data on these measures, to report on outcomes, and to further facilitate partnership activities with the help of the assessment. This approach, being focused on metrics, uses the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data and underlies the development of TICE.

### **How can we ensure the results are used in ways that promote improvement?**

From the outset it was important to be clear about how the results of the TICE data will be used:

- Guide distribution of performance and improvement funding;
- Provide the data to test the university’s implementation of the Community Engagement Strategic Framework (Scott, G., Bell, S., Jackson, J. & Holland, B., 2007; UWS, 2010);
- Provide feedback to the Board of Trustees, the UWS community and to external constituencies;
- Identify opportunities for staff development regarding engagement practices;
- Capture project-based evaluation data that can be used to monitor impacts and outcomes;
- Improve quality through recognition of areas of effective engagement project implementation and link these to those who are just starting out in the area;
- Identify partners with whom another part of the university is already working (in order to avoid duplication or embarrassment, or to identify opportunities for collaboration and leveraged capacity);
- Identify groups in other parts of the university working on similar topics or issues in order to foster cross-fertilisation and more cross-disciplinary work;
- Identify new cases for the Snapshots series;
- Produce systematic compliance data and data for the UWS annual report to the state government;
- Monitor the distribution and availability of community-based and service learning courses enabling the Colleges to identify areas where activity needs to increase as well as increasing their ability to promote these units to prospective students.

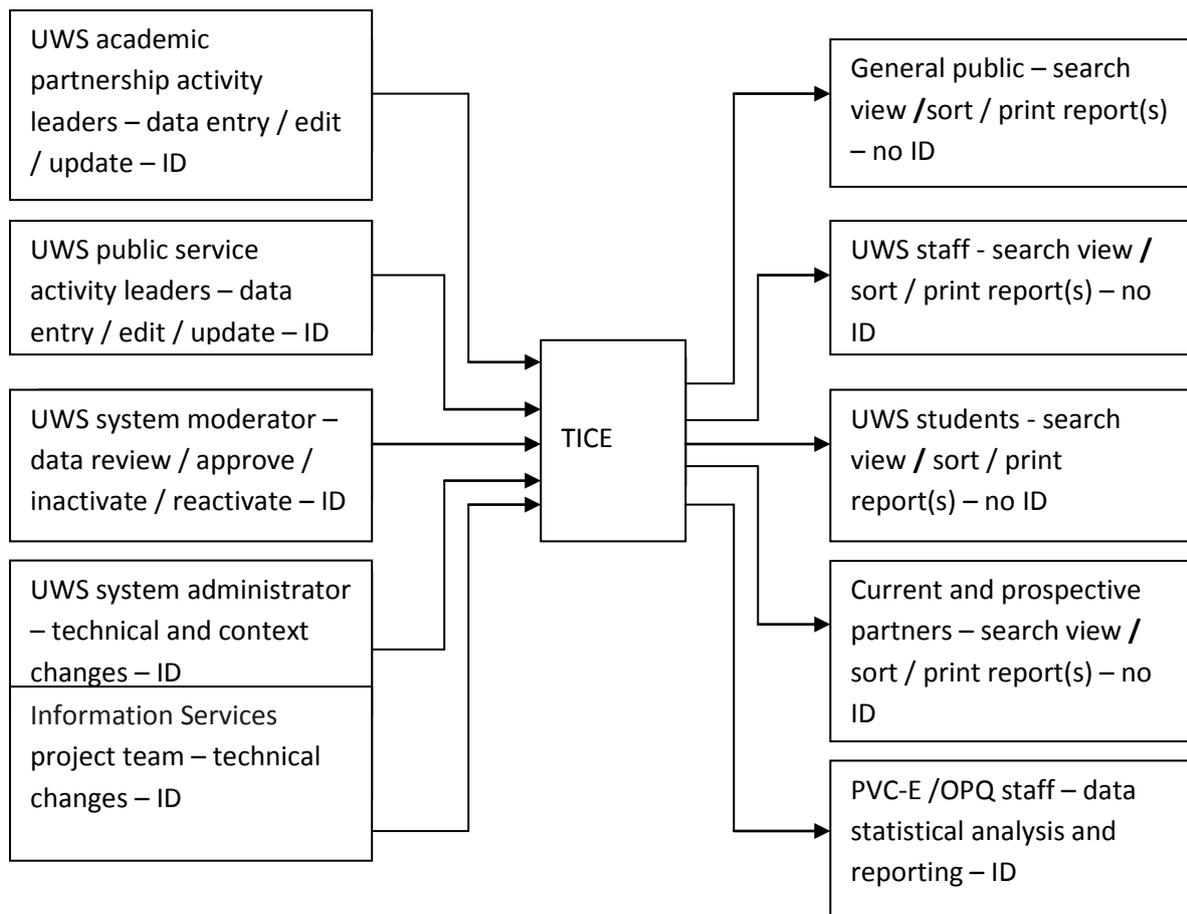
The following section of this paper describes the experience of designing and implementing the *Tracking and Improving Community Engagement* online interactive tool at UWS. The paper outlines the key TICE concepts, general design, users and their access types, functionalities, parameters and data sources.

Tracking and Improving Community Engagement online interactive tool

### **Overview**

The purposes of TICE are to capture, update and enable UWS to report on its engagement activities with communities of the Greater Western Sydney region, the state and beyond. It allows both university and community members to explore UWS external partnerships through a range of categories and via keyword search, and to extract and print reports. UWS leaders of such activities are able to add new data; edit or update previously entered data or save and return to their entries. The project is jointly sponsored by the PVC Engagement and PVC Quality because it spans both the implementation of the Engagement Strategic Framework and achievement of University strategic objectives, and quality management of the area. The working prototype of the system was created in 2007. The project was “soft launched” in 2009. Today, UWS Engagement team members and other UWS staff are providing training and support for every school in the University to build the data collection to as close to full representation of all engagement activity as is practical. Diagram 1 provides the TICE overview in terms of users, their purposes and access types.

Diagram 1: Business Overview Context

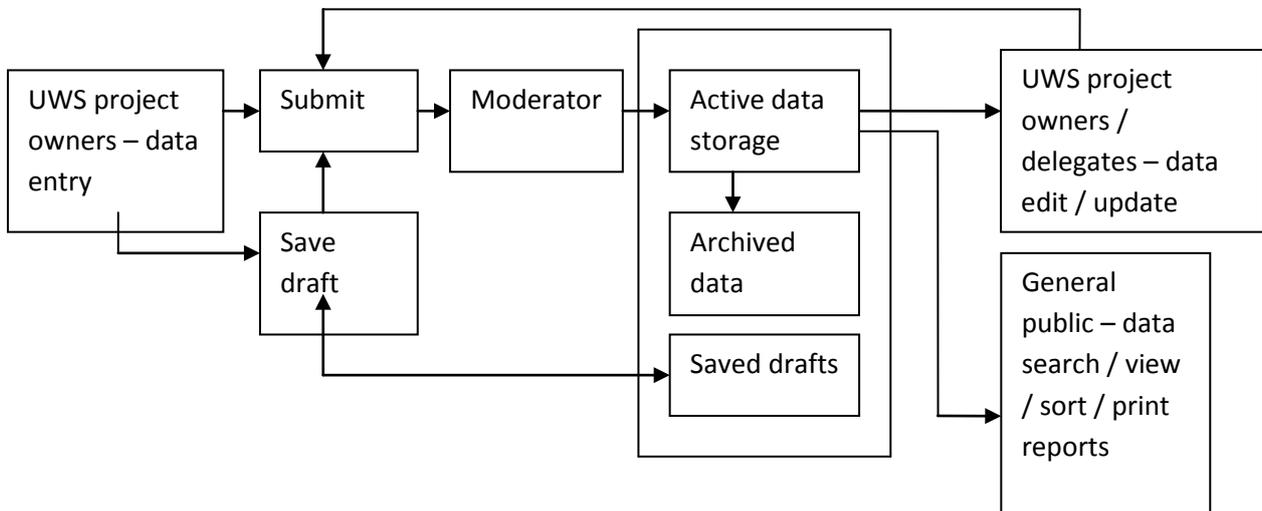


### System functional requirements

- The TICE system addresses the following seven broad areas of functional requirements:
- Data entry by UWS Academic Partnership and Public Service activity leaders;
- Editing or updating the previous entries by UWS activity leaders or their delegates;
- Searching and viewing the TICE database content by general public and all UWS community;
- Reporting on AP and PS activities – TICE produces both qualitative and quantitative reports;
- System Moderator functionality;
- System Administrator functionality;
- Archiving, viewing archived entries and re-activating them.

Diagram 2 provides further details regarding the TICE data flow.

Diagram 2: Data Flow Overview



#### Data entry form: Academic Partnership

The key variables, based on the definition and core principles of community engagement as articulated in the literature review given above and in the UWS Community Engagement Strategic Framework, defined the fields for the TICE database corresponding to the data entry and edit forms:

- UWS activity leader details (populated automatically based on staff ID);
- One other staff member who can update the activity data (search by surname);
- All other UWS staff involved in this activity (search by surname);
- Activity details including name, brief description, location, main purpose, primary focus area(s), connection to teaching and/or research outcomes, whether the activity is an Academic Service Learning program, source(s) and scope of funding, dates of commencement and (planned) completion, activity outcomes (academic and non-academic outcomes) and relevant web links (e.g., reports, publications, video materials);
- Partner(s) details including name of organisation, its website, type, contact person(s) details and whether they can be contacted without the UWS team leader's prior consent.
- Comments/reflection including future plans for the activity, and lessons that have been learnt from this activity and could be of benefit to others (“best aspect” and “needs improvement”).

#### Data entry form: Public Service

- UWS activity leader details (populated automatically based on staff ID);
- One other staff member who can update the activity data (search by surname);
- All other UWS staff involved in this activity (search by surname);
- Activity details including name, brief description, location, type, audience or recipients, whether the activity a service to a relevant profession or disciplinary society and what is the

type of this service, dates of commencement and (planned) completion, activity outcomes and relevant web links (e.g., reports, publications, video materials);

- Comments/reflection including future plans for the activity and lessons have been learnt from this activity that could be of benefit to others (“best aspect” and “needs improvement”).

#### Searching the TICE database and generating reports

The user can search the TICE database for either academic partnerships or public service activities. There is a range of search criteria starting with a keyword or words, and followed by all TICE categories and subcategories presented as dropdown menus. Multiple criteria can also be applied. The system returns all activities which match the specified criteria in any part of activity information.

The search results page gives a summary of search criteria, a number of activities found and a list of activity titles which match the selected criteria in the alphabetical order. There is an option to sort activities chronologically by the last updated date. Under each title there is a summary line advising on the main purpose, focus and location of each activity. Once clicked on an activity title the system opens the page with more detailed information on this activity including its brief description, completion status, UWS leader contact details and useful links to partners’ websites (for AP activities) and other relevant materials available on the web. There are also options to view all activities currently in the TICE database and print both the list of activities found and individual activity information.

In addition to the above qualitative reports the system can generate quantitative reports. Frequency tables are used to present all quantifiable data for a set of activities found through search or for all AP or PS activities in the database. Each frequency table contains frequencies of activities in each subcategory, percentages of totals of those activities found through search and those currently in the database. Table 1 gives an example.

Table 1: Academic Partnership Descriptive Statistics. Criteria selected: College of Arts

<u>School</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>% found by this search</u>	<u>% of all in the database</u>
School of Communication Arts	4	17.4	12.9
School of Education	13	56.5	41.9
School of Humanities and Languages	3	13	9.7
School of Psychology	1	4.3	3.2
School of Social Sciences	2	8.7	6.5
Total	23	100	74.2

## Incentives to encourage submission of data

As advocated by Scott, Bell, Jackson and Holland (2007) special consideration has been given to the motivators that would encourage staff to enter their external partnerships and public service data. In this regard, action has been taken to link TICE to funding, promotion and recognition systems for engagement.

For example, TICE is to be used as a basis for reward funding to divisions and colleges each year for excellence in the area. Each college and division will be asked to nominate two engagement projects each year for a reward under this fund. A group of university engagement experts and community people will evaluate the projects, specifically using material on the TICE database.

Evidence of successful engagement projects is to be used as part of the university's promotion criteria. Only data entered in TICE will be eligible for inclusion in promotion applications presenting engaged research and teaching activities. The University's template for application for academic promotion has been revised to reflect the University's Strategic Framework for Engagement which defines engagement as a form of teaching and/or research, and professional and community service as a third category of activity. This is reflected in the design of TICE with its two distinct survey instruments for academic partnerships and public service. Other incentives being investigated include using TICE to inform the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award for the area. Content for the university's annual engagement report and website will be drawn from TICE records. It has been also suggested that the performance plans for relevant Associate Deans in each College will include ensuring all projects in their college are in the TICE database and updated.

## Future directions: TICE II

Community Engagement is based on partnerships between the University and external organisations or individuals. To gain a complete portrait and assessment of the University's engagement performance and impacts or outcomes, input from the external partners is essential. Research on partner perspectives on collaborating with universities with the goal of mutual benefits is limited (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Drawing in part on a proven model for assessment of partner feedback on costs, benefits, impacts, and satisfaction (Gelmon et al., 2001), a second instrument is now being designed for TICE. TICE II aims to facilitate gathering and regularly updating UWS community partners' feedback on their joint projects with the University. This will provide the University with an important external source of analysis of its overall engagement agenda and of specific projects. These data will also inform internal actions to improve quality, update strategic directions, encourage cross-project collaboration and document partner-identified outcomes.

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## Collaborating to Reduce Health Disparities in the African American Community: A U.S. Case Study Presentation - *Dr Robyn Osborn, Brenda Lockley*

### **Abstract:**

The Uniformed Services University Center for Health Disparities (USUCHD) was funded by the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) in 2003 and 2007. The Center focuses on engaging communities to conduct community based participatory health research to reduce and eliminate health disparities. We describe two partnerships, where each community defined the research priority and USUCHD scientists assisted in developing a project focused on each community's concerns: 1) Infant Mortality: The Black Babies SMILE (BBS) Program and 2) Health Needs Assessment: GOSPEL Cares.

Partnering to Reduce Black Infant Mortality. BBS Program's mission is to reduce infant mortality and eliminate health disparities by implementing a home-visit, nurse case-management model available to all African American (AA) residents of Montgomery County. The collaborative vision was to evaluate program outcomes (e.g., birth weight) and develop a user-friendly client record report generating system to justify existence of BBS to County officials, modify the program based on outcomes, and disseminate program and findings. Several important outcomes of this partnership are outlined.

GOSPEL Cares. The Glorifying Our Spiritual and Physical Existence for Life (GOSPEL) Program was established by the County DHHS and the Black Minister's Conference as a faith-based health education program to eliminate health disparities among AA. USUCHD and GOSPEL outreach workers developed three goals: 1) conduct a health needs assessment in churches; 2) provide program evaluation of extant GOSPEL programs; 3) summarize information on health outcomes to guide the development of future programs. The long-term goal of this partnership is to examine if and how health status/healthcare utilization of GOSPEL participants changes over time. Outcomes for each phase of the partnership are detailed.

Lessons Learned. These partnerships between county government agencies, non-profit faith based institutions, an academic institution and a private corporation are a model of cooperation and efficiency in promoting research and addressing the issue of health disparities in the United States.

**Keywords:** Health Disparities, Community Partnership, African American health, Health Promotion, Infant Mortality, Faith-based health promotion

### **Overview**

Community-academic partnerships to reduce health disparities offer many advantages over traditional research approaches, which include addressing community defined needs, providing data-driven evaluations for community ideas thereby allowing communities to compete for needed resources, and improving the validity and quality of research. Two community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects are described that originated out of a series of year long meetings between researchers at the Uniformed Services University Center for Health Disparities (USUCHD) and local

public health leaders from the African American Health Program (AAHP) and the Montgomery County, MD Department of Health and Human Services. The origin of the USUCHD is described followed by a case history of each project: the Black Babies S.M.I.L.E. Program Evaluation (BBS) and the G.O.S.P.E.L. Cares Needs Assessment.

### **National Centers of Excellence to Eliminate Health Disparities**

Scientific and medical advances have bettered the health of many Americans. However, these benefits have not been seen for all Americans and, unfortunately, Americans of certain ethnic and racial backgrounds and those who live in certain rural areas carry a disproportionate burden of disease and often suffer health care disparities. Broadly speaking, health disparities can be defined as a difference in the burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality between one population group and another (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Under the United States National Institutes of Health, the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) Centers of Excellence (COE) Program was established by Public Law 106-525, the “Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000.” The program, initiated in 2002, was initially called the Centers of Excellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities and Training (Project EXPORT) and was renamed in 2007 the NCMHD Centers of Excellence. The goal of this program is to develop novel programs across the United States that make significant contributions to reducing and ultimately eliminating health disparities.

The USUCHD established a Center of Excellence funded through a NIH/NCMHD Exploratory Grant in 2003 and refunded in 2007. The USUCHD is located in the Uniformed Services University (USU) School of Medicine, a federal university with the mission of educating physicians for the U.S. military and public health services. USU is located in Bethesda, MD in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The overarching goals of USUCHD are to engage in a program of biomedical and behavioral health research to reduce and eliminate health disparities by 1) partnering with community groups in research, training opportunities, and educational offerings to increase awareness of health disparities; and 2) translate and disseminate research results and new knowledge to community members. The focus to date has been with the African American community.

#### **Projects: Development, Purpose, and Funding Source**

To address these goals, the newly formed USUCHD partnered with public health professionals, nurses, and outreach workers from the African American Health Program (AAHP) and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in Montgomery County, Maryland. Montgomery County is a large county in the Metropolitan Washington, DC area, with approximately 972,000 residents according to data collected in 2009 (US Census Bureau, 2010). Nearly 40% of residents in Maryland are non-Caucasian (US Census Bureau, 2010) and significant health disparities exist, despite incomes well above the national average. AAHP was founded in 1999 with a mission to eliminate health disparities and increase the length and quality of life for African Americans and Black immigrants living in Montgomery County. African Americans comprise 17% of residents in Montgomery County, MD and 26% % of residents in the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area.

This case study presents two community-academic partnerships, where each community defined the research priority and scientists from the USU Center for Health Disparities (USUCHD) assisted in the

development of a project focused on each community's concerns: 1) the Black Babies S.M.I.L.E. (Start More Infants Living Equally healthy) Program (BBS) and 2) the G.O.S.P.E.L. (Glorifying Our Spiritual and Physical Existence for Life) Cares health needs assessment. Both partnerships developed out of a year-long series of meetings with public health leaders from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the African American Health Program (AAHP) of Montgomery County, Maryland in the United States. The purposes, goals, and outcomes for each project are described below.

### **Collaborative Project 1: Black Babies Start More Infants Living Equally healthy (S.M.I.L.E.) Program (BBS)**

In the United States, between 1960 and 2001, rates of infant mortality have fallen dramatically (Office of Minority Health, 2007). Some estimates suggest that the rate has fallen as much as 74% (US Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], 2003). Yet still, the United States maintains one of the highest infant mortality rates of all industrialized nations, with a significant racial disparity between African Americans and Caucasian Americans (US DHHS, 2003). African American women are twice as likely as Caucasian women to experience infant mortality in the first year of their child's life (National Center for Health Statistics, 2006). African American infants are almost two times more likely than Caucasian infants to be born preterm/low birth weight (Martin et al., 2002), which is a risk factor for mortality. Of the many contributing factors causal to such racial disparities in prenatal health, inequities in amount and quality of prenatal health care is critical (Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2002). In fact, it has been estimated that lack of early prenatal care increases infant mortality by up to 40% (Vintzileos et al., 2002).

Black Babies S.M.I.L.E. (BBS) was initiated in 2002 by AAHP as a home visiting case management model to provide services to high risk pregnant women and neonates in Montgomery County, MD. The program was (and is still) available to any African American/Black resident of Montgomery County, Maryland by referral from health care providers, other agencies, friends, family or self. It was established in response to the disproportionately high infant mortality rate which exist across all social and economic levels. For example, infant mortality was found to be 2-3 times higher among Blacks than Caucasians in the County.

The BBS program consists of nurse case managers with experience in maternity and newborn nursing who provide one-on-one in-home visitation services to fully support the needs of the pregnant/parenting mother. BBS offered comprehensive care provided by full-time nurse case managers; focusing not only a full medical assessment, but also a holistic approach including psychosocial, economic, environmental, educational, vocational assessment and care. BBS quickly became popular and experienced rapidly increasing caseloads.

#### **Goals and Benefits for Each Partner in BBS:**

As BBS continued to grow, the need for a S.M.I.L.E. data management system was apparent. With limited program funding and staff expertise in data management, AAHP sought collaboration with the newly created USUCHD, also located within Montgomery County, to assist in designing the system. BBS had one main priority: the development of a user-friendly, multipurpose client record and data collection, analysis and report generating system which could be accessed and utilized by the nurses, management staff of BBS to improve patient care and system organization and allow

them to evaluate program outcomes. They believed the program was making a difference; they sought outcome data to assess the program realizing these outcomes would allow them to justify the existence of the program to the county, as well as to disseminate the results of the program for replication in other communities. The scientists at USUCHD realized that such a database would also provide an opportunity to build a partnership with an existing community program, allowing for evaluation of the program and scientific exploration of health disparities from an infant mortality perspective.

#### Activities of the BBS Project:

The BBS/USUCHD partnership officially began in 2004. Several steps were taken to develop this relationship and the projects which grew from it. First, AAHP staff educated USUHS about program, goals and needs. USUCHD researchers reviewed the scientific literature, investigated platforms for data management system, and met with County technology officials to discuss system compatibility. Together, USUCHD and AAHP determined desired data and outcomes, developed the initial assessment tool, entered existing data into the system, completed early analyses of existing data and performed and published an evaluation of the BBS program.

The initial research project that grew from this partnership followed a community based participatory research philosophy as study questions were largely driven by the priorities of the community, rather than the University. The goal of this project was to assess who was using the program and how those who were utilizing the services were benefitting from the program. A retrospective cohort study was developed to evaluate the association between ante-partum nurse-case management and home visitation on the occurrence of low birth weight and preterm deliveries in African American women in Montgomery County, Maryland (Wells et al., 2008). The study population was restricted to all singleton births for mothers enrolled in the BBS program from January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2005.

The typical participant in this second study was 27 years old, unmarried, high-school educated, receiving Medicaid and referred by a service agency in the community. Sixteen percent of deliveries for women enrolled in BBS ante-partum were preterm and 14.6% were of low birth weight babies. These data may be compared with 36.1% and 29.5%, respectively, for deliveries of women who were not enrolled in the program (Wells et al., 2008). Findings from this cohort study on the influence of this community-based program on pregnancy outcomes were encouraging, suggesting that infants born to high-risk mothers who receive ante-partum home visits through BBS were at a minimum 66% less likely to have a low birth weight baby or to deliver preterm compared to mothers who did not receive ante-partum home visits. The benefits of increased birth weight and longer gestational age in this population are known to reduce neonatal morbidity and infant mortality. Results were published in the Journal of the National Medical Association in 2008, furthering the University's mission of producing scientific publications.

#### Next steps for the BBS/USUCHD Partnership:

The BBS program has continued to thrive. In addition to the nurse case management program described here, the nurses in the program also offer the "Caring Connection Infant Loss Program" to any African American woman, or any woman of African descent, living in Montgomery County who has experienced a foetal loss in any trimester during pregnancy, to provide bereavement counselling

and referrals to community services. In addition, they offer in-home HIV testing, a breast pump loan program, free childbirth and breastfeeding education classes, and health education presentations for teens/adults.

BBS and USUCHD plan to continue to work together to identify community-specific factors associated with infant mortality. In addition, a goal for both researchers and program leaders is to quantify nurse case managers' intervention strategies considered "good clinical care" such that these types of interventions can be replicated and techniques disseminated among other groups of nurses and health care providers. Finally, a comparison of BBS strategies and outcomes to other programs targeting high-risk populations would lend additional scientific rigor to the program for competitive funding opportunities.

#### Evidence of Impact for Each Partner in the BBS/USUCHD Partnership:

As a result of this partnership, BBS received increased Montgomery County funding for evaluation through the partnership with WESTAT, an international research firm that is also located in the local county. USUCHD assisted WESTAT in transferring the initial database into a user friendly data entry system for tablet computers that nurses use in the field to enter patient information. Additionally, the County provided increased funding for the program, allowing the BBS program to hire two additional nurses, offer additional classes to enrolled mothers, and to offer breastfeeding support.

USUCHD researchers representing the University also benefitted from the project. In addition to invitations for four scientific presentations at academic conferences throughout the nation, there also were two peer-reviewed publications resultant from the relationship. Several graduate students obtained invaluable training in data management and analysis through the project as well. The University and USUCHD researchers furthered their goals of scientific publications, advancement of the science and increased likelihood of future funding for continued study in this area. Both partners were recognized for outstanding work with several awards, including the 2006 National Association of Counties Award for Achievement which highlights Montgomery County's commitment to all of its residents to provide the best quality of life possible. A State of Maryland Grant focused on social determinants of infant mortality was awarded in 2009.

#### **Collaborative Project 2: The G.O.S.P.E.L. Cares Health Needs Assessment**

Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD) rank as the number one killer of African Americans and over 4 out of every 10 African American adults have CVD (American Heart Association, 2006). The age adjusted death rate from coronary heart disease was almost 20% higher among African Americans than for the total adult population in the U.S. (American Heart Association, 2006). African-Americans between the ages of 45 and 64 are 2.5 times more likely to die from heart failure than Caucasians of the same age and have a 70% higher risk for heart failure than Caucasian males (National Minority Health Foundation, 2004). In addition, African American females between the ages of 45 and 54 have a 50% greater risk to develop heart failure than Caucasian females (National Minority Health Foundation, 2004).

A partnership between the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Black Minister's Conference of Montgomery County, along with funding from the Cigarette Restitution Funds, created the Glorifying our Spiritual and Physical Existence for Life (G.O.S.P.E.L.) program. G.O.S.P.E.L. is a community-based health education program, which serves a collection of

12 African American churches in Montgomery County, Maryland. The goals of the G.O.S.P.E.L. program are to reduce/eliminate health disparities among African Americans, initially emphasizing those that have tobacco as a risk factor and to increase knowledge and awareness among African Americans regarding health disparity issues. G.O.S.P.E.L. utilizes a health promoter model, with a team of approximately two outreach workers per church and the support of the church pastors. The team meets monthly and conducts everything from one-on-one interactions to large group interventions.

#### **Goals and Benefits for Each Partner in G.O.S.P.E.L.:**

As G.O.S.P.E.L. initiatives were undertaken by outreach workers, a need for assessment and program evaluation was quickly established. USUHD initially approached G.O.S.P.E.L. to participate in weight loss research. The G.O.S.P.E.L. outreach workers had other priorities and asked USUCHD to assist in fulfilling these needs. For example, the G.O.S.P.E.L. program leaders wanted to establish a method to track the impact of its health education programs in order to inform future educational programming as well as G.O.S.P.E.L. Leaders and Health Ministries at the various churches. Knowing that program evaluation is often needed to receive grant funding and outcomes can help justify programs existence, the partnership with an academic institution would play an important role. In addition, G.O.S.P.E.L. leaders would learn more about their congregations' health status, health interests, and access to and utilization of the programs. Through this partnership, researchers at USUCHD would also be able to work towards their goals and requirements from their funding agency, of partnering with community groups in research, training opportunities, and educational offerings to increase awareness of health disparities and to translate and disseminate research results and new knowledge to community members.

#### **Activities of the G.O.S.P.E.L. Project:**

After a series of meetings to develop a plan for taking the partnership forward, the first project was initiated in 2004, which consisted of a needs assessment and program evaluation project as well as an examination of the church congregations' utilization of and familiarity with the G.O.S.P.E.L. program. This initial phase consisted of collaborative survey development using the skills of academic researchers and the inquires of the G.O.S.P.E.L. outreach workers. The purpose of the G.O.S.P.E.L. Cares survey was to identify the health concerns and interests of G.O.S.P.E.L. program congregations, and to assess church members' familiarity with G.O.S.P.E.L. initiatives. The survey assessed demographic information and a range of health factors including health care access and utilization, health history (including hypertension, diabetes, CVD and obesity), exercise, smoking, stress and depression. The first version of the survey was 16 pages long and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Researchers from USUCHD collaborated closely with DHHS and G.O.S.P.E.L. program representatives to design and implement the written survey to assess the health concerns and interests of congregants and the impact of the first year of the G.O.S.P.E.L. program. It was determined that this information would later be used to inform outreach workers and to guide the choice of programs and information for future G.O.S.P.E.L. work.

USUCHD researchers provided outreach worker training in research ethics and survey administration, as the project was approved by the institutional review board. During 2004, 2005, and 2007, three versions of the survey were administered to almost 1,200 church members after church services or during special activities (e.g., summer picnic) by a team of G.O.S.P.E.L. outreach workers and

USUCHD researchers, providing an opportunity for USUCHD staff members and outreach workers to work together toward a common goal.

Results from the first survey administration conducted in 2004 revealed that G.O.S.P.E.L. was a well-utilized health education program within the churches. Four (of the eight churches that were members of the G.O.S.P.E.L. program at the time of survey administration in 2004) participated in the study. Data from 228 respondents at four churches were analyzed and revealed that 96% of respondents identified themselves as Black or African American. Respondents' mean age was 52.13 years (SD = 14.19), and 59% were married. All respondents were non-smokers, although 20% lived with a smoker. Ninety-five percent of respondents had some type of health insurance (private 84.2%, public 21.9%) and 92% had visited a doctor's office or clinic within the past year. Over 51% of respondents reported spending between 4-9 hours per week at church and about 20% identified G.O.S.P.E.L. or church as one of their two primary sources of health information. Most (90%) had heard of G.O.S.P.E.L. and 39% reported attending a G.O.S.P.E.L. event and/or reading program literature (33%). Of interest, there was consistency in the rankings with respondents most interested in their diagnosed problems, which included hypertension, high cholesterol, and weight management. Despite self-reported height/weight data indicating that 81% were obese or overweight, only 32% had been told by a health care provider that they were overweight or obese.

After USUCHD researchers presented survey results to program leaders, together they worked to develop new G.O.S.P.E.L. programming which would build off of the results. For example, one of the primary issues congregants reported was misunderstandings about their medications. Many reported taking several medications for various health conditions, yet they were unable to name the medication, its dose, and which condition it treated. Such a concern led to the G.O.S.P.E.L. "Pharmacy Brown Bag" event. Goals of the Brown Bag event were to help people to learn about their medications, including safe and effective use, and to increase patient skills for doctor-patient communication. Community pharmacists and advanced medical students from Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences gathered together at one of the G.O.S.P.E.L. churches for a day-long event where interested people could bring a bag containing their medications and have one-on-one face time with a pharmacist or medical student who would explain each medication, its use, its dose, and its potential side effects.

Since this initial survey, two additional versions of the survey have been conducted, in 2005 and 2007. Results from the three surveys confirm that GOSPEL is a well-utilized, accessible program and an important opportunity for providing community-based health education to African Americans, but also highlight the prevalence of cardiovascular conditions in the community. The third survey was expanded to ask about health knowledge relating to various health conditions (e.g., hypertension, diabetes) and health behaviors, where almost half of the participants reported an interest in learning more about exercise.

Next Steps for the G.O.S.P.E.L./USUCHD partnership:

Based on the interesting results of the three surveys conducted at the churches in the metropolitan Washington DC region, there are several next steps for this community-academic partnership. Perhaps the most immediate goal is to design an intervention to address exercise and overweight/obesity in G.O.S.P.E.L. churches. In addition, USUCHD researchers will work to educate

outreach workers and church pastors and conduct assessments of behavior change in church congregants over time.

Evidence of Impact for Each Partner in G.O.S.P.E.L./USUCHD Partnership:

The G.O.S.P.E.L./USUCHD partnership has clearly benefitted both parties. For example, at the Brown Bag event spawned by the initial G.O.S.P.E.L. Cares survey, program participants learned critical information about their medications and received valuable face-to-face time with health care professionals. G.O.S.P.E.L. programmers staged an effective and targeted health education intervention, and the program was awarded the National DDHS Award for Faith-Based Innovation in Prevention in 2006. In 2007, G.O.S.P.E.L. received funding from NCMHD, as part of the USUCHD Center.

In addition, USUCHD researchers were provided with another opportunity to serve as evaluation consultants. Such opportunities in data collection and analysis resulted in numerous local community presentations jointly conducted by USUCHD and G.O.S.P.E.L. leaders. Four scientific meetings were attended to disseminate G.O.S.P.E.L. data and results. USUCHD researchers representing the University have continued to further scientific work in the area of community based research, with a particular focus on health disparities. Future funding for the University and its researchers depends on such advancements.

#### **Conclusions and Lessons Learned from BBS and G.O.S.P.E.L.**

The partnerships described in this case study between county government agencies, non-profit faith based institutions, an academic institution and a private corporation are a model of cooperation and efficiency in promoting research and addressing the issue of health disparities in the United States. At first glance, the two programs had very different goals and initiatives. BBS focused on infant mortality and G.O.S.P.E.L. was interested in faith-based health promotion. However, researchers at USUCHD successfully partnered with each of the communities by following their lead on the priorities, lending expertise in scientific review, methodology, and data analysis. Then, after collecting results, researchers and community members partnered to interpret results within the context of each community and focused on the impact and outcomes that were important to both the community and University.

These partnerships resulted in many “lessons learned.” Perhaps most importantly, each partner realized that all relationships must be modifiable and malleable over time while maintaining a cadre of constancy with one or more key players. In projects that can take years to develop and implement, staff turnover is likely. However, having one or two identified individuals who provide a reliable point of contact for each party is critical to the long-term maintenance of these relationships. In addition, each party must be willing to compromise. For example, community members may desire information that does not directly influence the greater scientific community yet is directly relevant to their target population. In the G.O.S.P.E.L. case study, it became apparent that community members valued data derived from their communities, finding the implications relevant to their needs while also meeting scientists and public health officials’ requirements of methodologically rigorous surveys. On the other hand, research conducted by Universities often develops at a slower pace than community members might prefer. Obtaining IRB approval can take time and may ultimately result in changes that impact the data that can be gathered due to ethical

guidelines delineated by institutional review boards and other governing bodies. Despite these difficulties, however, the benefits of participating in community research can be of real benefit to both parties involved and may provide a springboard for other joint projects, interventions, and research.

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## Human capital, capability, ethics, university engagement and regional development – *Professor Steve Garlick*

### Abstract

In earlier work we introduced two concepts as mechanisms for universities to engage with their regional communities within a framework of achievement and moral and ethical responsibility. This work was stimulated by two trends in the Australian context; the growing disparity in regional outcomes, particularly human capital, in light of national growth; and the regionalisation (and parallel corporatisation) of higher education. The two concepts: ‘enterprising human capital’ and ‘sp-ethics’ (Garlick *et al* 2007, Taylor *et al* 2008, Garlick and Palmer 2008) provide a framework built around the realisation of the enterprising abilities of individuals in communities within a supportive regional milieu. Universities will be an active participant in this through their core business of learning, in ways that also embrace moral and ethical concerns for the common good.

In the light of Sen’s (1985, 2009) capability approach, embodying freedom of choice, opportunity, social justice and economic gain, are these two mechanisms, when taken together, enough to tackle problematic regional human capital trends and a worthwhile engagement agenda for universities that benefits both the individual and wider regional goals, or does the capability approach have something additional to offer?

The paper first outlines the nature of the spatial problem and the human capital implications that underlie it, using temporal Australian data over two decades. It discusses the capability approach and the concepts of enterprising human capital and sp-ethics as mechanisms to address the spatial human capital problem. The role of the university in its engagement with the normative individual, and the region, as a supportive milieu is then discussed as a means of enabling greater opportunity achievement on a regional scale.

The paper draws two conclusions about enhancing human capital outcomes in the region that involve a role for the university. Firstly, the capability approach may need to explicitly consider attachment to place as an exogenous non-cognitive mechanism consistent with common good goals and, in this spatial sense, it may need to be more explicit about the role of regional agencies associated with learning, such as the university. Secondly, both ‘enterprising human capital’ and ‘sp-ethics’ may need to explicitly consider the role of particular cognitive and non-cognitive factors, especially as they relate to younger people.

**Key words:** capability approach, enterprising human capital, ‘sp-ethics’, university engagement, regional development.

## Introduction

Regional growth concentration and disparity in Australia have increased with national economic growth. An unproductive ageing population, 'brain drain', industry 'just-in-time' vocational training, rural-urban population drift, daily out-commuting, and 'lifestyle' underemployment are familiar labour market characteristics that affect the economy and society of many regions outside the major metropolitan conurbations. When human capital is shown to be the most significant driver of economic growth for regions in Australia (Taylor and Plummer 2003, Garlick *et al* 2007, Taylor *et al* 2008), where does this leave local strategies for economic sustainability based on endogenous knowledge accessibility and social inclusion? What can be done about the capability-free zone that underpins underemployment and the flight of human capital from many non-metropolitan regions and what role should publicly-funded universities play in regional human capital and capability enhancement matters?

These questions are addressed in this paper through the lens of three actors and agencies – the normative individual seeking capability enhancement; the region as a creative and supportive atmospheric milieu; and the role of the learning institution (and the university in particular) for these individuals and spatial societies. It is argued that these actors and agencies need to be strategically connected (engaged) with a focus that goes beyond human capital and concern only for the commodity and the productive, towards capability-building initiatives and matters of social justice, cognition and inclusion of all groups in the community. It raises concerns about what role the university might undertake in capability realisation in the regional community when there are policy funding and business entity operation tensions attached to pursuing moral and ethical issues.

In previous work we have introduced the concepts of 'enterprising human capital' (Garlick *et al* 2007, Taylor *et al* 2008) and 'sp-ethics' (Garlick and Palmer 2007, 2008) as engagement mechanisms for universities to address regional concerns within a moral and ethical framework that involves the enterprising individual. In the light of Sen's (1985, 2009) capability approach, are these mechanisms enough, when taken together, to tackle problematic regional human capital trends and consequent regional community sustainability, or does the human capability approach offer extra benefits to the region and its engaging university?

### Literature themes: People, institutions and places

The first theme referred to in this paper is from the work of Sen (1985, 2009), Nussbaum (2000, 2002) and others on human capability. They emphasise individual 'ambition', 'opportunity' and 'functionality', rather than institutionally-imposed competency-oriented, path-dependent learning designed to meet pre-specified commodity objectives. The 'capability approach' favours social inclusion and social justice – a moral construct of justice based on individual choice through egalitarianism and freedom. Through the capabilities approach Sen does not emphasise what people *have* achieved by way of status and income, but rather what they *could* achieve given certain available liberties or 'functionings'. The state of individuals and their social environment, enabling or otherwise, rather than the commodities or services they produce, is therefore important in contrasting capability with the typical resources model of the way in which income and wealth are

generated with human resources<sup>2</sup>. Sen says, “Capability, thus, is a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another” (Sen 1992: 40).

In our work on regions we have likened Sen’s human capability model to what we have termed ‘enterprising human capital’, as it is about people with enterprising abilities who not only formulate ideas but can take them and turn them into real on-the-ground positive outcomes for both individuals and the wider community (Garlick *et al* 2007, Taylor *et al* 2008) within a supportive ‘milieu’.

The second stream of thought relating to taking a capabilities approach to achieving more effective outcomes in regions is the social construct of the region as a supportive ‘atmosphere’ or milieu of collaboration and dialogue, where knowledge spillovers and transmission effects are nurtured and promoted and can therefore generate community benefits beyond the individual outcomes that some see as implicit in the Sen model of human capability. Sen argues, however, that the capabilities approach is not about ‘methodological individualism’ (Sen 2009: 244-247). He says, for example, “It is hard, then, to envision cogently how persons in society can think or act without being influenced in one way or another by the nature and working of the world around them.” (p 244-245).

There is an enormous volume of literature in regional development theory about the notion of the so-called ‘atmospheric’ (Maillat 1995) benefit of the spatial milieu, and many instrumental institutional structures and processes and agency behavioural determinants have been argued as giving form to it. Concepts such as ‘institutional thickness’ (Amin 1999), social capital (Putnam 1993), trust (Fukuyama 1999), business clustering and networking (Porter 1998), innovation systems (Braczyk *et al* 1998, Lundvall 1996), learning regions (Maskell *et al* 1998), creative class (Florida 1995, 2002), regional leadership, and so on, are now everywhere.

We have argued elsewhere that these apparent determinants are built on soft analysis, are not responsive to the exigencies of the real capitalist environment in which regions operate (Plummer and Taylor 2003, Garlick *et al* 2007, Taylor *et al* 2008), do not take into account the way in which business partnerships are formed, and importantly, are not people centric. We do not see argued in the literature that the regional milieu offers the possibility of being a nurturing instrument to realise human capability. The result has been that after more than 20 years of institutionally-facilitated bottom-up regional development, many regionally-focused organisations have been created, there has been much busyness of local social capital and a plethora of sectoral, commodity and investment plans and reports, but little in the way of realising the capability of those who reside in these places. In short, the institutionally-supported instrumentalist approach to regions in this country has entirely missed the mark because it has focused on the product and the process and forgotten about the essential first step – realising the capabilities of the people in these regional communities.

The result of failing to address these human capability questions is an increasing flow in human capital away from many places. Despite the copious strategic planning that has occurred in regions

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction is made in this paper between ‘human resources’ and ‘human capital’, where the latter refers to those with higher learning that involves technical and creative skills and their application in addressing real-world matters of concern in the long term, as opposed to the former, which can also include people who have simply been trained ‘just-in-time’ to meet an immediate workforce need.

over many years there has been precious little that has focused on human capital planning in regions, and probably none that has addressed human capability as a tool for opportunity realisation and social inclusion. Opportunity realisation and social justice must of necessity go hand in hand.

What is demonstrated in our research is that economic growth in the regions of Australia over the last two decades has become spatially divergent, with concentrations of high and low- growth regions becoming more apparent over time. National growth in Australia has not been equally spread, and there has been no trend towards a long-run equilibrium growth for all regions. Key metropolitan regions have been the main beneficiaries of growth, while other regions have had declining fortunes.

What we have found, using economic growth data for 94 regions over 18 years with closed econometric modelling (Garlick, Taylor and Plummer 2007; Taylor *et al* 2008), is that the relative availability of a source of 'enterprising' human capital in a region is the most significant determinant of its economic future, and the inter-regional flows of this human capital are the most significant determinant of widening regional growth disparity nationally.

The third stream of thought referred to in this paper relates to the new emphasis on the role of publicly-funded higher education institutions in the development of cities and regions, the so-called 'third mission'. Universities play an important regional role because of their focus on human capital and the creation and dissemination of knowledge and learning, their spatial distribution, their relative institutional freedom of thought and expression and their regional leadership role in the processes of learning (Goddard 1997, Garlick 2000, OECD 2007). In this sense however, the university should not simply be seen as an insular entity with opaque borders through which students and money enter from some anonymous spatial somewhere and then emerge after the education process and end up in another anonymous spatial somewhere.

It is argued that universities, with other relevant actors and agencies, have a common good regional responsibility to 'reach out' and, with the assistance of other educational and regional actors and agencies, 'pull through' the human capital pyramid capable people who are on the margins of the community, to enhance social inclusion as well as economic sustainability (Garlick and Palmer 2008, OECD 2007, Observatory Pascal 2009). There is clearly a higher education participation implication in this. However, this university/regional community engagement highlights an ethical and moral dilemma for the modern university in meaningfully responding to a regional role for capability realisation within national policy funding frameworks that do not explicitly support such undertakings. Many universities moving down this path fail the Dewey (1956) and Boyer (1996) tests of the common good expected of the publicly-funded university (Garlick and Palmer, 2008, Benson and Harkavy 2002). What is argued in this paper is that universities perhaps need to have a role in human capability building, beyond their more traditional human capital creation role, in the regions where they operate, not only through curricular and learning pathway articulation with other learning organisations, but in their outreach and partnerships throughout the community.

### **The flight of human capital and regional development**

Using a conventional gap-convergence (Barro Regression) econometric model (Plummer and Taylor 2001b), regional growth for 94 Australian regions over the period 1984 to 2002 was decomposed into three causative growth components: (a) *transition dynamics* – or the speed at which a region's

growth rate returns to a long-run equilibrium after some disturbance, i.e. mean reversion; (b) 'structural' characteristics – or the extent to which there are growth differences between neighbouring regions after a shock; and (c) random shocks – or the unanticipated and unpredictable factors that can impact on the growth rate of particular regions (so-called 'white noise') (Martin and Sunley 1998).

It is hypothesised that, in a competitive labour market situation, there will be a convergence of unemployment rates in all regions towards a general common rate over time. We have used relative unemployment as a proxy for regional economic growth in the modelling (Plummer and Taylor 2003, Garlick *et al* 2007). If this does not occur, and each labour market converges to its own long-term unemployment rate over time, then there are particular 'structural' factors (or drivers) at work that reflect the local capacities of each region, rather than simply being reflective of national competitive trends. The nature of this long-term growth in each region is determined by the relative impact of each of the structural factors or drivers (Badderly *et al* 1998).

To explore the patterns of regional growth in the Australian situation over the period 1984 to 2002, three different approaches to explaining spatiality were used (Garlick *et al* 2007): (a) the significance of the overall spatial association among all regions, using a Morans I statistic (Anselin 1996); (b) the identification of particular spatial clusters of growth among regions (spatial accumulation), using the Getis-Ord (or G) statistic (Getis and Ord 1992, 1995); and (c) the significance of specific spatial clusters that have been identified to the extent that they might be classed as 'hot spots' of difference from neighbouring regions, using local indicators of spatial association (LISA) (Anselin 1995).

The resulting analysis shows that economic growth across the 94 regions has become increasingly divergent. The computed Morans I statistic for regional growth has risen from 0.213 to 0.416 over the two years, significant at the 1 per cent level, suggesting that an increased degree of spatial growth association or clustering is occurring. In other words, as aggregate national growth has risen between 1984 and 2002 spatial divergence in growth between groups of regions has increased.

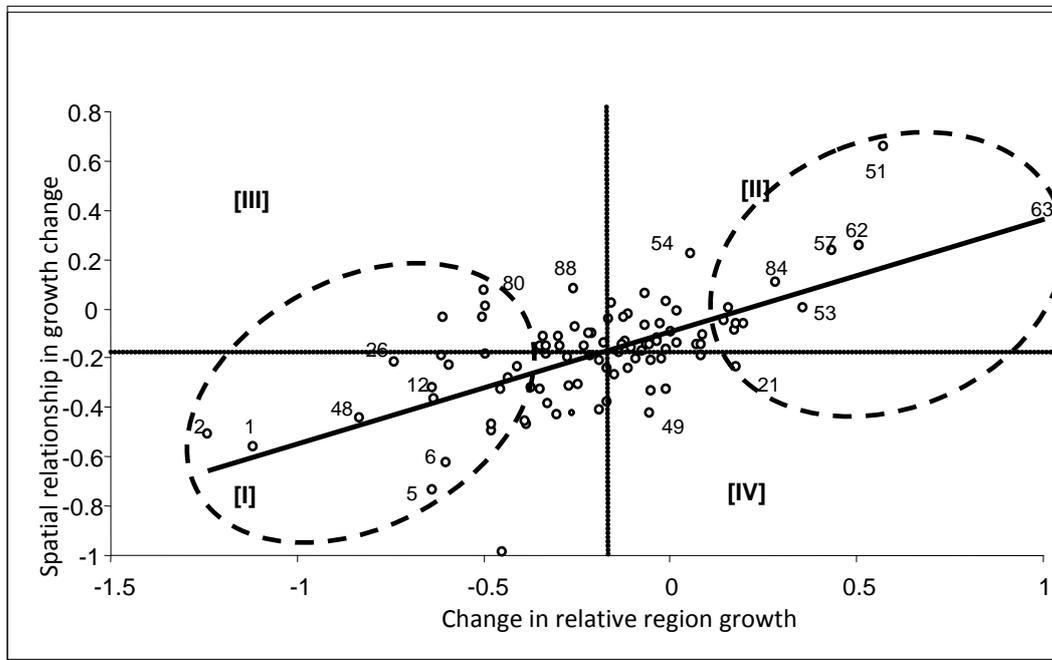
The scatterplot (Anselin 1996) diagram in Figure 1 shows the degree of change over the time period for each region relative to that of its contiguous neighbours. Spatial patterns of high growth (negative values) appear to be occurring around regions in quadrant I: Central Sydney (1), Gosford (2), North Sydney (3), Southern Sydney (5), Western Sydney (6), Southern Melbourne (12) and Wollongong (48) to name just a few, while patterns of poor growth (positive values) are shown in quadrant II: Morewell (63), Moe (62), Sale (57), and Traralgon (51) in particular. Cairns (80) in quadrant III is also interesting, in that it stands out, along with several other hot spot locations with relatively high growth (negative values), in a segment of the scatterplot diagram that otherwise comprises zero/ low-growth regions. Similarly, in this scatterplot diagram Lithgow (49) in quadrant IV stands out as a cold spot, or low-growth region surrounded by rapid-growth regions. This pattern of significant, increasingly distinct and disparate growth clustering of regions is supported by both the G statistic and Lisa statistic (Garlick, *et al* 2007)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Readers wishing to read more detail of the modelling results are referred to Plummer and Taylor 2001b and Garlick *et al* 2007.

Given that there is a divergence of regional growth away from a long-run equilibrium towards a clustering of different growth rates across all regions, it is necessary to identify the significance of the drivers of these less-than-ideal regional growth patterns. From six ‘institutionalist’ or ‘structuralist’ regional development theories, eight hypothesised drivers of this growth have been tested in the Australian situation (Plummer and Taylor 2001a). Only four variables were found to be significant in determining the actual growth disparity between regions in the Australian situation, viz: strength in human capital, technological leadership, industry specialisation and institutional support. However, only the first three were positively significant and the most significant of these was human capital. Regions with a high degree of institutional support and a high and growing level of employment, without a strong concentration of human capital (i.e. low educational experience and level of qualifications) can expect poor growth outcomes. On the other hand, regions that have high and growing concentrations of human capital, technological leadership and industry specialisation and low levels of institutional intervention have good growth prospects.

**Figure 1: Moran scatterplot of relative regional growth 1984 to 2002**



Adapted from Garlick *et al* 2007

What can be concluded is that a combination of growing human capital, visionary technological leadership, industry specialisation and reduced institutional intervention appear to have the potential to generate better growth outcomes if they can be effectively harnessed. Together they suggest the need for an enterprising approach to human capital in regional areas and there has clearly been a flight of human capital from groups of non-metropolitan regions to key metropolitan conurbations,

In the regional development context we define 'enterprising people' as those individuals, or groups of individuals, that take an idea and, using their various capabilities, realise that idea through engaging the supportive regional community milieu (physical, social, economic and cultural). This 'enterprising human capital' idea comes close to the human capability enhancement thesis of Sen and others when applied on a regional scale, but is still not sufficient and needs to be augmented by notions of freedom, ethics and social justice. This will be taken up later through the spatial concept of 'sp-ethics'.

### **The human capital pyramid**

Figure 2 is a schematic portrayal of what might characterise underperforming regions, such as those located in quadrant II of Figure 1. Three perspectives are given. The first, on the left-hand side of Figure 2, shows the traditional development of human capital from a wide platform of basic literacy and numeracy through foundation and vocational skills to technical, creative and higher-level skills at the apex. The second perspective, on the inside of the pyramid, shows the contribution to each of these stages of various learning agencies and the impediments and regional consequences of these impediments that can occur when there is no effective progression through the pyramid.

Progression through the pyramid depends on two factors: (a) consistency in pathways across learning agencies; and (b) 'reaching-out' of the learning process to engage in the reality of the region. When these factors are absent, the region, and the capability of its residents, continues to revert back to a lower state of possibility. The third perspective shows how these attributes either enhance or diminish the human capital capacity of a region through leakages (e.g. 'brain drain', out-commuting etc.) or underutilisation (e.g. underemployment, unproductive ageing etc.). A cluster of regions with a low and declining human capital (e.g. quadrant II in Figure 1) might be expected to be characterised by unemployment, underemployment, out-commuting workforces, 'brain drain', and an unproductive ageing population, as well as unclear learning pathways and limited engagement in regional circumstances. These are the results of unrealised human capability in the region. Those regions with high and growing human capital (e.g. quadrant I in Figure 1) would be expected to have little unemployment and underemployment, a commuting-in workforce, 'brain gain', and an engaged and productive older population, with human capability being realised to a greater degree in these regions.

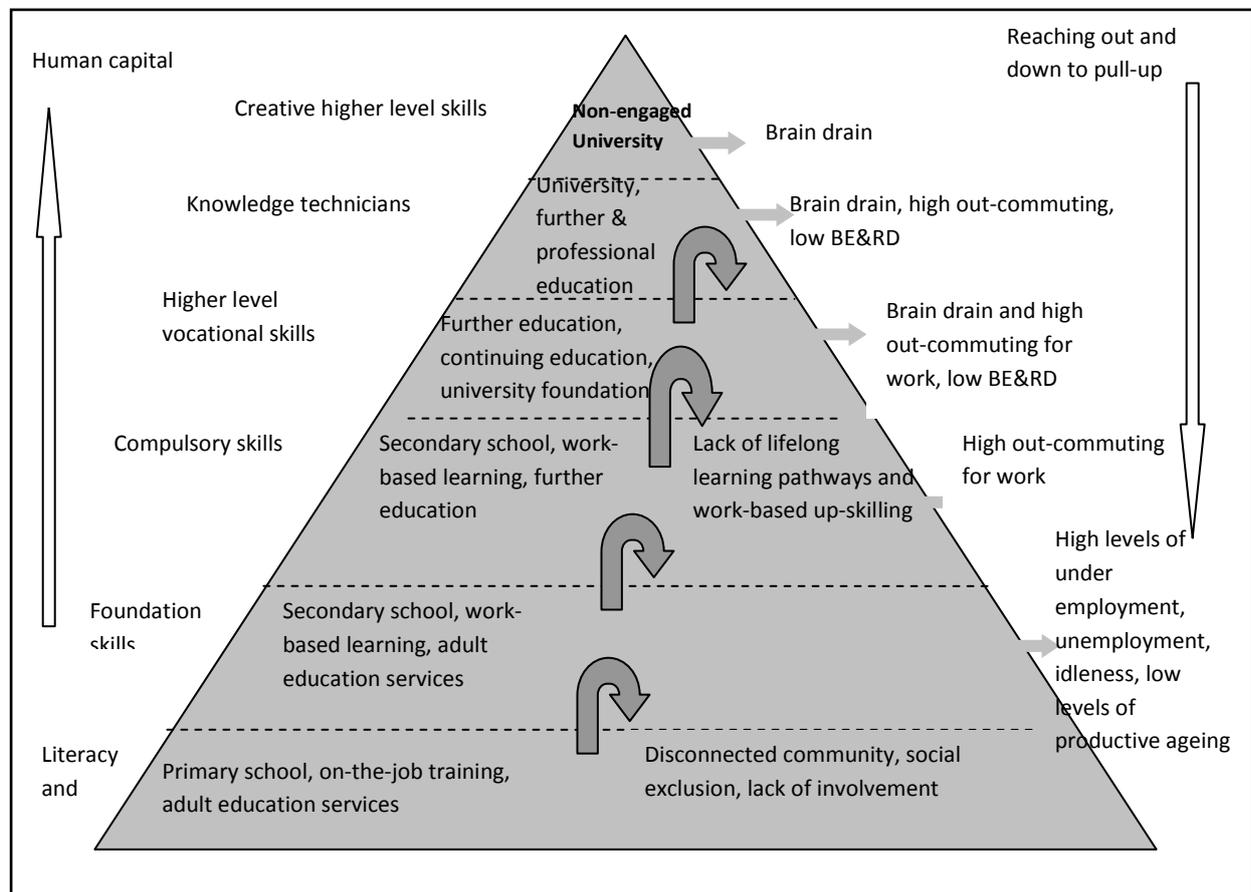
### **Human capability, place and ethics**

Sen (1999) clarifies the distinction between human capital and human capability by reference to the following characteristics: (a) connection to freedom and wellbeing; (b) connection to social justice; and (c) connection to influencing economic production (pp 296-297). He argues that only the third of these characteristics is relevant to human capital.

Central to a capabilities approach is valuing a person's freedom to pursue opportunities that they otherwise might miss because of endogenous skills and cognitive functions (following Gasper 2002, so-called 'S-caps') and exogenous societal and other constraints ('E-caps') which include the effect of social norms and roles, regulations, policies, rules and so on. Together, 'S-caps' and 'E-caps' determine the options available to the individual ('O-caps'). Finally, according to Gasper (2002) the freedom to pursue an 'O-caps' life path based on 'S-caps' and 'E-caps' has to be oriented to what is

‘right’. In other words, there is a moral action (‘M-caps’) based on ethical principles which can be used to weight the various life path options.

**Figure 2: Human capital pyramid and regional progression**



Taken together, the generalised ‘S-caps’, ‘E-caps’ and ‘M-caps’ of Sen’s human capability approach bring us close to the ‘enterprising human capital’ and ‘sp-ethics’ concepts we developed in our earlier work (Garlick and Palmer 2008) as a theoretical underpinning of the way in which higher education might engage with its regional community based on principles of the common good. In this regard it is easy to agree with Lanzi (2004) who argues that human capital both influences and is influenced by capability enhancement

*Sp-ethics refers to the combined interaction of values and principles relevant to local places, the fostering of enterprising human capital based on local needs and identity, and geographically-specific concerns. Sp-ethics evolves through the process and practices of people engaging together within the community, where learning is seen as a two-way street, and the formation of tacit knowledge is valued as equally as that of explicit knowledge... Sp-ethics embodies the sense of ‘a community woven together from sharing and mutual care’ (Bauman 2001, p. 150). More importantly, it acknowledges that the experience of space is fundamental to our identity (Davidson 2000) (Garlick and Palmer 2008: 76).*

This interpretation of enterprising human capital in the spatial context is thus not too far removed from Sen's ideal human capability within a regional engagement framework. However, the question of attachment to place as a moral space (Smith 2001, Bauman 2001), as it influences 'E-caps', might need greater consideration as a means for enhancing capability achievement. For Bauman (1995, 2001), Smith (2001) and Davidson (2000), context is important for learning and engagement in a fragmenting and liquid modern world. In this liquid world, to address the human capital problematic of regions, attention must be directed at fostering and anchoring human capability in ways that form and are informed by the natural, physical, economic, social and cultural distinctiveness of the spatial community.

The work of Heckman is relevant to this discussion on human capability and to human capital stocks and flows in the spatial context. Heckman (2007) argues that epidemiological and neurological studies point to there being 'critical and sensitive periods' in the development of human capability "...where some skills or traits are more readily acquired at certain stages of childhood than other traits." (p 13251) and "The capabilities produced at one stage augment the capabilities attained at later stages." (p 13252). It makes sense therefore that a local or regional environment that offers opportunities to stimulate capabilities (cognitive, non-cognitive, health) at the appropriate ages will have long-lasting beneficial effects. As Heckman reminds us, ability matters and leads to success and achievement in many aspects of economic and social life.

It is likely therefore that a stimulating local environment that generates an attachment to place for normative individuals at critical and sensitive stages of their life will have long-run capability benefits both for them and, as Sen (2009) notes, for groups such as entire communities (pp 246-247).

### **The role of the university and engagement**

Surprisingly, there has as yet been very little research on the application of the capability approach to education (Otto and Zeigler 2009).

In other work we have stated that claims that 'universities are not public goods that require government subsidies... [and that] higher education can be financed privately' (Schwartz 2006, p.3) risk eroding relations between universities and their local communities (Garlick and Palmer 2008). The more a business entity logic underpins the conditions of university funding and operation, the more the relationship between the university and its students and community takes on a utilitarian, fragmented and episodic agenda not unlike that of other business partnerships where there is funding conditionality. There is little moral recognition of the other in these partnerships. Ordinarily this would not be a partnership difficulty, but an engagement relationship between university and region where there is an ethical obligation on behalf of a common good (Boyer 1996, Davidson 2000, Benson and Harkavy 2002) to address community and individual impediments to capabilities and resultant social justice deserves something more.

Following Bauman's (1995) forms of togetherness, business entity-oriented university/ community engagement as an ethic of behaviour becomes more akin to 'being-aside'. The entities partnered with, like the regional communities in which universities are located, are not recognised as being of significance. They are not characterised by the moral ideal, 'being for', where the full ingredients of the person (or community) are seen as precious. Elsewhere we termed the kind of engagement

required in this situation as ‘sp-ethics’ (Garlick and Palmer 2008), where there is an intrinsic mutuality between university and place directed towards an ethical and moral purpose.

Human capital planning and actions that take into account capability enhancement at critical and sensitive stages of life seem like useful initiatives on which universities could take the lead in their engagement with other education sectors and in pathway planning and with the wider communities in which they are located. This would help to address the under-performance and inequities that appear to occur spatially in spite of national growth. Such planning would embrace learning pathways for the youngest of ages to the oldest through established education entities, as well as by reaching out to the wider community and its goals. Figure 3 provides a schematic of the connections implicit in such a plan.

**Figure 3 Schematic human capability plan**

Regional community priority area/ goals/ groups	Higher education	Adult education	Vocational education	Secondary education	Primary education	Pre-school education
<b>Priority A</b> Goal A1 Group A1.1 Group A1.2 etc. Goal A2 etc.	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	←
<b>Priority B</b> Goal B1 Group B1.1 Group B1.2 etc. Goal B2 etc.	↔					
<b>Priority C</b> Goal C1 Group C1.1 Group C1.2 etc. Goal C2 etc.	↔					

## Conclusions

Economic growth in Australia is being accompanied by a widening disparity in spatial economic achievement. Underlying this is a significant under-utilisation and leakage of human capital in many non-metropolitan regions. In earlier work we argued that universities play an important role in contributing practically to the supportive atmospheric milieu of these 'problem regions' in ways that are consistent with the common good, as well as with individual and institutional achievement. We see this engagement through the dual lenses of 'enterprising human capital' and 'sp-ethics'. In this paper, Sen's capability approach has been considered as a tool for addressing this spatial human capital problematic.

The paper draws two conclusions about addressing the human capital problem in the region. First, the capability approach may need to explicitly consider attachment to place as an exogenous mechanism for cognitive and non-cognitive advancement. In this spatial sense it may need to be more explicit about the role of regional agencies associated with learning, such as universities, and the way in which they focus their programs towards capability building by engaging with the distinctiveness of the community context of which they are a part. Second, 'enterprising human capital' and 'sp-ethics', as mechanisms for an ethical approach to learning within the region may need to explicitly consider more closely the role of cognitive and non-cognitive factors, particularly as they relate to young people.

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## **A University-Government Collaboration to Address Community Health Priorities: a Mid-term Evaluation of the Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance.**

*- Kay Mills, Dr Kathryn Von Treuer, Sigrid Miller Johansen, Mr Chris Loughnan*

### **Abstract**

During 2006 and 2007 a Business Plan was developed for the Deakin + DHS Partnership, (now the Deakin/Department of Health/Department of Human Services Strategic Alliance), with the aim of achieving greater university-community engagement. A mid-term evaluation was instigated recognising its potential to inform and guide the implementation of the Business Plan during 2010 and beyond. This case study presents the findings of a qualitative and quantitative mid-term evaluation of the Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance. The study comprised two parts: a mapping activity and survey. The mapping activity measured the strength of the relationships between agencies involved in the Alliance Advisory Groups. Members were also asked to (a) comment on their understanding of, and attitudes towards, the Alliance; (b) rate it according to characteristics of successful partnerships; and (c) rate the overall success of the Alliance and to list barriers and facilitators to partnership functioning in the form of a survey. Some of the main findings were: almost all participants believed that there was a clear need for, and commitment to, the Alliance; and nearly all participants reported that they were still interested in the Alliance. Many participants believed that the Alliance was achieving its aims and objectives. The main barrier to Alliance performance was insufficient resources, while the key facilitators to performance were clear objectives and mutual goals, resources, commitment and support from those involved and the Executive. These findings together with other key Alliance activity during 2009 were catalysts for some significant changes to the Alliance for 2010. The new focus will include strengthening the governance of the Alliance, refreshing and revitalising the Advisory Groups, reviewing key stakeholder engagement in each of the key priority areas, and ensuring better alignment between Alliance activity and regional priorities.

**Keywords:** Partnership, Alliance, Evaluation, University, Government

## Introduction

Increasingly, partnerships are recognised as positively impacting on community health (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). A partnership or alliance can be defined as a working arrangement between partners who are otherwise independent bodies collaborating to achieve a common objective (Audit Commission, 1998). As such, partnerships enable various stakeholders to work together and share relevant resources, risks and rewards, with the aim of implementing strategies to affect health issues of mutual concern (Granner & Sharpe, 2004). Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001) have suggested that partnerships with a high level of 'synergy' are better able to meet targets and are thus more effective. The level of 'synergy' in a partnership is the "extent to which the perspectives, resources, and skills of its participating individuals and organisations contribute to and strengthen the work of the group" (p. 187).

VicHealth (2005a) noted that partnerships may be viewed along an engagement continuum that ranges from informal networking through to formal collaboration, with the latter representing the deepest level of engagement and synergy. This model for the various levels of partnership is depicted below in Figure 1.

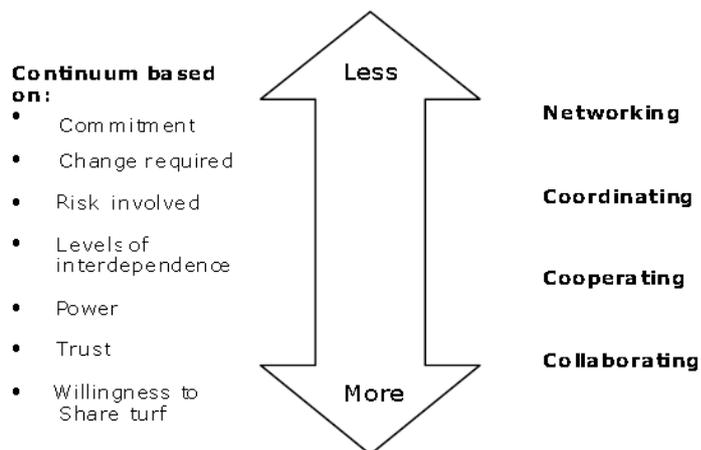


Figure 1: Partnership Continuum (VicHealth, 2005a)

Universities are often identified as having a key partnering role, particularly in developing regional communities, because they are a source of knowledge and ideas that can address issues of importance (e.g., public health concerns) by working closely with the community (Butterworth & Palermo, 2008; Huggins, Jones, & Upton, 2008; Ramaley, 2005). The engaged university is committed to interacting directly with communities through jointly beneficial exchange, examination, and use of the expertise and resources of all those involved (Ramaley, 2005). University Alliances are vital to the representation of a university as an active and engaged member of society and they can also help develop the social and physical infrastructure required to promote healthy and thriving communities (Tsouros, 1998).

It is acknowledged, however, that sustainability can be difficult (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). This may be partly due to the need for greater knowledge concerning the managerial and organisational factors which are necessary for effectiveness (Einberger, Robertson, Garcia, Vuckovic, & Patti, 2000). An effective evaluation may provide accountability to stakeholders, improving strategies,

highlighting community awareness of the partnership, and informs policy decisions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004).

Alliance evaluation should involve an assessment of whether desired targets have been reached (Dowling, Powell, & Glendinning, 2004). However, this poses challenges, as some strategies implemented by Alliances are only realised long-term and are difficult to attribute solely to the work of the Alliance (Dowling, et al., 2004). Much of the research on partnership evaluation has examined their internal functioning (Lasker, et al., 2001; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). This methodology attributes effectiveness to the ability of the Alliance to function as an entity (Pope & Lewis, 2008). Evaluations of this sort have highlighted many factors which may be important for Alliance functioning and hence effectiveness. These include having a clear purpose (Dowling et al., 2004; Pope & Lewis, 2008), appropriate leadership (Dowling et al., 2004; Lasker et al., 2001; Shortell et al., 2002; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), group cohesion (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), trust and respect (Dowling et al., 2004; Lasker et al., 2001), communication (Scott & Thurston, 1997), having good processes, such as those needed to manage conflict (Lasker et al., 2001; Pope & Lewis, 2008; Shortell et al., 2002), good accountability arrangements (Dowling et al., 2004), active and equitable involvement of all partners (Casey, 2008; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), collaboration among member agencies (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), member diversity (Lasker et al., 2001; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), ability to manage size and diversity (Shortell, et al., 2002), sufficient resources including skills and expertise (Lasker et al., 2001), ability to modify resources and assets when necessary to keep up with various changes (Shortell et al., 2002) and strong and formal governance procedures (Lasker et al., 2001; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006).

In a recent evaluation, Pope and Lewis (2008) interviewed 10 Alliances within Victoria and found that having a good facilitator to assist in building relationships within the Alliance, having the right decision-makers involved who are committed, having a clear purpose and good processes, and ensuring motivation through champions (i.e., public figures who endorse the Alliance) and achievement reports, were all important for Alliance success. The authors used information gathered during these interviews to generate network maps. Network analysis can be defined as a method of collecting and analysing data from individuals or organisations that are working together (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005). This network mapping approach enabled the strength of the relationships between those involved in the Alliance to be examined (Pope & Lewis, 2008). It is largely recognised in the literature that network structures and relationship building are important elements of Alliance success, yet few existing self-assessment tools (notably the VicHealth tool) attempt to examine these features (VicHealth, 2005b). This is of concern, because this information can then be fed back to the Alliances to help improve them, by highlighting relationships within the Alliance that require strengthening (Pope & Lewis, 2008).

Deakin University (DU), the Department of Health (DH) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), Barwon-South Western Region (BSWR) identified shared concerns about regional and rural health needs. It was recognised that these organisations could work towards building capacity through establishing an Alliance to meet such needs, sharing the same geographic region, similar academic and professional interests, and working in a shared environment of broader reform. Advisory Groups (AGs) were identified to address objectives in four key areas: Teaching and Workforce Development; Research and Evidence-Based Practice; Health and Well-being/Health and Community Services; and Public Health Forums. This Partnership, originally called the Deakin + DHS

Partnership, is now referred to as the DU/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance (Deakin/Department of Health/Department of Human Services Strategic Alliance) and members of this Alliance also include key partners in the health and human services sectors across the Region.

This research aimed to comprehensively evaluate the DU/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance. While there is some research evaluating partnerships, tools developed for partnership evaluation are lacking (Pope & Lewis, 2008). Therefore, there is a need for empirically grounded evaluation tools, and consequently the evaluation research using well developed measures. Evaluation of the Alliance was completed using knowledge gained from the available literature and various assessment tools, while also being guided by a balanced scorecard framework (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). It is anticipated that the results of the evaluation will contribute to improving the evaluated Alliance and its outcomes.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Eighteen participants responded to the survey. The response rate was 27% and participants consisted of DU, DH and DHS employees. Further, participants were representative of each of the four AGs (i.e., the Research and Evidence-Based Practice AG, Health & Wellbeing AG, Teaching and Workforce Development AG, and Public Health Forum AG) and the Alliance Executive. Of particular note, two-thirds of participants had been involved in the Alliance for less than two years.

### **Materials/Instruments**

The mid-term evaluation consisted of two parts: a mapping exercise and a survey.

The mapping exercise occurred with the AG co-chairs. This exercise was obtained from the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b). The purpose of this exercise was to identify existing relationships, and their strength, between agencies involved in the Alliance. These findings will provide an indication of where particular relationships can be strengthened to benefit the Alliance. All co-chairs provided input and were provided with the opportunity to review and comment on the linkages and relationships identified as part of the mapping exercise.

The second part of the evaluation requested all Alliance members to complete an electronic survey. This survey contained several sections:

*Section A* of the survey obtained **demographic information** from participants.

*Section B* focused on the **importance of partnerships** and consisted of qualitative questions on members' perceptions of the importance of the Alliance. Several of these questions were adapted from the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b).

*Section C* consisted of statements referring to **characteristics of successful Partnerships**. Members were asked to rate the Alliance against each statement to indicate whether such characteristics are evident within the current Alliance. This exercise was obtained from the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b).

*Section D* required members to rate the current **success of the Partnership** and to list both barriers and facilitators to Alliance functioning. The rating scale for current Alliance success was obtained

from the Nuffield Institute for Health's Partnership Assessment Tool (Hardy, Hudson, & Waddington, 2003).

*Section E* of the survey required members to complete a **resource-use** template to highlight where and how time is spent on the Alliance. This template was obtained from Melbourne University's UCan2 Evaluation materials (The University of Melbourne, 2009).

## **Procedure**

Following ethics approval data were collected via interviews (part 1) and a survey (part 2). Advisory Group co-chairs were interviewed, while all Alliance members (including co-chairs) were sent an email containing details of the evaluation and a link to the electronic survey, which also contained the Plain Language Statement and the consent information.

## **Results**

### **Part 1 Mapping Activity**

This activity involved AG co-chairs placing all partners in relation to each other using a mapping technique. Participants then labelled the strength of the relationship between partners as being at one of the following stages: networking, co-ordinating, co-operating and collaborating as previously mentioned in Figure 1. Two examples are displayed in Figure 2 below: the Health and Well-being AG; and the Research and Evidence-Based Practice AG.

### **Health and Well-being Advisory Group**

The network map for the Health and Well-being AG is linked to seven agencies (see Figure 3 below). Almost without exception, the nature of the relationships between these agencies appears to be at the coordinating stage, meaning that co-chairs of this AG believe that the partners are striving towards a common goal and are also exchanging information. Only the relationship between Deakin University and the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) were perceived as being at the networking stage.

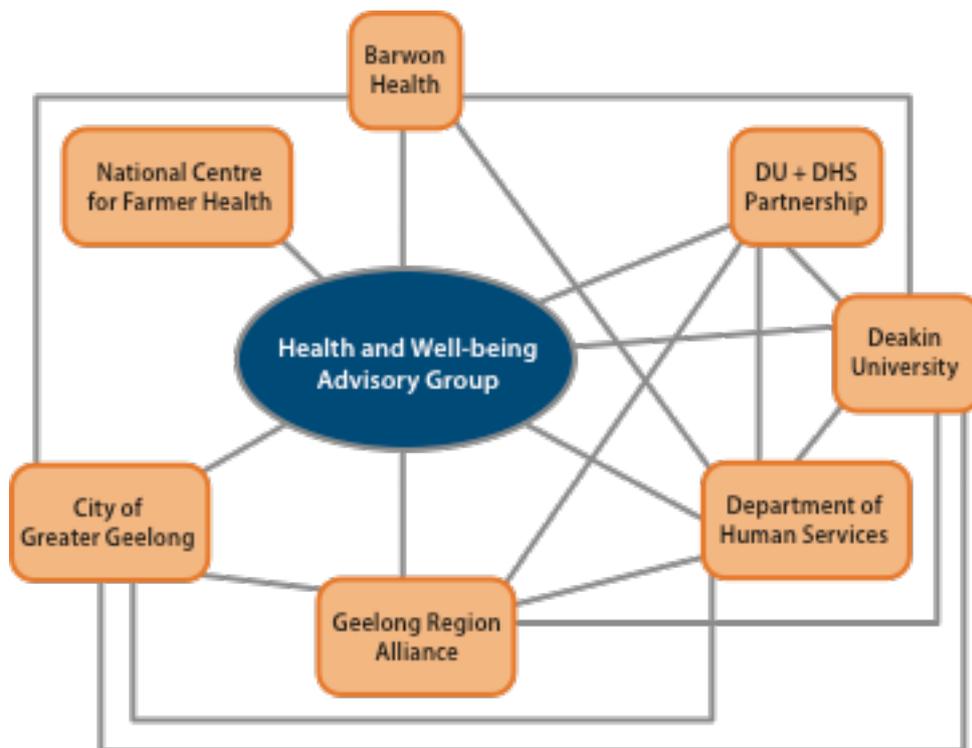


Figure 2: Network Map for the Health and Well-being Advisory Group

#### **Research and Evidence-Based Practice Advisory Group**

A more complex network map was drawn by the co-chairs of the Research and Evidence-Based Practice Advisory Group (refer to Figure 3 below). Surrounding this AG were fourteen agencies, but, similar to the network map described earlier, the strength of the relationships between all agencies was depicted as being at the coordinating stage.

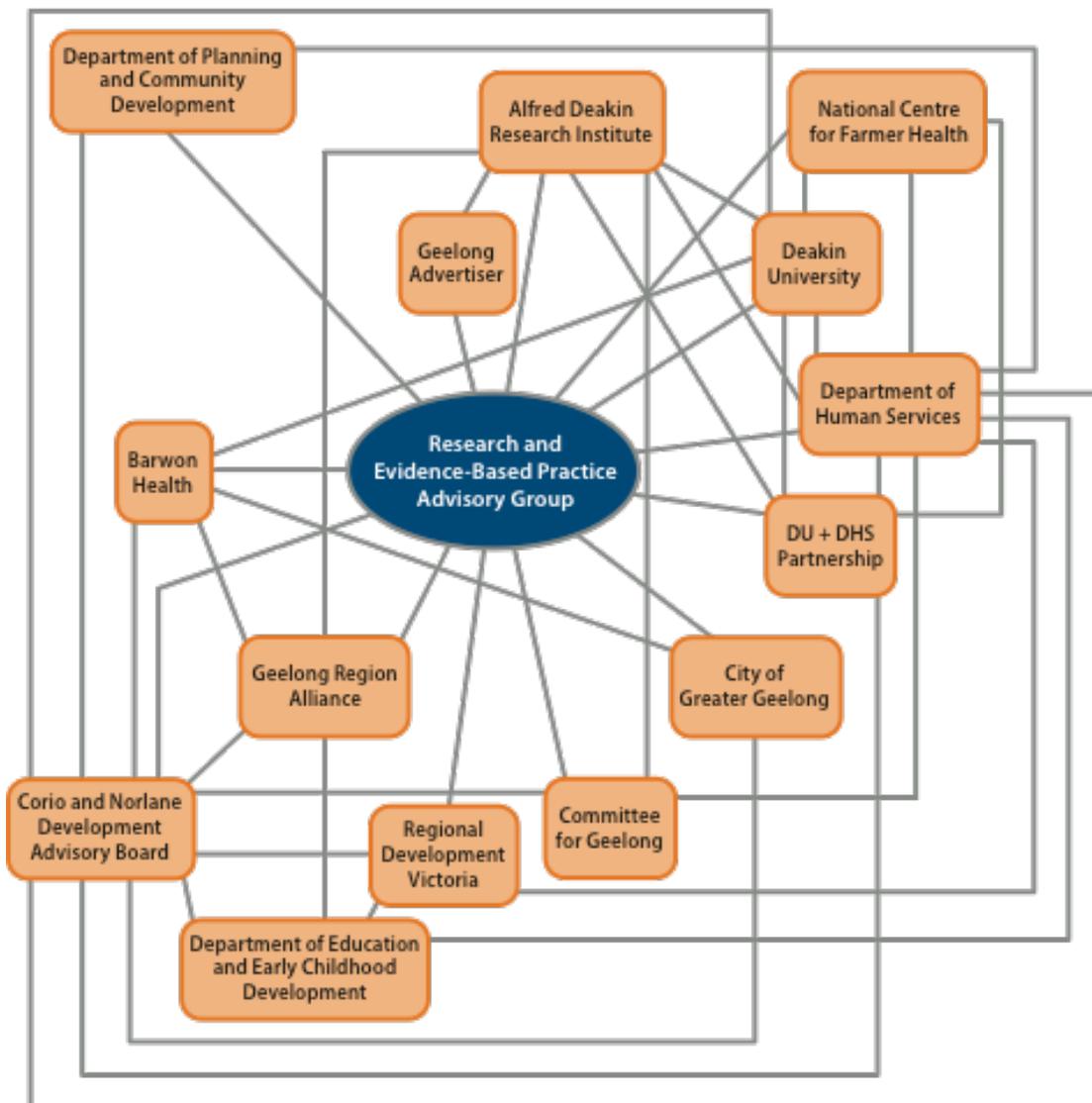


Figure 3: Network Map for the Research and Evidence-Based Practice Advisory Group

## Part 2 Survey

### Section B Importance of the Alliance – Understanding and Attitudes

Analysis of the qualitative data was performed using a ‘thematic content analysis’. In reporting the findings, participants’ direct quotations have been italicised. The percentage of participants who commented on a particular theme is also reported in parentheses to emphasise the relative importance of each theme.

#### Importance of an Advisory Group

Participants were asked to comment on why they feel the AG is necessary. The most frequently reported theme was that AGs were needed to *share information and knowledge* (26%). Several participants also noted that AGs are necessary to *identify priorities* (18%). An equally reported theme was that the AGs are needed to *coordinate research* (18%).

## Benefits of Advisory Groups

Participants also commented on what value they feel that the AGs add to the Alliance and a diverse range of responses were given. The theme most frequently reported was that the AGs acts as a *think tank* for the Alliance, generating *new ideas* and *[honing] in on key issues or areas of need* (26%).

## Overall Importance of the Alliance

By far the most commonly reported theme was that the Alliance is necessary to achieve mutual benefits and to accomplish more than each organisation could achieve independently (53%). The second most frequently reported theme that emerged from the qualitative data was that the Alliance can improve public health awareness and address national health concerns (13%).

## Community Benefits of the Alliance

Several participants responded to the question: *What value does the Alliance add to the community?* The most commonly reported theme on this topic pertained to how the Alliance is having a positive impact on the community via coordinated expertise (36%). In other words, the Alliance is: *Adding value by bringing the best of expertise from both organisations together to build capacity and strengthen activity across the Barwon-South Western Region.*

## Reasons for Alliance Involvement

The most common reason participants stated that they liked to have Alliance involvement (38%) was that they have an interest in the Alliance itself or specific aspects of it. A representative quote was: *The opportunity to be able to provide opportunities that generate mutual benefits and to tap into the rich skills and talents of those involved around the Alliance tables.*

## Current Level of Alliance Interest

Nearly all participants commented that they were still interested in the Alliance (94%). Whilst many of these participants expressed their current level of interest in the Alliance by stating *yes*, some more detailed responses were given: *It is becoming more interesting as it begins to take on a new place in the community and evolves into a transformational entity.*

## Alliance Likes

The collaborative effort was the most frequently reported 'Alliance like'(40%). For example, the potential for collaboration between Deakin, DHS, Gordon and other organisations is extensive and still mainly untapped. The second most frequently mentioned aspect of the Alliance that participants reported liking was the people that they work with (27%).

## Alliance Dislikes

In contrast, participants also identified aspects of the Alliance that they dislike, and their most frequently expressed dislikes related to *insufficient resources*, particularly the *lack of time* (42%). For example, *not enough time to follow through initiatives and meetings where the actions are not clear and lack of time currently dedicated to funding the partnership activity.*

## Alliance Improvements

Only one clear theme emerged on the topic of Alliance improvement. More than half of all participants seemed to feel that more funding, resources and time would help improve the Alliance (54%). Below is a representation of the views expressed by participants on this topic: the *Partnership has more initiatives and possibilities than it has time to implement. More resources would enable this to happen and increase opportunity for community consultation.*

### Section C Characteristics of Successful Alliances

Participants evaluated the Alliance against a series of statements referring to characteristics of successful partnerships to indicate whether such characteristics are apparent within the current Alliance. The characteristics assessed were: *determining the need for the Alliance; choosing partners; making sure Alliances work; planning collaborative action; implementing collaborative action; minimising the barriers to Alliances; and reflecting on and continuing the Alliance.* Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The frequency and type of responses given to individual items are provided in Table 1 below showing frequency and percentages are in parentheses. Furthermore participants were asked for additional comments which are reported below.

Table 1: Summary of quantitative items for Characteristics of successful Partnerships (frequency and percentages)

Question (abridged)	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Determining a need for a Partnership</b>					
There is a perceived need for the Partnership	7 (39)	10 (56)	1 (6)		
The Partnership has clear goals	1 (6)	11 (61)	5 (28)	1 (6)	
There is a shared understanding of goals	3 (17)	9 (50)	5 (28)	1 (6)	
The Partners are willing to share resources	4 (22)	13 (67)	1 (6)	1 (6)	
The perceived benefits outweigh the perceived costs	6 (33)	8 (44)	3 (17)	1 (6)	
<b>Choosing Partners</b>					
The Partners share common ideologies and interests	1 (6)	11 (61)	4 (22)	2 (11)	
Partners see their business as partially interdependent	1 (6)	15 (85)	2 (11)		
There is a history of good relations between partners	3 (17)	12 (67)	3 (17)		

The Partnership brings added prestige to the partners	4 (22)	12 (67)	1 (6)	1 (6)	
There is comprehensive understanding of the issues	2 (11)	10 (56)	5 (28)	1 (6)	
<b>Making sure Partnerships work</b>					
Managers in each organisation support the Partnership	4 (22)	12 (67)	2 (11)		
Partners have the skills for collaborative action	2 (11)	6 (33)	8 (44)	2 (11)	
The expectations of partners are clearly understood	2 (11)	6 (33)	8 (44)	2 (11)	
The communication of the Partnership is simple		14 (78)	2 (11)	1 (6)	1 (6)
There is a level of trust and respect among Partners	2 (11)	12 (67)	4 (22)		
<b>Planning collaborative action</b>					
All partners are involved in planning priorities		14 (78)	3 (17)	1 (6)	
Partners communicating and promote the Alliance	2 (11)	15 (85)	1 (6)		
Some roles cross traditional boundaries btwn agencies	1 (6)	13 (71)	4 (22)		
Lines of communication and expectations are clear		11 (61)	5 (28)	2 (11)	
There is adequate and appropriate communication		13 (71)	3 (17)	2 (11)	
Participatory decision-making that is inclusive	1 (6)	11 (61)	5 (28)		1 (6)
<b>Implementing collaborative action</b>					
Appropriate investment of time, personnel & materials		6 (33)	5 (28)	7 (39)	
Reciprocity btwn agencies is rewarded by management	2 (11)	11 (61)	5 (28)		
There are regular opportunities for contact	3 (17)	12 (67)	3 (17)		
<b>Minimising the Barriers to Partnership</b>					

Differences in priorities and goals are addressed		8 (44)	8 (44)	2 (11)	
A core group continued for the life of the Partnership	2 (11)	10 (56)	3 (17)	2 (11)	1 (6)
There are informal ways of sharing information	1 (6)	14 (78)	3 (17)		
There are strategies so alternative views are expressed	2 (11)	7 (39)	8 (44)	1 (6)	
<b>Reflecting on and continuing the Partnership</b>					
There are processes that recognise group achievements		11 (61)	7 (39)		
The Partnership demonstrates outcomes	3 (17)	10 (56)	4 (22)	1 (6)	
There is commitment to continuing the collaboration	4 (22)	13 (71)	1 (6)		
There are resources to continue the Partnership		8 (44)	6 (33)	4 (22)	
There is a way of reviewing/removing partners	1 (6)	7 (39)	9 (50)	1 (6)	

Overall there appears to be general consensus among participants that (a) there is a need for the Alliance and (b) the partners are willing to share resources, knowledge and power to fulfil their goals (see Table 1). The progress that the Alliance is making was also commented on: *As Advisory Group meetings have progressed, participants have developed clearer priorities and identified wider areas for Partnership collaboration and engagement.*

As Table 1 highlights, the majority of participants agree that: the partners view their business as being partially interdependent; the partners have good relations; and the Alliance brings added prestige to all players.

There was general consensus among participants that: the managers (i.e., the Alliance Executive) support the Alliance; the Partners have the skills needed to collaborate effectively; the communication and decision-making in the Alliance is as simple as possible; and that trust and respect exist between partners. However, almost half of all participants seem to be unsure whether the roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly defined and understood by other partners.

Although almost one-third of participants were unsure whether the lines of communication and the roles of partners were clear and whether there was an accountable and participatory decision-making system in place, generally, participants agreed with the above-mentioned items which assessed effective planning of collaborative action.

There seemed to be general agreement among participants that the Alliance is adding value for the community and those involved and that there are opportunities for regular, informal contact between members of the Alliance. Implementation of collaborative action was identified as an

*important aspect of our success*, but would rely on the need for additional resources as has been requested across other areas of this survey.

The Alliance seems to have informal ways of sharing information and resolving conflict because 84% of participants either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* with this statement. Approximately two thirds of the participants agreed that there was a core group of committed members that has continued over the life of the Alliance.

Almost all of the participants surveyed (95%) believed that there was a clear need for, and commitment to, the Alliance. There was the greatest variation in assessing the adequacy of the Alliance resources, with 35% and 24% of participants responding *Not Sure* and *Disagree* to this item respectively. The availability of resources seemed to be of concern for many Alliance members, with one participant commenting: *Sufficient resources remain a concern for both organisations*.

#### **Section D Current Success of the Alliance**

In order to assess the Alliance's current success, participants were asked to rate on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) the extent to which they agreed with the statement: *The Alliance is achieving its aims and objectives*. Of the 18 participants surveyed, the majority of participants (84%) agreed with this statement.

In questioning the barriers to the success of the Alliance, two-thirds of participants identified the need for more resources as a barrier to Alliance performance.

A similar question asked participants about the key facilitators to Alliance performance. The most frequently reported response that emerged was the importance of having *clear objectives*, common agendas and mutual goals (36%). Quotes given by participants on this topic included: *Clarity of purpose and intent*, and *Common agendas that we are excited and passionate about, which deliver clear wins for both partners*. Interestingly, having *sufficient resources* in terms of staff, time and funding was mentioned by almost a third of participants as a key facilitator. Commitment and support from those involved in the Alliance were also identified as being important to Alliance performance. One-fifth of participants had also mentioned facilitators and a quote included: *Support and leadership from senior management and entrepreneurial and proactive Alliance staff*. Another equally reported theme (21%) that emerged as being important to the Alliance's success was *the coordinators employed by the partners and the Alliance*.

#### **Section E Time Spent on the Alliance (Resource use)**

Participants were asked to provide an approximation of their time spent (in whole hours) on the Alliance in the last three months by recording their activities under five broad categories. These categories included: *general activities*, *Alliance development and maintenance*, *program development*, *program delivery* and *other resources*.

*General Activities* referred to time spent on general administration and day to day activities, including preparing for and attending meetings, phone calls, travel time, emails. Almost three-quarters of participants (72%) undertook these activities as part of their Alliance involvement. However, the amount of time that participants spent on these activities ranged from 0.5 hours to 236 hours.

Thirty-one percent of participants spent less than 10 hours or greater than 120 hours on these general activities in the three-month period immediately prior to data collection. It is important to note however, that this latter group most likely comprises participants for whom this Alliance represents 100% of time allocated to their role, that is, staff employed by the Alliance. Moreover, 27% of participants reported spending little time on general activities ( $\leq 10$  hours) and no time on other Alliance activities in the same three-month period.

Also, participants overall are spending far more time on general activities than other types of activities, see Figure 4 below.

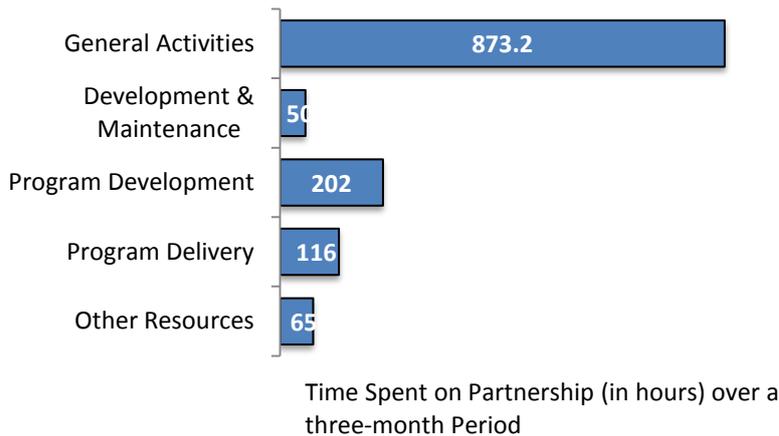


Figure 4: Participants’ Combined Number of Hours Spent on the Alliance across the Five Broad Categories

## DISCUSSION

The evaluation of Partnerships can be challenging. Nonetheless this multi-pronged approach to evaluation served to collect robust and comprehensive information to assist the Alliance in moving forward after 2010. All aspects of this evaluation were found to be useful for planning the next stage of the Business Plan.

Whilst almost all of the participants stated that they believe the Alliance is achieving its aims and objectives, there were some key areas identified from this evaluation that will form the basis of further Alliance development during 2010, taking the Alliance into the next phase and supporting deeper levels of engagement.

Several key facilitators of Alliance performance were identified including: the need for clear objectives and a common purpose; sufficient resources; commitment and support from those involved including the Executive team; and good communication. In terms of implementing collaborative action, members agreed that Alliance action was adding value to the community and those involved in the Alliance, and that there were regular opportunities for voluntary and informal contact within the Alliance.

The response rate in the current study was 27%. Whilst this represents just under a third of the Alliance’s base of core members, almost one third of the core Alliance members have not attended an AG over the last two years and consequently have not been extensively involved in the Alliance.

The majority of people initially became involved in the Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance as they had an interest in partnerships and nearly all participants surveyed stated that they were still interested in the Alliance. Moreover, partnership likes commonly reported included the collaborative effort and the people involved (i.e., Alliance members). At the launch of the Business Plan, individuals were invited to join the specific AGs and some members joined later or were co-opted specifically. At the time of the evaluation, there had been no formal review of the membership base of each AG.

Barriers to performance were noted by half of all participants, two-thirds of whom identified the lack of resources as a barrier. This was consistent with the most frequently reported Alliance dislike, insufficient resources. These findings supported anecdotal concerns of the Alliance Team during 2009. Alliance activity increased together with a marked increase in the frequency of AG meetings (generating agendas for action), during a period of staffing changes, resulting in an escalating workload for the existing staff members. Resources are a fundamental aspect of Alliance functioning that is likely to influence the success of an Alliance (Lasker, et al., 2001).

The results of the mapping activity indicated that the AGs are currently functioning at the coordinating level (i.e., involving sharing of information and altering activities to achieve mutual goals). This is not surprising, given that the Alliance is still developing and was only revitalised in 2007. Consequently, the Alliance's perceived level of engagement appears to be in line with its current stage of development. The next level of engagement (i.e., coordinating) requires a significant amount of time and lack of time was a frequently mentioned concern amongst Alliance members.

Lack of time, together with insufficient resources, was also cited as a frequent dislike. One of the frequent challenges has been to realistically scope and respond to the emerging issues and the work generated by each of the AGs. The need for further investment of resources and a more sustainable match of activity to the existing resource base have been key areas for discussion during 2009 and 2010 and will continue to be priorities.

The Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance (BSWR) is unique in Victoria and advice has been sought from other Victorian (DH) regions interested in developing similar models of engagement. Knowledge about the process and outcomes of reshaping and redeveloping this Alliance will be of great value as we take an introspective look at this Alliance and also to other communities considering similar models of engagement.

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## Engaging Pre-Tertiary Students with Low English Literacy Using Online Technologies - *Dr John Guenther, Paula Johnson*

### Abstract

UTAS has for a number of years offered people without adequate tertiary entry requirements a preparatory program (called UPP, or University Preparation Program) that facilitates entry into a number of undergraduate courses. A large proportion of students participating in UPP come from a family background where study at university is not the norm. On the north-west coast of Tasmania, where UPP was first offered in 1996, the proportion of people with tertiary qualifications is about half the national average and this is reflected in low year 12 retention levels. More recently, in the south of the State, a number of students entering UPP come from refugee backgrounds where English is spoken as another language (typically third or fourth). Both cohorts of students when confronted with distance learning face many challenges as they struggle to come to terms with academic culture. Once they are engaged in their learning, they tend to continue on and complete. If they fail to engage early on in their UPP studies, they tend to drop out fairly quickly. While there have been many success stories from UPP, the critics point to high attrition rates—typically in the order of 50 per cent.

Many students are attracted by the flexibility—among a number of reasons—inherent in online course delivery. For this group of students though, engagement processes must be intentional, supportive and understanding of their individual (sometimes traumatic) backgrounds. For engagement to occur, teaching and learning resources and practices must be of a high standard. The authors of this paper pose the question: ‘Is an improvement in online teaching and learning resources and strategies linked to increased engagement, and does this then lead to improved retention?’. The paper reports on findings of a trial conducted in 2009, designed to test a number of online teaching and learning approaches as a response to these questions.

The results of the trial suggest that carefully chosen resources will work to engage low English literacy students. However, the resources must be backed up with flexible, responsive and understandable support as well as teaching and learning strategies designed to connect students with each other and with tutors so that the learning is both interactive and human. The findings suggest that there is a need for a more intentional online teaching and learning strategy and the need for built in evaluation to gather evidence about what works best. The project team in UPP have developed an implementation plan to further extend the trial to other units within UPP. An evaluation framework has also been developed. The intent of the team is to increase the quality of the online learning experience for all students but, significantly for the group of students who struggle the most, deliver teaching and learning in an environment that encourages success.

The paper describes the trial and its findings and goes on to discuss the learnings that have emerged. It considers implications for UPP and UTAS more generally, as it attempts to attract, engage and more importantly retain students from culturally diverse and low English literacy backgrounds.

## Introduction

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) University Preparation Program (UPP) acts as a bridging program for students who either do not meet the requirements for entry into undergraduate programs at the university or who are exploring options for university study and are trying to find out whether they are capable of doing this. A large number of the students come from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), many as migrants or refugees from non-English speaking countries. Others' experiences of learning at secondary school were not enjoyable. Many struggle with English language, literacy and numeracy. Many are mature age learners who have not engaged in formal education for an extended period of time. Students are sometimes offered UPP as an option after not being accepted into undergraduate programs. While many students do go on to succeed with undergraduate (and in some cases post-graduate) studies, attrition rates are typically in the order of 50 per cent. Those who drop out early often fail to engage with the learning resources or with lecturers. While all units are offered in attending mode (usually at the Cradle Coast or Hobart campuses of the University) a majority of students enrol in non-attending or distance mode. It is this cohort which is of most concern to UPP lecturers.

The authors of this paper pose the question: 'Is an improvement in online teaching and learning resources and strategies linked to increased engagement, and does this then lead to improved retention?'. Responses to this question are based on a trial conducted during Semester 2 of 2009 to determine how lecturers can better engage learners in an online learning environment and to find out which among a range of resources available to University of Tasmania (UTAS) teaching staff could prove useful in engaging students in the cohorts described above. The trial was conducted in a range of units including: a) a general introduction to tertiary studies called *Study Skills*; b) an introduction to communication, critical thinking and group work skills called *Communication Skills*; c) a pre-tertiary numeracy program called *Bridging Maths*; and d) an academic writing unit called *Written Communication Skills*.

## Literature

### Rationale for e-learning

One of the key reasons that students choose to use e-learning as a means of formal study is because of the flexibility it offers: students can use online resources when they want, where they want and at times that they choose (Brennan 2003; Choy et al. 2003; Misko et al. 2005). Learners who enjoy the flexibility of the online learning environment may also have a predisposition to being self-directed and self managed. Learners must be 'comfortable with e-learning' in the sense that they must be ready to access materials on the Internet and be prepared to collaborate online (Smith et al. 2003). However, flexibility does not equate to quality. Of critical importance to the learning process is active engagement of learners. Ivancevich et al. (2009:199), citing a number of researchers, assert: 'learning is more effective and retention is higher if learners (students) are actively engaged in the process rather than being passive listeners'. Based on a sample of more than 300 Australian university students, Smith (2005) suggests that:

*‘willingness to engage with others through electronic communication and a preference towards self-managed learning represent at least two important learner dispositional characteristics that may predict success’ with collaborative online learning’. (p. 5)*

If it is true that students who engage with each other and with their lecturers in an online learning environment are more likely to achieve successful outcomes then an important factor contributing to successful outcomes for students will be the ability of the learning environment to facilitate engagement. If there is nothing for students to engage with, then they will surely not engage. The embedded assumption in this of course is that it is the lecturer’s responsibility ‘to organize online interactions that are sufficiently structured to benefit students’ learning’ (Tallent-Runnels et al. 2006:101).

### **Use of e-learning in universities**

Universities are increasingly reliant on online delivery methods among a mix of teaching and learning strategies—sometimes referred to as ‘multi-modal’ (see Table 3). Higher education data produced by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) support a view that increases in multiple modes are increasing ‘largely as a result of the adoption of on-line teaching methods’ (Smith et al. 2006:79).

**Table 3. Modes of delivery for students in Australian Universities 2003-2007**

<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Change, 2004-2008</b>
Internal	754,828	761,969	786,697	828,183	857,510	13.6%
External	137,465	133,697	132,413	130,277	132,300	-3.8%
Multi-modal	52,684	61,510	64,951	71,386	76,285	44.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>944,977</b>	<b>957,176</b>	<b>984,061</b>	<b>1,029,846</b>	<b>1,066,095</b>	<b>12.8%</b>

Source: Department of Education Science and Training 2006; Department Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2008; Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009 (selected higher education statistics)

While the data presented here points to an increasing uptake of online learning by students and universities, questions still remain about whether these technologies are producing better outcomes for students (Hosie et al. 2005).

### **Quality, content and learning communities**

Herrington et al. (2001) explain that resources should be organised in ways that make them accessible; their age should be appropriate for the subject matter; they should represent a rich variety of perspectives; they should be suitable for the intended purpose; and they should demonstrate social, cultural and gender inclusivity. Using this framework Hosie et al. (2005) suggest that ‘inclusion of quality online resources ensures that material content is current and accessible to a wide range of online learners’ (p. 545). Routine external evaluation should guide the ongoing development of quality online teaching and learning practice, including the ability of the learning management system to be able to satisfy the learning needs of students and the teaching needs of

lecturers. According to Palloff and Pratt (2009), a focus of such evaluation should be formative as well as summative so that 'instructors can receive ongoing answers... as the course is in session and can adjust as necessary to ensure outcome achievement, rather than finding out at the end that activities were not as successful as hoped' (p. 50).

In his discussion of the theory of online learning Anderson (2008) points to a number of factors that could be seen as quality attributes of an online learning environment. These include a range of attributes related to content, such as assessments, but also a mix of flexible learning spaces that offer the possibility of engagement through a 'learning community'. He states:

*The challenge of online learning is to provide very high quantity and quality of assessment, while maintaining student interest and commitment—something that is often best done by developing a learning community...(p. 51)*

He acknowledges however, that the idea of learning community—whether built around synchronous or asynchronous technology—impinges on students primary motivation for distance learning, that of flexibility. Other studies suggest similarly that for some students the interaction offered by a virtual learning community does not parallel or satisfy the need for face to face contact between lecturers and students (LaPointe and Reisetter 2008).

### **Support**

Support, in the context of student learners is sometimes interpreted as lecturer support rather than support from a centralised help desk. That is, students are looking for responsive feedback and help from their lecturers. Kilpatrick and Bound (2003:191) comment that 'Support of student learning involves far more than supporting students through difficulties in overcoming hardware or the operation of software'. The online learning environment creates an expectation of immediate response akin to the idea of '24/7' online support that might be available at some commercial sites. Cashion and Palmieri (2003:75) comment on this issue: '[Students] are disappointed if they do not receive responses when they need help, and they have no concept of waiting their turn as they would in class'. In another study, Choy et al. (2003:114) found that '[t]eachers were expected to provide advice, directions and feedback on a regular basis'. This does not suggest that there is not a need for 'IT help desk' support, but after ironing out basic problems, students have an expectation that their lecturer will be there to support them.

### **UPP context**

Analysis of data from UPP courses from Semester 1 and 2 show withdrawal and failure rates of as much as 54 per cent (see

Table 4). The table understates the extent of withdrawals and failures as a number of students will withdraw post census date.

**Table 4. UPP student fails and withdrawals 2009, selected units.**

<b>Students 2009 to August 13</b>	<b>Study Skills</b>	<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>Bridging Maths</b>
Enrolled	113	62	151
Withdrawn/failed	61	18	72
Per cent withdrawn/failed	54.0%	29.0%	47.7%

## **Findings**

### **Findings from resource trials**

A number of online learning resources were trialled during semester 2 of 2009—some in the context of the learning environment. Other tools were tested by staff separate from the online learning environment. This section briefly describes the resources that were trialled. Reference is made to 'MyLO', the University's electronic Learning Management System, which is built on a Blackboard web interface.

#### **Online journals**

As a way of encouraging engagement in critical reflection using an online medium, students in Study Skills were tasked to make regular entries into the MyLO based journal as part of their assessable work.

#### **Online calendars**

One of the important aspects of the UPP program is the development of personal organisation and time management skills. In the past students in Study Skills have been tasked to prepare hand-written diaries for assessment. During 2009, use of the MyLO calendar feature was trialled as an alternative to hand-written diaries. The reasoning behind this was that by students needing to use the calendar within the online learning environment they should then be able to engage with other elements of MyLO (such as discussions and other electronic resources).

#### **Video and audio resources**

Students in Study Skills and Communication Skills were provided with one to two minute weekly downloadable topic video introductions by their lecturer. The purpose of these introductions was to put a human face to the otherwise impersonal set of resources and to encourage contact with the lecturer.

Students in Bridging Maths were offered audio recordings of lectures to supplement web based and text-based resources. The purpose of these resources was to offer students who prefer auditory learning styles a supplement to resources otherwise available.

#### **Illuminate Live!**

Lecturers involved in the online project held regular meetings using Illuminate Live! to test features and to ascertain whether the web-based collaboration tool was sufficiently accessible for students

and lecturers. The Elluminate trials were conducted on campus and home-based computers. Some of the features proved difficult to use on campus-based computers owing to University restrictions.

### **Pebblepad/e-portfolios**

The use of e-portfolios as a way of gathering and storing evidence of work is encouraged in Study Skills. Documents prepared for an e-portfolio are far more flexible than hard-copy documents and can incorporate a range of multimedia resources. For students with English literacy difficulties, electronic portfolios offered a way of presenting their knowledge without the need for high levels of written language skills.

### **Findings from teaching and learning trials**

Within the teaching and learning environment, attempts were made to test out different approaches to improving engagement between students and staff in the online learning environment. These are outlined below.

### **Group work assessment tasks**

An important part of any learning environment is the interaction that occurs between students. While this interaction has typically been a part of attending mode classroom settings, in UPP at least, it has not been a feature of the e-learning environment. A new feature of Communication Skills was the introduction of group tasks and assessments including a debate and a tutorial presentation. While there was some trial and error in implementing these, it proved valuable from an engagement point of view. Students reported that the online interaction was useful and that it gave them reason to connect with other students.

### **Interactive real time text based tutorials**

An emphasis on group work and negotiated learning requires a reasonably responsive and flexible online tutorial arrangement. What we found was that participation in online tutorials is fairly limited if it is not assessed. In Semester 1, 2010 we again trialled the use of the MyLO web chat facility. Some students found this difficult to access because of missing plugins and others found it difficult to follow the thread of a conversation when many people were actively contributing to the discussion—which poses a particular problem for those who have limited English literacy. However, we believe that, as a tool for engaging students in the online environment, the tool did work well.

### **Discussion groups**

Discussion boards have for some time been used as a means of engaging students in an online environment. UPP students do not tend to engage in online discussions (especially attending mode students), if they are not required to. Discussion boards have also tended to be based around individual work tasks. One of the trials in Communication Skills centred on group tasks (a debate), where distance students were allocated a group and then were asked to negotiate within that group using the discussion board about who was going to engage in the for or against team. They were then able to present their debate using a sequenced set of postings (for-against-for-against etc.). A similar strategy was used for the equivalent of a group presentation as an alternative to a class-based tutorial presentation.

## **Electronic presentations**

Class-based presentations are a feature of many UPP units. Offering ways for distance students to present electronically has been difficult, which is in part why Elluminate was trialled. However, modelled on the examples of introductory videos offered by lecturers, distance students are now asking about different ways in which they can present electronically. One student from New South Wales presented a DVD video presentation in Study Skills, which was shown to an attending mode class group and critiqued in much the same way as an in-class presentation. Other electronic media are being promoted (such as real-time Skype-based video conferences and YouTube presentations).

## **Online availability of staff for student consultations**

Staff have in the past typically been allocated time for student consultation during office hours. As noted in the literature, flexibility is a key reason for students to learn by distance. They certainly do not have the time to attend campus-based consultations and sometimes are not able to call a lecturer during office hours. For this reason, students in Communication Skills and Study Skills were offered individual consultations by appointment outside office hours, either by phone or some other electronic medium such as Skype/MSN messenger or other internet-based tool. Students were also encouraged to ask for call-backs from their lecturers using text messaging. Several students took up these offers for flexible consultations.

## **Learnings**

### **Overcoming technology barriers prior to engagement**

What we find with UPP students is that a high proportion will have limited technology abilities. Further, their access to technology in terms of computer hardware, software and internet is a major constraint to their ability to engage in an online learning environment. Therefore it is imperative that technology barriers are overcome early in their learning experience. Some of these barriers are systemic and relate to the online learning environment. Other barriers relate to teaching and learning practice. For example, what appears to be a common sense instruction and taken for granted by the technology savvy student may be totally foreign to a student with low levels of English literacy or for that matter low levels of information technology literacy. Whatever the cause, if these barriers remain, they will confound students in their attempt to engage. We recognise that pursuing rich media content in teaching and learning practice can alienate some students—potentially causing them to disengage.

### **Engagement: lecturers and students**

On entry into the program, UPP students are often unsure of their abilities and whether they have the capacity to succeed at university. We have found that having contact with lecturers at the start of semester makes the experience less daunting and is instrumental in empowering students to seek help when they need it. Typically the students who attended orientation sessions, or who had individual contact with lecturers (in person or by telephone) in the first couple of weeks of semester, have a much higher rate of ongoing online engagement. These students not only regularly access online resources, they attend online tutorials and have regular online contact with lecturers. They are also more likely to engage with other students using the discussion boards and text based chat rooms and form the online communities advocated by Anderson (2008), but our experience suggests

that the significant factor in successfully engaging students in online activities is ensuring that there is some form of human contact at the beginning of their studies.

### **Text-based technology constraints**

One of the benefits of conducting text-based online tutorials is that once the system is accessed, it is a relatively straightforward interface for inputting text and it has the advantage of mirroring a number of other text-based technologies which students may already be familiar with, such as SMS and MSN. Unfortunately, being text reliant also creates a number of difficulties. Few UPP students have touch-typing skills and many are unfamiliar with keyboard layout. It then takes a considerable amount of time for them to type in messages in text based learning environments and while they are focused on typing, they may miss other comments and questions. This can lead to a disjointed thread, with frequent repetitions and a lack of authentic conversational flow. Students suggest that this makes it difficult to keep up and one student, for example commented on the complicated nature of text based chat and the difficulty of understanding what was going on. This is a significant issue given that one of our primary goals was to provide appropriate support for students with low literacy levels.

One solution is to use software that does not require the students to type such as the Elluminate Live! software previously trialled by lecturers. The software allows both voice and video communication, but due to the technical difficulties experienced by lecturers when accessing Elluminate Live! on campus and because UPP has a cohort of students with varying levels of computer literacy, we felt that it would not be suitable to rely on it as a primary method of online communication. However, ongoing improvements with both the software and level of support available, have enabled us to begin trials with a group of volunteer students in semester 1 2010, with the aim of developing the necessary support material for students to use the software with confidence.

### **NESB students**

The NESB students enrolled in UPP are from varied cultural backgrounds and age groups, including a number who have participated in the Tasmanian secondary school system. We found that while there is no significant difference in their levels of technology usage from those of UPP students who speak English as a first language, they are much more likely to engage in asynchronous online activities such as the discussion boards than they are in synchronous ones such as the text-based chat sessions.

Where high levels of engagement were demonstrated there was also some form of face-to-face contact. For example, on-campus study groups were formed specifically to participate in the discussion board debate activity previously mentioned, and students electing to give presentations to peers in tutorials rather than presenting the information online. These choices are likely to be influenced by culture as much as by language, but they demonstrate that face-to-face contact is required as a necessary component for NESB students.

### **Multimedia as a 'way in' to learning for low literacy students**

Our experiences with multimedia in the trial showed a degree of acceptance among UPP students—at least those who were able to access the resources. Some students have reported that watching a

video is a simple way of coming to grips with the learning resources that they are to access for the week. Others suggest that multimedia presentations involving audio and/or video can be a useful adjunct to their learning experience. Further, in terms of engagement, they enjoy 'seeing' the person they would otherwise have contact with only by phone or email. It makes them see the lecturer as a real person and therefore increases their propensity to engage in their learning. We also recognise that an over-reliance on multimedia presentations will ultimately disengage students.

### **Online teaching takes time and requires flexibility on the part of staff**

The trial re-affirmed to us that online teaching is not a shortcut way to teach and it does not save time compared to face to face delivery. In our real-time online engagement with students we deliberately set up sessions that are out of usual class time—typically on a Saturday morning or a week night after 7:30 p.m. We respond to emails and phone calls whenever we reasonably can. This is not time we save elsewhere—rather it is an added impost. However we recognise that if we want to engage distance students then we must be flexible in our response to them. The literature discussed earlier (see for example Choy et al. 2003; Anderson 2008), confirms the need for a flexible response to student expectations.

This flexibility however, has implications for resourcing. Not all lecturers are willing to spend their Saturday mornings or Thursday evenings attending to students in a web chat—especially when they are not remunerated for this additional effort. Remuneration is only one part of the resourcing issue. In order for staff to work this way it may require that resources are made available to staff (such as laptops, internet access, web cams and a host of other office resources that would normally be made available at the institutional office). This could be costly and many institutions would balk at this as unnecessary expenditure. However, the reality is that—and this is based on our experience—if we are to do online teaching well, we must offer at least a component of flexible teaching time.

### **Quality assurance and engagement**

One of the unanticipated problems we observed with feedback from students related to the issue of quality and consistency. Students noted that other units did not have the same range of learning resources and engagement opportunities. This has created an expectation that all units should be upgraded to at least an equivalent standard. And while (as we note below) it is our intention to raise the bar of quality within UPP we cannot guarantee quality across the whole University.

### **Principles for practice**

Notwithstanding the above discussion, we recognise that if UPP is to stand out as a program of excellence, supporting an alternative university entry pathway for low literacy students, it will require the adoption of a range of quality teaching and learning practices. To this end it is envisaged that by 2011, all UPP teaching staff will be able to adopt principles underpinning good practice for engagement of learners in an online learning environment. These principles include:

The resources must be readily accessible to students and staff (in terms of information technology literacy) with minimal or no cost/time burdens to either;

The resources and practices must enhance engagement in learning with a view to reducing attrition and increasing retention of students;

Where possible the resources should encourage students to strive for better academic learning outcomes with a view to being better prepared for tertiary study;

Where possible, teaching and learning strategies should be applied within the MyLO learning environment;

New resources should be used by staff with appropriate levels of expertise to teach in online learning environments; and

Effective use of resources and teaching and learning strategies will not aim to result in increased efficiencies of staff time.

### **Ongoing evaluation**

One of the outputs of the trial conducted in 2009 was a draft evaluation framework document, which among other things identified expected outcomes from the implementation and development of strategies trialled. The evaluation framework suggests a mixed methods approach with formative and summative elements that respond to three evaluation questions:

What elements of online delivery are demonstrated to work effectively for students and why?

What are the implications of adopting the proposed online learning strategies for course design?

What are the implications for teaching and learning practice?

Embedded within these questions is an assumption that evaluation tools should measure a) student perceptions of quality; b) student retention; c) student engagement; and d) quality in teaching and learning practice.

### **Conclusions**

Having considered the findings of the UPP trial we now return to the question we posed in the Introduction. 'Is an improvement in online teaching and learning resources and strategies linked to increased engagement, and does this then lead to improved retention?' In terms of the first part of the question we can categorically say that our experiments with a range of teaching and learning resources has indeed increased engagement with distance students—including those with low levels of English literacy. This has to some extent been mediated by an expanded and more focused use of technology in teaching and learning practice. However, it is perhaps more the product of adapting good practice in teaching and learning to the online environment. For those students from NESB backgrounds use of visual multimedia made a difference to their ability to *access* the learning resources. On the other hand, the requirement to contribute to online learning environments that incorporated text-based responses somewhat inhibited their ability to engage. To a large extent however, these issues were ameliorated by face-to-face contact with UPP tutors and lecturers.

The second part of the question is yet to be determined. Ongoing evaluation of the 2010 cohort will shed light on this question. While we are confident that teaching and learning practice has improved we are acutely aware of the range of factors that contribute to student retention. Many students who come to UPP with good intentions of completing are forced to withdraw because of the

complexities of the lives they lead—we acknowledge that for many students coming to university involves a degree of self-sacrifice. We note that sometimes bridging the gap into university is an unrealistic expectation, regardless of the attempts we make as lecturers to support and engage them in their studies. We who are lecturers in UPP are, however, committed to making that transition as easy as we can by providing a learning environment that is rich and engaging.

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**Partnership: Engaging for Health: Medicine in Context as a Case Study in Engaged Teaching and Learning for Students in Medicine – *Dr Louella McCarthy, Alison Jones, Neville Yeomans, Hilary Bambrick, Fiona Pacey, Jay Ramanathan, Tim Wills***

Paper in Spring Journal

## **Bittersweet Impacts of a Sugar Mill's Closure: Partnerships and Processes in Using University Research to Inform Planning and Management Around a Complex Regional Issue – *Dr Anne Roiko, Bonita Hafey, Bill Allen, Susie Chapman, Sharon Hall***

Key individuals can make or break engagement initiatives. Even where formal mechanisms exist to facilitate engagement and collaboration across organisational boundaries, the desired outcomes are unlikely to be achieved without the critical and timely input of key individuals. This is one of the key findings of the reflective analysis reported on in this paper, built around a university-led research study that examined the impacts of a sugar mill closure on the health and well being of cane growing families. Rather than focussing solely on the outcomes of the research, it highlights informal and formal engagement mechanisms that both pre and post date it. Through the lens of social network theory, this paper discusses the ways in which such mechanisms were utilised and the lessons that can be learnt in the management of university-community engagement.

**Keywords:** university engagement, structural adjustment, sugar-cane, health and well-being, networks

### **Introduction**

Building and maintaining relationships takes time. Relationships between universities and regional bodies built around issues of regional significance are no exception to this rule. A number of studies have been conducted into the involvement of universities in assessing and, where possible, ameliorating the impact of industry closures on regions. These include studies based on the Newcastle Steelworks Closure (Pond et al 2006), structural adjustment in Western Australian agriculture (Allison & Hobbs 2004) and the community response to an automobile plant closure (Beer & Cooper 2007). The study by Beer and Cooper (2007) highlights the fact that while studies into university-region relationships often report on 'success stories', their own experience suggests that there is often a 'less than perfect fit' between universities and regional institutions. They make particular mention of relationships with regional development bodies, speculating that 'poor working relationships between regional development bodies and universities are probably more common in Australia and some other developed nations than effective working relationships.' (Beer & Cooper 2007, 1081) They suggest two reasons for this: First, that the impact of universities is spread across regional, national and international communities of interest rather than concentrated at the local. Second, that there is no dedicated funding stream for regional engagement in Australia as there is for universities in the United Kingdom and Land Grant universities in the United States. Unlike Beer and Cooper's analysis, this paper emphasises the role of individuals in the engagement process rather than focussing on institutional and government policy dimensions.

### **Engagement in the lead up to the research study**

In 2003, the Moreton sugar mill located at Nambour on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, closed, removing the primary market for cane growers in the region. The decision to close the sugar mill was made on the basis of an assessment of financial viability made by Finasucre, the new owners of the Mill's parent company, Bundaberg Sugar Limited. Those growers who had not already

diversified by that time operated relatively small farms, a factor that limited their alternatives in the face of the mill's closure. There were quite a number of engagement initiatives involving government agencies, industry lobby groups and emergent community organisations that followed the Mill's closure and these are outlined briefly below to present the context for the University's engagement with this issue.

Maroochy Shire Council (amalgamated to form Sunshine Coast Regional Council in 2008) responded by sponsoring the Cane Futures Project, which brought together cane growers, rural producers, representatives of the three tiers of government and the broader community to try to find a sustainable solution to the problems posed by the closure of Moreton Mill. At that point, approximately 13,000 hectares of land had been designated in the Maroochy Plan 2000 as a 'Sustainable Cane Lands' precinct, which represented the majority of the affected cane land. Subsequently, the Australian Government announced their revised Sugar Industry Reform Program (SIRP) in April 2004, a component of which was the Regional and Community Projects (RCP) fund of \$75M over three years for regional initiatives and industry adjustment projects to facilitate change in regional sugar industries.

The SIRP established a series of Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) to develop and implement regionally based initiatives. The RAG (South) commenced operation in August 2004 and developed a strategic plan for each of the three mill areas in the region – Rocky Point, Maryborough, and Moreton, which was released in August 2005. The Chair of the RAG was also the Chair of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee (SCACC), and included in its membership a representative of Natural Resource Management (NRM) SEQ, an organisation which later became SEQ Catchments. It is perhaps unfortunate that the RAG South and its plans post dated the closure of the Moreton Mill. Also in 2004, the Australian Government funded a number of positions of Sugar Executive Officer (SEO) to provide executive support to and work with the RAGs on their strategic plans, including applications for assistance under the Regional and Community Projects fund (RCP). The Committee of Management of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee (SCACC) administered the contract for the SEO for the Moreton Region. The membership of the Committee of Management of the SCACC included an individual who held subsequently the position of Director of Regional Engagement at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

The strategic plan for Moreton area was based on the premise that a sugar based industry in the region was not viable, and explored options around a small level of sugar production (some for stock feed developed in conjunction with BioCane Limited), combined with diversification strategies into alternative crops or livestock. In August 2006, CSIRO produced a report entitled Future use of Sunshine Coast Cane Landscapes, which was developed to inform land use planning by all stakeholders. This report was funded by a grant secured under the Natural Heritage Trust's Regional Competitive Grant Scheme secured by the NRM SEQ (now SEQ Catchments).

The CSIRO report did not address social aspects of the Mill closure. In particular, it did not address the impact of the Mill's closure on the health and wellbeing of the cane growers and their families, yet there was an expressed need by the Sunshine Coast Caneland Action Group (SCCAG) for this to be addressed explicitly. SCCAG emerged following the delivery of the CSIRO report in an attempt to put forward a case to the Queensland Government's Office of Urban Management (OUM) seeking a review of the SEQ Regional Plan's designation of the cane land. SCAGG included caneland owners,

developers, Maroochy Landcare members, and local land owners in other industries. It was this group that approached SEQ Catchments and the University of the Sunshine Coast to design and undertake a research study on the impacts of the Mill's closure on the health and wellbeing of the cane growers and their families. This study was funded jointly by the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee (SCACC) and SEQ Catchments, and was undertaken in collaboration with the SCSAG. The research study was initiated in early 2007 and completed in November 2007(see next section). A copy of the research study was forwarded to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in 2009, while they were compiling the Canelands Position Paper and the Sunshine Coast Rural Action Plan. Unfortunately, the research study was not acknowledged as informing these two key strategic documents.

### **Engagement around the research study and its findings**

The initiation, design and conduct of the empirical research reported in this paper were built on the earlier collaboration and partnerships that had emerged both around and within the University. A key figure in engagement leading up to the conduct of the research (a staff member of SEQ Catchments) also became central to the planning of the research. It was this individual who sought out and invited a public health researcher from USC to the meeting where the CSIRO report on the future of the canelands was being released. The researcher had previously been drawn into informal discussions about the issue on several occasions over a period of approximately six months. During this time, the researcher had also identified a prospective honours student who was looking for a research topic. The student was also invited to the meeting above and it was through discussions held there that firmer plans were made for a research project to be carried out to characterise the impacts of the Mill's closure on the health and well-being of cane-growing families.

A highly participatory approach was adopted for the research. A series of meetings were held in the planning stage of the project with representatives from a number of regional stakeholder groups including the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), SEQ Catchments, Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee (SCACC), Sunshine Coast Caneland Action Group (SCAGG), Biocane Limited, the RAG (South), Lifeline, the Sunshine Coast Cane Growers Association and Maroochy Landcare. At first, the group meeting was small and those attending agreed on the value of establishing a formal Project Reference Group. Additional members from the groups mentioned above were nominated in a 'snow-ball' fashion. With approval from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, and with the informed consent of all participants, these planning meetings became a formal part of the data-gathering process and were tape recorded. The taped discussions were then analysed between meetings to inform each subsequent step in the research.

The input of the Project Reference Group members into the design and implementation of research was both necessary and invaluable. In the first instance, they provided valuable data in their own right about the real or expected conditions that many of the cane-growers were facing. Several of the participants were cane-growers themselves who had experienced the dramatic downturn in the industry following the closure of the Moreton Mill in Nambour. Others had close connections to the affected cohort of farmers and had considerable knowledge about features of the group as a whole. As the meetings continued they became a forum where theoretical constructs of health and wellbeing were discussed and related to the issue at hand. This group guided the design and development of the primary data gathering instrument, a questionnaire, through agreeing on the

key themes to be canvassed, debating how various psychometric scales could be incorporated into the survey and significantly, contributing to the construction of a unique tool to gauge the 'highs and lows' of cane growers wellbeing across a decade. In addition, group members provided access to participants in the empirical research through the provision of mailing lists, and through informal advice as to how to approach the conduct of the questionnaire. The tenuous nature of the situation was illustrated by this good will being withdrawn for some time because of disputes within one of the main organisations, the representative of which was part of the Project Advisory Group.

The second, more quantitative phase of the research involved conducting an interviewer administered community survey targeting all adult members of families that were growing cane prior to the mill's closure. This survey aimed to measure levels of self reported health and well being, levels of stress, depression and anxiety (Antony et al. 1998), in addition to a range of constructs adapted from the Environmental Distress Scale and measures of individual and financial resilience (Conner et al. 2004). Through consultation with the Project Reference Group it was suggested that it would be better to administer the health and well being survey face-to face with the project participants. This was largely due to the nature of the issues at hand being very personal. The participants completed the survey in a comfortable environment of their own choice. This process, in turn, permitted the researcher to listen and observe the participants. The qualitative data from the surveys were analyzed within the NVIVO 7 software package whereas the quantitative data generated through the closed-ended response questions were summarised and analysed to explore associations between key variables using SPSS Version 14.0.

### **Results of Data Analysis**

The Moreton Mill closure both directly and indirectly affected a cross section of the Sunshine Coast community, as well as the economy of the area (RAG South, 2005). Furthermore, without an income and with little financial assistance from the government, the majority of sugarcane farmers lacked the resources to conduct minimal maintenance on their properties. Therefore the cane lands in this region began to degrade and lose their visual appeal, as well as harboring weeds, dingoes, pigs, foxes, rats and other vermin (McDonald et al 2006). These factors combined with the loss of income have a significant effect on the growers' lifestyles. The Mill's closure is embedded within a hierarchy of broader contexts including the plans for regional development and growth on the Coast, population growth in South East Queensland, and industry restructuring both nationally and internationally including changing land uses and the ability to grow alternative crops in the area.

Out of a potential 130 cane farming families that were farming at the time of the closure, 30 individuals participated in the survey. Key findings from both the qualitative and quantitative sections of the study revealed that those surveyed had below average levels of self reported health along with high levels of felt impact and 'solastalgia'. Self reported health was measured using the SF 8, an international instrument that is used in over 30 countries to measure eight dimensions of self reported health (Ware et al. 2001). For the purpose of this study the Australian Normative values for the standardized scores were used. These data showed that more than half of the participants had significantly lower scores than they should have for their age and gender for four of the 8 scales (role emotional, social functioning, vitality, bodily pain), and the physical summary score. Many of these participants were still farming or working on a farm in the region. Factors such as lack of community consultation and depression exacerbated the impact of the Mill's closure and others

such as conferred resilience and family support mediated the impact. In turn, the experiences of the farmers appear to have impacted on their levels of place attachment. The key findings were as follows:

- 38% of participants registered 'solastalgia' (a profound sense of loss as their familiar surrounding landscape becomes degraded)
- 76.9% agreed that "family support at the time of the closure helped me to cope"
- 69% agreed that their "financial situation at the time of the closure helped them to cope"
- 76.9% strongly agreed that they felt distress over the exclusion from the sustainability grant
- 85% agreed that the community was divided over the mill's closure
- 70% disagreed that the 2005 SEQ regional plan would achieve sustainable rural land use.
- 50% agreed that there were positive future prospects for the cane lands
- 75% of those interviewed utilised four or more strategies to engage with the issue (eg submission of responses to proposed development applications, discussion with family, public meetings and forums, involvement with stakeholder groups).

The results of a mapping exercise where participants rated their relative perceived well-being in relation to key events associated with the mill's closure are shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1** - Relative perceived well-being of participants in relation to key events associated with the Moreton Mill's closure

These results indicate clearly that most of these significant events left the participants feeling worse than they did normally. Of these twelve events, the mill's actual closure had the greatest impact on well-being, followed by the exclusion from the sustainability grant and release of the South East Queensland regional plan.

So how did the research benefit the community? In stakeholder discussions leading up to the commissioning of the research and as reflected in the ethics application, it was anticipated that the study might yield significant benefits to the region, including community empowerment and the opportunity to inform decision making both within the region and in other cane regions across the State. It was actually quite difficult to evaluate against such expectations. There were some clear benefits in that a number of participants reported that their direct involvement in the research project was cathartic. On the other hand, the outcomes did not appear to influence policy decisions around the cane lands following the research. Although a copy of the thesis was presented to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in 2009 for their consideration in the development of their *Canelands Position Paper* and *Sunshine Coast Rural Action Plan*, the research findings were not referred to in either of these two strategic documents. The actual referral process was informal in nature and was made by the key individual from SEQ Catchments who sent a copy to the relevant Council Officer, who was highly supportive. Subsequently, a new staff member within Council took over the two strategic documents and there was a shift in emphasis.

### **Analysing processes of engagement**

The research on which this paper is based is an interesting example of how regional policy issues are shepherded into the research domain. This cycle is, however, only completed effectively when the outcomes of research are brought forward to inform policy and decision making. Given that the research is relatively recent, the majority of the key players around regional development and sustainability are still working within the region and with each other, although some of them hold different positions. In looking at the mechanisms of engagement around the mill's closure, what becomes immediately obvious is the importance of key individuals in connecting people with issues across organisational boundaries. In this situation there was one key individual who was instrumental in building lasting relationships in support of collaboration around the issue over a period of many years, before and after the research was conducted. There was another individual too, who played a role in influencing the decision to approach USC to conduct this research and this is discussed. There are distinctive traits of researchers too, who choose to become actively engaged with regional issues. It is the traits of and mechanisms used by such individuals that are examined further here.

Network studies have been reported extensively in the management literature as a means of tracking the impact of relationships between actors, whether they are individuals, work units, or organisations. From a network perspective, each of these actors is embedded in a series of networks of interconnected relationships that either facilitate or impede particular behaviours and outcomes. A network is simply a set of nodes and ties, the nodes representing actors and the ties representing relationships or the lack thereof. This approach has been used to study strategic alliances, collaborative initiatives, flows of information and communication, friendship based alliances, and influence, as well as overlapping group memberships (eg boards of directors).

Over the last decade in particular, social network analysis has been applied to inter organisational responses to so called 'wicked' problems such as poverty, health and educational inequities, and climate change, which 'defy efforts to delineate their boundaries and to identify their causes' (Rittel and Webber 1973, 167) and which have therefore been targeted for multi disciplinary and multi agency responses. These studies have raised a number of key questions about how organisational structure, forms of governance, and ultimately individuals contribute to the sustainable resolution of complex problems. According to Bardach (1998), positive outcomes will be achieved and sustained as a result of the determination and creativity of practitioner and managers, otherwise known as 'purposive practitioners'. These purposive practitioners have been called by many, sometimes quite inventive, names – 'networker, broker, collaborator, cupid, civic entrepreneur, boundroid, sparkplug, collabronaut and boundary spanner' (Williams 2002, 107) – although it is the final term, boundary spanner, that seems to have gained the most traction.

Boundary spanners are individuals who manage across either intra or inter organisational boundaries. Some are employed in jobs that mandate participation in collaborative exchanges (eg engagement practitioners) and others adopt the role informally (and are not always acknowledged for their efforts). This particular case study highlights the importance of boundary spanners of both types. Even a cursory network analysis around the closure of the Moreton Mill identifies a staff member of SEQ Catchments as linking central connectors in several inter organisational stakeholder networks, thus making her a very effective boundary spanner. Indeed, it seems likely that, without this individual, the right links would not have been made to allow the USC research to take place.

In the period during which the research was undertaken, only one job designated boundary spanner existed in any of the stakeholder agencies. That individual was employed by USC and held the position of inaugural Director of Regional Engagement. She also held a position on the Committee of Management of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee, an appointment which, interestingly enough was not *ex officio*. Although her job role was identified expressly as a boundary spanner, her appointment to an advantage in that role was her lengthy service as the senior officer in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. This advantage was further heightened by the clearly articulated vision of the University's CEO of an engaged institution. This vision was and continues to be made clear in the University's Mission, which is currently: *"To be the major catalyst for the innovative and sustainable economic, cultural and educational advancement of the region, through the pursuit of international standards in teaching, research and engagement"*.

Not everyone in an organization is able or willing to take on such a role and, according to Williams (2002), the literature is neither definitive nor extensive as to why. A range of analyses has been conducted, which can be largely categorised as personality based or cognitive in nature. Given that trait theories in general have been found to be poor predictors of behaviour, this has given rise to an alternative approach that stresses cognitive styles and processes (Brunas-Wagstaff 1998). This approach includes theories that postulate that, in the current environment of increasing resource scarcity within organisations, boundary spanners are quick to recognise and capitalise on the advantages of effective collaboration. From this perspective, the development of particular skill sets (eg reticulist, networking, and communication skills) coupled with a clear understanding of the values, perspectives and power relationships of other individuals and their organisations facilitate and maybe even encourage boundary spanning activity. Thus we see descriptions of boundary

spanners as 'entrepreneurs of power' (Degeling 1995), 'civic entrepreneurs' (Leadbeater & Goss 1998), and 'cultural brokers' (Trevillion 1991).

The creation of job designated boundary spanning positions (eg the position of Director of Regional Engagement at the University of the Sunshine Coast) lends support to the notion that organizations are prepared to facilitate and recognise the potential inherent to harnessing boundary spanning activity. Logic would also suggest and the literature has borne out the supposition that trust is a key factor that influences the nature and outcomes of inter organisational relationships, and is thus critical to the success of boundary spanning activity. Vangen and Huxham (1998) have found that positive outcomes reinforce trust and increase the chance that partners will re engage and have positive expectations about future joint actions. In this instance, feedback from members of the Executive Committee of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee revealed that their past experience in dealing with USC (through their member employed by the University) had made them comfortable in approaching the University to commission the research.

As Cross and Prusak (2002), organisational life is not always kind to boundary spanners, who tend to spend a lot of time developing their external networks. If this activity is not valued by their organisation, it may well be detrimental to their career prospects. In this particular case, both the job tasked and informal boundary spanners agreed that their work is rarely recognised when successful outcomes are celebrated and that this was a source of dissatisfaction and stress. In a similar vein, where their role was recognised, they reported that it was difficult to quantify (prove) the degree to which a successful outcome was dependent on their boundary spanning activities. This then became an issue in performance appraisal and promotion.

As outlined by Meadows et al. (2004), designated boundary spanners are exposed to levels of stress and tension beyond that experienced by other positions within an organisation (Sumrall & Sebastianelli 1999). This includes task characteristics and job demands, role characteristics, interpersonal conditions and relationships, organisational structure, climate and information flow and career development (Liou 1994). There is ,however, another category of stress specific to boundary spanners that is relevant to this particular case and this relates to stressors arising from the representative duties undertaken by boundary spanners (including the necessity to communicate effectively under pressure) and the consequences of the actions or philosophies of external parties (eg ignoring requests for information) that inhibit role performance. These two issues – job satisfaction and stress – might therefore warrant special consideration when applied to boundary spanners, assuming of course that this activity is valued within an organization. When managing a boundary spanner, a number of factors arise in the literature that might help create a supportive environment:

1. Making clear that the activity is valued, both inside and outside the organisation
2. Recognising that trust is built up over time and supporting the boundary spanner in facilitating a positive outcome for external stakeholders (this includes supporting them in co opting other members of staff)
3. Being willing to recognise that creating and maintaining networks takes time and that it will always be difficult to quantify the degree to which the boundary spanner's activities contributed to a successful engagement outcome

4. Facilitating work arrangements that allow boundary spanners to deal more effectively with stressors (e.g. flexible working hours that recognise often extensive out of hours networking).

The second set out conclusions deriving from this research project concerns the degree to which intra and inter organisational mechanisms assist in taking forward the outcomes of research into the decision making and policy domains. In this particular case, there was no clear regional mechanism for achieving this. The researchers presented the research report in the form of an honour's thesis and distributed it to several key stakeholders directly involved in the research. The graduating honours student then went on to take up employment. It was the boundary spanner from SEQ Catchments who maintained engagement with the issue and took it upon herself to share the research report with colleagues throughout her various networks.

From the University's point of view, there were at that time no clear means of bringing forward research findings for discussion either at an institutional or at a regional level. This may be explained in part by the emphasis within academe on certain types of research outputs such as peer-reviewed publications rather than policy outcomes of research. In the case of USC, it is significant to note, however, that the University's academic promotion policy was the first in Australia to include engagement as a criterion for promotion. At this point, there is limited evidence on how this decision has impacted on the motivations of academic staff.

Garlick and Langworthy (2002, 19) point out that, for universities, 'developing meaningful regional relationships and embedding engagement activities into the core business of the university is a challenging task'. Building and maintaining relationships takes time and is often not rewarded or recognised (eg through academic promotion), and even where a university has a strategic focus on engagement, the way this is put into practice is often project by project, which approach may appear fragmented to external stakeholders.

Since the research was completed, a number of mechanisms have been put in place by regional stakeholders and the University with a view to fostering increased utilisation of research in regional planning and decision making. From a regional point of view, the most important formal mechanism is the Compact. After many unsuccessful attempts, the Compact provides a mechanism through which key stakeholders work together to identify and coordinate a whole of region approach to strategy and projects in economic development and employment. The Compact group, which is a high level group led by the CEO of Sunshine Coast Regional Council, provides a regular opportunity for the University to:

- Bring forward research in support of decision making and policy development
- Identify new projects on the basis of the outcomes of research and
- Identify during the conduct of Projects where research can and should be commissioned.

Within the University, a number of mechanisms have been established to strengthen the link between research and the region. First and foremost, the Office of Regional Engagement has been expanded and placed under the stewardship of a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional Engagement). This has provided a strong message to academic staff that regional engagement is valued within the institution, and that it is viewed as an academic discipline in its own right. Another internal mechanism has been the establishment of the Coast Research Database, which is accessible from

the University's corporate website, and which provides open access to the research output of the University. In addition, a database of all research projects and consultancies with regional partners and/or regional outcomes is maintained within the Office of Teaching and Research Services and shared with the Office of Regional Engagement. A third initiative has been the establishment of USC Link, which provides a single point of access to link regional stakeholders seeking research or consultancy support with the appropriate USC staff. This service is run by the Office of Regional Engagement and supported by a network of senior academics from each faculty.

This process of formalising elements of engagement at USC by no means assumes that informal networks will cease to exist and be useful. Indeed, one of the explicit roles of staff in the Office of Regional Engagement is to make links with these informal networks and especially with boundary spanners in those networks with a view to linking them to external networks.

In summary, this reflective analysis of a small-scale research project based around a regional issue led to a much deeper analysis of both the formal and informal mechanisms of communication and collaboration between various types of stakeholder groups. It became clear that key individuals, boundary spanners, can make or break engagement initiatives. Two other points arose from an examination of the engagement processes around this particular research project. First, unpredictable or sub-optimal outcomes can result where there is a vacuum (by virtue of the lack of formal engagement processes) and informal networks are relied on completely. Second, in the same way that key individuals are critical to effective engagement, others with their own agenda can hijack and compromise the effectiveness of both informal and formal networks.

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## **Active Launceston - University Partnerships for Healthy and Active Communities - *Stuart Auckland, Lucy Marshall***

**Key words: Partnerships, physical activity, social connectivity**

### **Abstract**

Active Launceston is a community driven project aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Launceston through increased participation in physical activity. The project comprises a number of physical activity programs which target the greater Launceston population of approximately 100,000 people. Physical activity can play a key role in the prevention and management of many chronic health conditions whilst also having a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing, social connectedness, enhancing community safety and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions through active transport options such as walking and cycling (Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, 2008a). The higher level of chronic conditions that are suffered by Tasmanians in comparison to populations in other States and Territories in Australia highlights the importance of the Active Launceston community engagement initiative (Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, 2007).

A recent report into physical activity in Tasmania concluded that the most successful physical activity promotion strategy for the State of Tasmania is one that incorporates many sectors, including education, and one that adopts a number of concurrent approaches that also link with nutrition and mental health and enhance overall health and wellbeing (Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, 2008b).

This paper reports on the Active Launceston project which was piloted in Launceston between June 2008 and November 2009. The University of Tasmania (UTAS) played a leading role in the implementation of the pilot project. Central to the University's interest in Active Launceston is reflected in its overall mission to provide leadership within its community, thereby contributing to the cultural, economic and social development of Tasmania. Community engagement and partnerships are key cornerstones of the University's strategic development as defined within EDGE2, the University of Tasmania Strategic Plan for 2008-2010. It is within the context of its strengthening partnerships while deepening the level of engagement with communities that the University of Tasmania aligns its interests in the Active Launceston project. The Active Launceston partnership comprises support from community partners the Launceston City Council and Sport and Recreation, Tasmania. The diversity of partners provides a wide range of opportunities to reach target groups and encourages innovation and exchange of ideas among partner institutions (Matsudo, 2003). The University of Tasmania has provided the perfect home for Active Launceston, with support from numerous faculties/schools and students providing specialised input from several disciplines and professions including health and physical education, epidemiology, behavioural science and community development. Importantly, Active Launceston has enabled the development of a strong connection to the community in a non political environment. Since its inception in 2008 Active Launceston has developed an excellent reputation and a highly recognisable community identity.

The case study examines the role of UTAS in a community based physical activity partnership by drawing on the experiences of the recently completed Active Launceston pilot project. It explores

the role of University community engagement (UCE) beyond the more traditional domains of teaching, research and evaluation to that of community leadership. In particular, the paper considers the impact of the partnership on the project partners including the challenges and opportunities in strategically assisting/partnering with programs such as Active Launceston to further build the capacity of communities to bring about behavioural change toward physical activity. The study examines the sustainability of such collaborations and the extent to which they successfully align themselves with the UCE agenda.

## **Introduction**

“Over the last decade there has been increasing evidence supporting active lifestyles as one of the best investments for individual and community health. This has led to a global movement to promote more active communities” (Bauman et al., 2002).

The impacts of sedentary lifestyles in terms of individual and community health and wellbeing have been well documented as has the inverse relationship between activity levels and chronic disease (Sparling et al., 2000a). This point has particular pertinence in Tasmania where levels of chronic conditions suffered by Tasmanians in comparison to populations in other States and Territories in Australia are significantly higher across a range of conditions (Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, 2007). Tasmania also has the second lowest participation rate in physical activities compared with other States (Sport and Recreation Tasmania, 2005). Such research suggests that there is a clear need for innovative interventions to address physical inactivity and the importance of adopting a social ecological approach which addresses behaviour change at multiple levels (Brittain, 2006). The promotion of physical activity has long been advocated as a population “best buy” in terms of reducing chronic disease and enhancing physical and mental health outcomes (Steele, 2005). Historically, the impetus for increasing recognition and adoption of physical activity for health promotion has occurred largely through non-governmental groups such as private, academic and sports organisations (Sparling et al., 2000b). In most cases these groups have worked independently with little evidence of inter-sectoral collaboration. The success of the Active Launceston initiative can be largely attributed to the operation of the partnership between UTAS, the Launceston City Council and Sport and Recreation, Tasmania. Kilpatrick et al., 2008 defines partnerships as interactive, collaborative processes for working together in order to identify goals and develop processes for realising them.

## **Active Launceston**

Active Launceston is a community driven project aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Launceston through increased participation in physical activity. Active Launceston has three key objectives;

1. Identify and engage with relevant groups to coordinate, cooperate and commit to the goal of Active Launceston.
2. Enhance and increase the opportunities for the community’s participation in physical activity.
3. Identify and develop resources that support and monitor increased participation in physical activity.

Active Launceston targets the greater Launceston population of approximately 100,000 people, which represents 20.9% of the total Tasmanian population (ABS, 2006 Census).

One of the long term aims of the Active Launceston project is to reduce lifestyle risk factors for chronic disease by facilitating engagement of all members of the community in physical activity, healthy lifestyle behaviours and providing access to resources to improve and monitor wellbeing.

Evidence suggests that daily moderate physical activity is a significant factor in improving general health and wellbeing and that there are substantial benefits to be gained from the creation of a more physically active community. These include physical and mental health benefits for individuals and their families and more broadly, benefits for the community, the environment and the economy (Sport and Recreation, Tasmania, 2005).

Active Launceston draws on evidence based initiatives and strategies from around Australia including the Active Australia strategy which was launched in 1997 as a joint initiative of the Australian government's health, sport and recreational sectors. Central to the philosophy of Active Australia was the promotion of collaboration between the many sectors of government and industry with a view to increase people's choices and opportunities to be more physically active.

The concept of working in collaboration to create a more active community within the Launceston City municipal area was brought to the attention of UTAS by an external agent who had previous involvement in National physical activity initiatives. Central to UTAS' involvement in the collaboration is the University's ability to provide resources and attract funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Sport and Recreation, Tasmania, the Launceston City Council and other groups. Following an approach to the potential partners a public meeting was convened to gauge community interest in this concept of a physical activity project for the people of Launceston. Following the meeting the partners initiated a number of very successful meetings and forums with major stakeholders to shape the project. It was agreed that the project should be based on maximising the effectiveness, reach and capacity of strategies in the Launceston community to improve individual wellbeing.

In addition, the Active Launceston project was also focussed on the identified lack of coordination in the Launceston community for physical activities. Although there were many physical activity events and programs existing in the community, and many non government and government organisations for health and wellbeing for example Eat Well Tasmania, Quit Tasmania, The Heart Foundation and the Premiers Physical Activity Council, there was not an organised authority to promote the benefits of physical activity locally or, more importantly, deliver a selection of inclusive physical activity opportunities to the Launceston community.

Rather than duplicating or reinventing the wheel Active Launceston initiatives are designed to add value to existing successful local programs and events and develop capacity within the community to ensure sustainability.

### **Physical activity initiatives - a vehicle for University Community Engagement**

Active Launceston presented an ideal opportunity to capitalise on the respective organisational interests and capacity to contribute to the improved health and wellbeing of the residents of Launceston city. The notion that universities actively seek partnerships that help address social, civic,

economic and moral problems within their host community is not new. Dr Ernest Boyer challenged universities to become more vigorous partners in the search for answers to some of society's most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems and to reaffirm their commitment to what he called 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1994). Partnerships that link universities with communities to address community problems can be mutually beneficial. Central to the core interest of UTAS is the commitment to the creation, preservation, communication and application of knowledge. As Tasmania's only University, UTAS makes its responsibilities towards the Tasmanian community a high priority and works with local and national providers to improve health, education and public policy. It thrives on developing positive relationships and partnerships. The framework for such partnerships is embedded in the UTAS Strategic Plan known as EDGE 2. EDGE 2 priorities included a commitment to strengthening partnerships whilst deepening the level of engagement with its communities of interest (UTAS, 2008).

UTAS views community engagement as working with and through individuals, groups, organisations or institutions that are outside the formal structure of the University. It is within this context that UTAS provided the perfect home for Active Launceston with support and volunteer involvement and in kind support from numerous faculties/schools and students. It has enabled the development of a strong connection to the community in a non political environment.

For its part, the Launceston City Council considered the partnership as an opportunity to move away from simply being a provider of settings for participation in physical activity to supporting a more holistic approach. Council now offers and supports services and programs to improve the utilisation of facilities and in turn improve the health and wellbeing of their residents. Projects delivering healthy living activities found diversity critical to bringing various existing resources to the table, mobilising the community around the issue and finding the energy to secure new resources. The identification of shared and required resources appeared to stimulate ownership of the issue and a common strategy to address it (Higgins et al., 2007).

### **The partnership**

An important factor in the engagement process was the pre-existing relationships between UTAS and the Launceston City Council. The University had undertaken a significant number of collaborative projects with the Council and in doing so had developed a significant degree of trust between key decision makers within Council. As an aspect of the quality of the engagement relationship, trust is frequently cited as foundational to good engagement (Forde, 2001a). This was important as it allowed UTAS to focus on the project planning and communication processes rather than relationship building. In addition, each partner is able to bring strong community connections to the initiative. Partnerships are more apt to be sustained when strong, dense and broad community connections have been forged so that activities are relevant and meaningful to the local ecology (Alexander et al., 2003).

The complex nature of the partnership stems from the fact that the core business of each partner is fundamentally different. For example the Launceston City Council has a service delivery focus, Sport and Recreation, Tasmania has a capacity building and policy development focus, whereas UTAS has an education and research focus. Each organisation has their own particular demands to meet in these areas.

The partnership has been established through the Active Launceston project despite differences in the political and cultural environments and different foci of the respective organisations. This can be largely attributed to a clear vision with a shared purpose and expectations that are results oriented (Garlick & Pryor, 2002a). The shared vision is improving the health and wellbeing of the residents of Launceston through the promotion of physical activity. Taking this further Sunderland et al., 2004, considers engagement to be founded in partnerships having an equally shared interest likened to a friendship, rather than being about the university purposely acting to connect with the community as is often the case. The extent to which this reflected the partnership is evident in the project evaluation which indicated that AL successfully brought together a wide variety of groups and activities under one 'brand' or umbrella. There is perceived to be a greater level of coordination and cooperation which has been fostered through holding joint events, project committee structures, the capacity to support existing initiatives through an endorsement process (Combes, 2010a).

### **The Active Launceston Project partnership enabling Factors**

There are a number of project enabling factors influencing the success of the AL partnership. These factors include;

- **External funds**
- **Matching partner resources with project needs**
- **Mutual recognition of project needs and benefits**
- **Flexibility**
- **Leadership and project governance structures**

#### **External Funds**

Rarely do university administrations commit funds to community work (Baum, 2000a). The injection of initial funding for the pilot project from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing through the Healthy Active Australia grant program acted as a stimulus to attract interest into the partnership. This funding was essential to commence and sustain the partnership. The funding provided the leverage to access further financial support and provided the necessary capital to engage a Project Manager who had the overall responsibility for developing and implementing the project and for procuring further funds.

#### **Matching partner resources with project needs**

The three Active Launceston partners bring a diversity of resources to the project. The literature relating to university - community partnerships identifies the importance of being aware and realistic about the resources each partner brings to the engagement and the significance of an organisational commitment to the partnership also acknowledged through sufficient resources, including time (Garlick & Pryor, 2002b). UTAS, with support from numerous faculties/schools and students provides specialised input from several disciplines and professions including health and physical education, epidemiology, behavioural science and community development. Active Launceston provides students with an opportunity to connect theory with practice. Students provide leadership in a range of Active Launceston physical activity initiatives in community settings. The students are able to experience firsthand how their respective areas of study are applied outside

an academic setting. This type of student engagement promotes leadership development, character development, cultural and community understanding, and self discovery (Baum, 2000b).

### **Mutual recognition of project needs and benefits**

As one of the largest employers in Launceston, UTAS recognises the value of investing its intellectual, financial and social capital in supporting an initiative that addresses the health and wellbeing status of citizens of Launceston. Dooris et al., 2010, argue that such an investment contribute to the core agendas of universities such as institutional and societal productivity and sustainability.

From the perspective of the Launceston City Council as a project partner the need and benefits of the Active Launceston initiative are articulated in the communities' vision statement Launceston Vision 2020. This vision is designed to form a strategy for change, not only for the Launceston City Council, but also for the Launceston community as a whole.

*"I am Launceston in 2020. I am a vibrant, confident, 'life-sized' city with opportunities for all in learning, work and recreation. I treasure my clean and beautiful environment, and respect my heritage. I am outward looking, full of community spirit and move forward in partnership with others. I value the unique role I play in Tasmania and Australia."*

*In regard to physical activity, health and wellbeing the following comments, goals and suggestions are outlined in the vision document.*

*"What we should do differently – Show more community spirit in working together cooperatively and respectfully, including the old and young, the community and council."*

The Active Launceston project is enabling the Launceston City Council to align its work within these vision statements.

Sport and Recreation, Tasmania, regard Active Launceston and the partnership as an opportunity to increase the range, variety and quality of physical activity opportunities available to the residents of Launceston. There is therefore mutual recognition of the project needs and benefits.

### **Flexibility**

Another significant enabling factor is the willingness and ability of the partners to take a flexible approach to Active Launceston. In particular, the flexibility of the organisational structures of the partner agencies to be able to respond to each other's needs and constraints, to aid social entrepreneurship and to adapt to the constant learning throughout the engagement (Forde, 2001b). For example, University academic representatives support project management activities, partner relations and have direct involvement in events and programs. These contributions are in direct contrast to their normal functions.

### **Leadership and project governance structure**

Strong leadership and governance are two critical components of the partnership. Obtaining commitment 'from the top' of the respective partner organisation was crucial to the success of the

project. The literature affirms the importance of strong leadership as a key factor in providing the drive to enthuse, motivate, network and energise towards a common vision, helping to clarify purpose and build trust (Winter et al., 2005). Coupled with strong leadership the Active Launceston project is managed by a two tier governance model with an Advisory Committee and a Project Working Group. The Advisory Committee comprises high level representatives from each funding body and is designed to provide high level guidance to the project. The Project Working Group comprises of representatives from numerous stakeholders in the community and is designed to support the Project Administrators through assistance in event and program management along with advice and a strong connection to the community. The Project Working Group also provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share and communicate their organisations current directions and projects with relevance to health and wellbeing. This process has enabled strong communication links between the partners about their priorities.

In addition, a Project Manager, who had previously worked for one of the partner organisations, played a key role in cementing the partnership through her understanding of the respective organisational cultures and networks. This role is referred to in the literature as that of a boundary crosser or boundary spanner. The roles of boundary crosser serve critical communicative roles, such as linking discourses, through an understanding of the language, values and culture of the partner organisations. They also build relationships and find common ground (Kilpatrick et al., 2008b).

The governance structure is further underpinned and strengthened by a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation (MOUC). This document provides a formal framework for interactions between UTAS and the Launceston City Council. The agreement outlines a shared purpose and what needs to be done to achieve their mutual aspirations. This MOUC is further underpinned by the Active Launceston Project Management Plan which outlines roles and responsibilities of each of the partners and details how the project will be delivered.

### **Sustaining the Active Launceston partnership - opportunities and challenges**

Research suggests there is no quick fix or single approach to improving community and individual health and wellbeing (Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, 2008c). Rather, it recommends that a long term commitment is required from across the sector with multiple initiatives and interventions taking place at all levels. Active Launceston is providing the perfect framework for this to occur. However, to enable a reasonable level of cultural change to occur in the community, Active Launceston must continue to provide interventions at the same or an increased level as it has throughout the pilot period. This has implications for the structure and role of the partnership.

#### **Opportunities**

In the immediate future, opportunities exist for UTAS, through the partnership to instigate community focused research and intervention by integrating the knowledge of community based organisations with university based researchers, to promote physical activity within Launceston. There is an opportunity to invest in further research and evaluation through a multi-disciplinarily evidence based approach in order to establish benchmarking data, an insight into stakeholder perspectives and competing priorities, and a fuller understanding of what works, for whom, and why.

For example, researching what works in promoting engagement in physical activity, particularly by those who were previously not undertaking physical activity.

Due to the success of the project, communities, health professionals and other organisations have shown an interest in developing programs similar to Active Launceston. Therefore, another opportunity exists through the development of consultancies and the commercialisation of resources based on the experience and knowledge that has been gained through the Active Launceston pilot.

### **Challenges**

From a project perspective the challenge is to continue to build the Active Launceston brand and to engage with the non-active residents of the city to create a series of sequential opportunities across the municipality which can lead people to ongoing participation in physical activity. The challenge will be to 'move' participants from being participants in Active Launceston activities to other opportunities available in their local community. To achieve this, the partnership must continue to be robust and responsive to change. Key challenges to the partnership will occur through changes in strategic direction, personnel and leadership, budgetary as well as external factors such as policy reform and legislation.

The continued investment in Active Launceston has significant resource implications. For example, how can the partnership best match the available and over committed resources of the respective partner organisations with the interests of the project? In particular, it will be increasingly important to demonstrate how such a partnership approach to health and wellbeing can contribute positively to core business objectives such as quality, distinctiveness, recruitment, retention, experience, achievement and productivity and forge strong connections to related agendas such as sustainability.

### **Outcomes and lessons learnt**

The outcomes and impacts of Active Launceston have long term benefits to the cultural lifestyle and health and wellbeing of our region. The impacts are, and will continue to be extensive. They include, but are not limited to;

- Social benefits include, fostering and enhancing family and community connectedness, improving individual social skills and networks and building self esteem and confidence, whilst also reducing peoples' sense of isolation and loneliness.
- Physical and mental benefits include, an improvement in wellness and quality of life, improved management of weight that will reduce the risk of chronic disease or assist in recovery from illness.
- Economic benefits derived through savings in costs in support of chronic health conditions, decreased absenteeism, improved environmental outcomes and stimulating economic growth particularly within the fitness and recreation sector along with associated industries.

A key lesson learnt has been how effective it is for local government, business, universities, the media, and the community sector to work together in a partnership to coordinate and promote physical activity programs within a locality base (Combes, 2010b). Such partnerships are not in

contradiction with the strategic directions of the project's key stakeholders and, in fact, act to enhance their core business objectives.

## **Conclusion**

Active Launceston is making progress towards its goal of improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Launceston through increased engagement in physical activity. The evaluation of Active Launceston indicated that rates of participation in moderate to vigorous activity have increased by almost 13% in the Launceston area since the project was introduced 18 months ago (Examiner Newspaper, 2010). Whilst much of the project's success can be attributed to its high profile branding, endorsement of pre-existing activities and tailoring of programs to meet the needs of particular groups, the project has also created an effective partnership model of how to engage a community in physical and wellbeing activities.

In summary, Active Launceston has been successful as it has:

- clear management structures
- a key driver (Project Manager) who can work collaboratively
- built on what exists instead of replacing or duplicating other initiatives
- a focus which is ongoing and strategic
- high profile partners
- a strong media presence and effort put into the development of an Active Launceston brand
- a wide range of activities and events utilising a range of physical and community spaces/sites/locations
- specific, targeted programs as well as general ones (Combes, 2010c)

Partnership initiatives such as Active Launceston can play a significant role in enhancing university community engagement through providing access to specialised university resources whilst also facilitating collaborative research opportunities. Through the work of the Active Launceston partnership, stronger links between the University, the Launceston City Council and Sport and Recreation Tasmania have been developed. The trust developed through the partnership has enabled the partner organisations to enter uncharted waters and to take risks to try something new.

The future challenge for the partnership is to determine how, given the complex environments in which the partner organisations operate, can the partnership continue to grow and strengthen in a sustainable way as new opportunities arise to expand Active Launceston.

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## **Can the Academy Help Itself? Authenticity in Equity Group Recruitment-** *Brenda Cherednichenko, Nathalie Collins*

### **Abstract**

With a combination of marketing fads and government fashion calling the shots, Higher Education marketing and recruitment staff would be wise to moor themselves to guiding principles. The authors propose that the academy look to academic theory for an authentic and effective navigation of shifting currents. This paper outlines current marketing theories of co-creation of value, applies them in a Higher Education context, and presents cases to illustrate how a partnership approach to recruitment can be more effective than a traditional, target-oriented approach. This paper explores a recent paradigm shift in marketing, Service-Dominant Logic, as a way of creating principles toward engagement and partnerships that are sustainable and recognise the importance of self-determination when marketing to prospective students and partners rather than on them. In so doing universities and equity groups can work together to develop value propositions, programs and outcomes with creative, innovative and effective solutions.

**Keywords:** Service-Dominant Logic, Higher Education, Marketing, Student Recruitment

### **Introduction**

Successive Australian Governments have attempted to address the low participation of certain socio-economic groups (called “equity groups”) in higher education using a combination of the carrot and stick approach on universities. The recent review of higher education in Australia and the subsequent report and commentary by the minister has indicated that the more things change the more they stay the same: universities will be financially rewarded for engaging equity groups; and those that don’t may be penalised (Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report, 2010).

Equity groups are defined by the Australian Government as populations that have a low participation rate in higher education. Broadly speaking they are:

- Australian Indigenous Peoples
- People with disabilities
- People from low socio-economic backgrounds
- People with low household incomes
- People residing in regional, rural and remote Australia
- People who are the first in their families to participate in Higher Education (James, 2009)

The recent report also recognises that engagement in higher education by the above groups is a challenge internationally, but perhaps more so for a country with a sparse population (Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report, 2010). The burden to engage these populations rests squarely on the shoulders of the universities; their funding is tied to it, creating uneasy fellowship between universities and the populations with whom they are the least familiar.

Front line university staff will find their priorities shifting too. Universities are investing more heavily in marketing, specifically investing in branding exercises that create value propositions for mass domestic and international markets. Overall this may be a sensible approach, however equity

populations clearly haven't responded to these messages. Therefore the government's imperative may result in short-term quick fix approaches rather than sustainable initiatives reflecting true engagement and partnerships. Universities will have to revisit how their staff attract individuals in equity groups, how they gain access to university programs, the support they receive when they are there and retaining these populations regardless of the pressures that exist for these individuals outside the classroom. It is a rethink of what it means to engage in social change as a university.

This paper explores a recent paradigm shift in marketing theory, Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic), as a way of creating principles toward engagement and partnerships which are sustainable and recognise the importance of working in concert with prospective students and partners rather than on them. The concept of self-determination is key in S-D Logic, although less so in traditional marketing environments. In developing self-determination as the centrepiece of value co-creation, equity groups can work together with universities to develop value propositions, programs and outcomes with creative, innovative and effective solutions.

### **Shifting marketing paradigms**

In 2004, the American Marketing Association academic paper of the year (Vargo & Lusch) proposed that the marketing paradigms in existence to date were not structured for products beyond the industrial age. In a service-dominant economy, the previous theoretical structures for marketing simply would no longer hold.

This in and of itself was not surprising. Marketing theory emerged in the mid 20th century with two perspectives leading the way: economics and psychology. Both rooted in the reassuring, empirical purview of statistical analysis, they promised producers that with the right "Four Ps" (Product, Price, Place and Promotion), they could hit their target market and sell products (both goods and services) to the public. In the limited marketplace of the post-war era, these theories reaped benefits when put into practice (Lusch, Vargo, & Wessels, 2008; Sweeney, 2007).

As society has become more fragmented, however, the traditional approaches to marketing aren't delivering: quantitative analysis shares the stage with qualitative approaches, demographics don't carve up into tidy age, consumer, or behavioural groups. And even when people are grouped by demographic or behavioural characteristics, such as equity groups, producers fail to be able to engage with them effectively when they are objectified as targets, as opposed to partners (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

The rise of the service economy, the digital age and the ubiquity of the internet provide an emphasis on Services Marketing, which posited that the producer and consumer co-create value during a transaction, as the product is developed and delivered in the same moment. For example, a haircut can only be delivered when the head of the customer is present; the cut cannot be captured and stored or taken home. (Sweeney, 2007).

Services marketing all of a sudden seemed to apply to almost everything: food, travel, entertainment, housing, health and, of course, education. At the same time, the concept of brand equity was on the rise and the marketplace recognised that brands could mean added value to a product if the consumer recognised that value. Relationship marketing seemed to hold the key to ongoing purchases and a relationship with the customer where a premium could be extracted based on the

producer's reputation and emotional connection with the customer (Sweeney, 2007). Universities in the United States trade heavily on this concept, developing emotional connections through sports, the Greek system and other extra-curricular activities and then trading on that emotional connection for donations and support years after their students had been graduated.

The Marketing discipline, from a theoretical perspective, was putting itself through gymnastics to be able to cope with the foundation principles based in economics and psychology on one hand and the demands of a service economy on the other. Like the shift in astronomy from an earth-centred galaxy to a sun-centred one, it seemed as though Marketing was waiting for a conceptual shift which would harken to the future of product delivery; not the past. The conceptual shift from a producer-centred business environment serving a customer to a producer-customer relationship where the groups are serving each other was looming.

Academics had to sweep all presumptions off the table and revisit economics as the basis for theoretical perspectives in marketing. Instead, they developed a set of core competencies based on recently published literature regarding co-creation of value:

1. Identify or develop core competences, the fundamental knowledge and skills of an economic entity that represent potential competitive advantage.
2. Identify other entities (potential customers) that could benefit from these competences.
3. Cultivate relationships that involve the customers in developing customized, competitively compelling value propositions to meet specific needs.
4. Gauge marketplace feedback by analyzing financial performance from exchanges to learn how to improve the firm's offering to customers and improve firm performance. (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 5)

Compelling, and extremely relevant to marketing higher education to equity groups, is competency three. This will be addressed later in this paper.

One of the principles in the Vargo & Lusch (2004) paper that departed from the previously economics-based models is that a producer can only create a value proposition. The proposition is to the customer, and if the customer cannot see the value or interact with the product, the value will not be realised. This is a major departure from previously held theories, and integrates the consumer into the experience by recognising their importance in the partnership and value exchange.

The emphasis on this point, and its relevance to marketing Higher Education and creating sustainable partnerships for teaching, learning and research cannot be overlooked. What Vargo & Lusch are proposing is that one cannot create value on one's own. Value creation is a partnership between the producer and the consumer. Whereas value was previously something built into a physical product, value in the new paradigm takes the shape of the knowledge and skills built into the product. The consumer is purchasing the product to obtain the benefit of the knowledge and skills that went into the product creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Those of us raised in the traditional marketing paradigm may find it a conceptual stretch to rethink physical goods in this context. However, for those of us in the Education industry, Service-Dominant Logic is a perfect fit in form and function if students are partners.

### **Student as partners: are we using a service-dominant approach?**

Service-Dominant Logic tells us that we can't make our product without participation from the customer. What, at university, do we produce? And what is the value to the customer? What skills and knowledge is our customer attempting to obtain? And do we create an environment where we educate and empower the prospective customer? And how come, when it comes to equity groups, universities have a history of not being able to deliver value propositions tempting enough to attract and retain these groups?

According to the Australian Government Higher Education Report, universities provide Australia with a skilled workforce and a research and innovation system. The future that universities help create is one, according to the report, in which more Australians from diverse backgrounds should share (*Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report, 2010*).

On an individual level, a completed university education is likely to provide superior career and employability outcomes. It also leads to longer life, better health, happier marriages (particularly for women) (Kolata, 2007). The length of time spent in formal education outranks every other factor in determining health and longevity: more than race, use of cigarettes or wealth in every country in which longevity and health were studied (Kolata, 2007).

Certainly, there are additional benefits. However the career outcomes of graduates are the key focus of many campaigns and the key perceived value of a university. This is true in many OECD countries, and accounts for the declining enrolments in courses without a clear career connection, such as those in the humanities (Slouka, 2009).

Universities historically operate in a context of hierarchy and the associated power differentials, usually in the favour of the most credentialed person in the room. Approaching prospective students from a position of sharing power is a shift for the university representative. What if the prospective student is in Year 12? Year 10? How does one approach a group of year 10 prospective students and talk about university education in a way that taps into the co-creation of value? The Service-Dominant Logic model reinforces the need for this inquiry-focussed on the needs, context and aspirations of prospective students and the delivery of appropriate services and practices which actively respond to these.

Consider the way universities approach the sale. They call their salespeople *advisors*. They call their purchase process *applying*. They create terminology that is a coded language designed to, it seems, inhibit participation and success: undergraduate, postgraduate, practicum, deputy vice-chancellor, dean, and so on. The university is not far from its background in medieval religious orders (Himanen, 2001). Greater participation amongst the population is not always received warmly, as it is often seen as "dumbing down" and risking the quality of the professions and is often as strongly resisted within the academy as outside of it (Hiatt, 2010).

It is essential that universities choose their students well. Every student/university partnership is an agreement that is legally as well as morally binding: students must actively participate in the process

to articulate through it and earn the recognition a degree gives them; the university staff are obligated to teach, assess and enable the student through the process.

The recognition of the partnership by the academic staff is mostly the reason that staff have concerns about how students are selected; they know it will be up to them primarily to create an environment for success and this can be more challenging for students from equity groups, especially if the student does not have support at home or is facing financial and other challenges as well.

Once a university offers a student a place, that student embarks on a partnership with the university that will last a minimum of three years, but most probably longer. Students spend many thousands of dollars in fees alone, with even more spent on ancillary services such as books, parking, campus vendors and materials. They also forgo employment opportunities and self-fund services such as child care and transport in order to make study possible.

What the student spends is only part of the picture. The government will fund the university for thousands more. If a student ceases to participate in a course of study or at the university, the place likely remains empty, a loss of income pipelined into the final years. The commitment of the university to the student is significant as well.

Even though this is the case, many universities in Australia cling to an antiquated system of selecting applicants, based on a formula of Year 12 achievement, recently renamed the ATAR. This norm-based ranking system purports to identify academic merit for graduates of the secondary school system, and has proven, for a majority who participate in it, to be an ineffective assessment of skills and knowledge required to succeed at university.

Identifying a single capability as the one measure for indicating academic capacity and/or ability to be successful in Higher Education is seriously flawed (Cherednichenko B & Kruger, 2006). The ATAR requires revision as to university entry requirements, if the government's desire to reach higher levels of participation is to be realised (Hare, 2009). To select one's partners through their previous achievements is not in and of itself problematic; however to exclude others based on the same measure is clearly not working for many Australian universities and for the charter of engaging members of equity groups in Australia. Ideally a student gets ruled in through their demonstrated capacity to be an active partner in the value creation process.

For Higher Education marketers this presents an interesting problem. How can we communicate the value of a partnership when the first barrier seems to belie the institution's interest in the student in the first place?

### **The case for philosophy in Alabama**

Auburn University is a state-funded university in Alabama, USA. Auburn is a university that attracts rural, regional and working class students in one of the poorest states in America. Defying the trend internationally for a decline in the Humanities, (Slouka, 2009) it has one of the proportionally highest achieving Philosophy departments in the USA. Auburn has more students in that discipline going on to postgraduate programs than it should, demographically speaking. Nicknamed "the barn", Auburn is known for its inclusivity. It accepts seventy percent of the people who apply. In a university of

20,000, Auburn's philosophy department is thriving when larger public universities struggle with a fraction of the philosophy majors (Mahler, 2008).

Auburn is a case study in S-D Logic as practised by philosophy Professor Kelly Jolley. Jolley is not a marketer, and he doesn't work in admissions. He teaches a core first year unit in Philosophy required in all courses. He identifies talent for the discipline not through the highest achieving students, but through the most engaged. He runs philosophy discussion groups outside of university hours, in local coffeeshops and while hiking nature trails near to the campus. When the university initially refused to fund higher level units in philosophy to help create a viable major, he taught them anyway (Mahler, 2008).

Professor Jolley doesn't sugar-coat the topic to attract students to his major. Rigour is demanded as he requires the students to read from primary texts and work through the challenging concepts of the discipline. He claims his priority is not to his students first, it is to the discipline of philosophy itself. His enthusiasm for the discipline and for teaching and learning is his primary concern, and he has managed to dodge the politics and the decline in the humanities that have affected his colleagues and peers at other universities. At no stage, his students claim, does he seem aware that his students should not be able to perform at the level he expects. His students comment about his method of teaching that he seems less like a teacher; more like a collaborator (Mahler, 2008).

The case of Professor Jolley and Auburn University in Alabama is interesting as it goes against conventional thinking and trends in university education. Professor Kelley's success is not explicitly due to a S-D Logic approach. However it illustrates a point: if Philosophy can flourish in a rural context in a state where literacy rates and participation in education is some of the lowest in the USA, can Australian universities achieve something similar? Can prospective students be valued as partners in the achievement of successful outcomes for the society, individuals and the organisation? And what part does self-determination of the student play in the process?

Both parties must bring something to the table so that each is critically conscious of their role, authority and are responsive to the capability of the other. The personal agency of the partners, and notably the development of and responsiveness to the explicit agency of prospective students, that will assist change and improvement in participation (Giddens, 1984).

Marketers, recruiters, advisors and the like go into the community and negotiate partnerships with individuals and groups for teaching, learning and research. A key component of the role is to understand that the value proposition of a university education will differ depending on the individual and their circumstance. Similarly and particularly when in a rural and regional context, it is critical to be thoroughly knowledgeable and attuned to what teaching, learning and research has to offer *this* individual *this* organisation, *this* community.

This requires the staff member not only to thoroughly understand the complex university system, but to have a thorough understanding of the geographical, social and economic conditions in which they operate. The staff member themselves must be authentic, and be a university graduate themselves, and must understand the level of the service their organisation can provide. To have a thorough understanding of all these factors requires extensive training and commitment, on behalf of the university to the recruiter, and on behalf of the recruiter to their territory and market.

In order to be effective in a S-D Logic context, University staff must, in a brief and convincing way, educate the prospective student on pathways, curriculum and options, along with support services, access to facilities and possible career outcomes in any given course of interest. The staff member must have a sense of their authentic role in the organisation. A university staff member must empathise with all members of the partnership: the University, the perspective student and their family, the community and the industry into which the student wishes to enter upon graduation.

University staff must attempt to do this in an environment which is unconventional; many rural and regional areas in Australia do not have university campuses or if they do they are poor cousins to the metropolitan versions (*Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, 2010). University staff must be able to provide holistic service in surroundings not conventional, or necessarily conducive, to discussion about a prospective student's future.

#### Operationalising a service-dominant approach to recruitment

An enabling recruiter can bring university experience to life to capture the imagination of the prospective partner, to engage the prospective partner in a vision of the value proposition of in teaching, learning and research. Recruiting in a S-D Logic context means negotiating a partnership with the perspective student: a partnership where all members benefit: the community, student and the university. And that might mean delivering the pitch in a paddock without a slide presentation, or in a coffeeshop to the waitress, or in a shearing shed to a group of farmers' wives.

The authors of this paper make three suggestions, based on operationalisation of the Service-Dominant Paradigm: Incorporate teaching, learning, research and engagement into the corporate function of the university; Rethink treating students as customers—consider treating them as partners; and measure the “right stuff” as indicators of performance.

#### Incorporate teaching, learning, research and engagement into the Corporate function

The Corporate, or non-academic, area of universities approach teaching, learning, research and engagement in very uneven ways. Some areas are so operational they overlook the value of being part of a larger research organisation and do not leverage the opportunity that the proximity to educators and researchers affords them. Particularly in the areas of marketing, management and human resources, it is key for Corporate areas of the university to be abreast of the research in their field, including theoretical developments. By doing so the university models the positive results that generate from combining theory with practice.

#### Treat students as partners; not customers

To move toward recognising students as co-creators of value, one must disregard the conventional wisdom around seeing students as customers and resist doing too much for them or give over to them too much authority in the relationship as well. Due to the nature of the relationship between student and university, and the amount of labour involved in co-creating the value, the relationship is not analogous to a simple retail transaction. Therefore how the process of interaction between student and the university is handled is important: it should be balanced, as a healthy partnership usually is. Universities should resist the urge to treat their students as “kings” (as in “The customer is king” or children (in a patronising way). Partnerships often require equal effort from both sides; so universities should not shy away from requiring effort on both sides with every aspect of the process.

## Measure the right stuff

In the move to corporatise university service, standards are put in place and measured which mirror retail standards. For example, how many rings until the phone is answered, the length of service calls, the frequency of use and effectiveness of the web site, the format of email responses to queries. Although these aspects of the business are worth standardising, they are not the sum total of a satisfactory and effective experience for both parties. The content and delivery of the message should also be analysed. For example, the tone, accuracy, authenticity, content of a message is crucial. The ability of the recruiter to learn from their interactions and bring the information back to the university is essential. Universities should seek to find a measurement for these aspects of communication that are more difficult to quantify but are, in fact, the key to effective recruitment.

Universities do not have to rethink the way they conduct business, rather they should adhere more strongly to an evolving model of service delivery to their individual partners—their students. Until recently, the discipline of marketing did not have a model that could guide marketers and recruiters. However, a Service-Dominant context with a focus on co-creation of value synchronises so well with the university experience; it is now possible to watch the academic research unfold while operationalising key values stemming directly from theoretical principles.

## Conclusion

It is time for universities to recognise and communicate in an authentic way for a sustained period of time. This doesn't require resources, government funding or a special segregated program for equity groups. It requires a service-dominant approach to the entire university experience, already based on humility, sincerity, respect and the recognition of the power of personal agency and the opportunities that lay ahead for everyone.

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## The 'rules of Engagement': Cross-national and Cross-cultural Perspectives on Civil Society, Citizenship and University Engagement - *Beatriz Cardona*

### **Abstract**

Civic Engagement is often described as a mutually beneficial partnership between the University and the publics they serve (Saltmarsh et al 2009), as a way for improving student learning (Pollack 1997), building social capital and addressing social issues (Field 2003). Emphasis has also been placed on the development of private citizenship attributes (Wallis & Dollery 2006) gained by learning and assisting the community achieve positive outcomes. These laudable goals often overlook the cultural dimensions as well as the political and strategic dynamics and power tensions surrounding the notion of civic engagement. By looking at civic engagement practices in different localities I will contest the global relevance and applicability of mainstream civic engagement discourses, the political and economic structures shaping its ideology and practice and the cultural dimensions which define and confine the repertoire of actions available to individuals. Rather than rejecting the role of the university in addressing social problems this paper is an invitation to be more reflective about the language of engagement and the local and global forces shaping its practice. Armed with this knowledge I believe we can become more effective public scholars and agents of social change through community engagement.

**Keywords:** engagement; civil society; civic engagement; civil society organisations; university

**Introduction:** Civil society and civic engagement

The public purpose of universities constitutes perhaps one of the most examined topics on higher education in the last 20 years. Profound changes in society have led to a re-thinking of the purpose and role of higher education in society. These changes include the proliferation of new forms of communication and information technologies, global consumer cultures and social fragmentation, corporate systems of funding and governance (Winter et al. 2006), economic rationalist policies, and the emergence of a global knowledge economy. Engagement with local communities has been identified as a key strategy to address the need for tangible contributions to local needs, as a way to counteract the excesses of economic rationalism in education, revitalise civil society and rectify the supposed civic deficit among students (Winter et al 2006). Emerging collaborations between universities and civil society organisations are often underpin by understandings of civil society as key sites where civic virtues are nurtured and democratic practices fostered. The following analysis of civil society organisations and practices, however, suggests the need for greater consideration of the often convoluted character of the community and voluntary sector, the impact of governance and regulatory regimes on civil society's capacity to represent public concerns and needs and the repertoire of actions available to its actors.

Concepts of civil society have a rich history, dating to Plato and Socrates, to the Enlightenment and the rise of democratic institutions in Europe. But it is only in the last 15 years that they have move to the centre of the international stage due partly to concerns on the perceived decline of civil society

(Edwards 2004). The historical and philosophical roots of notions of civil society are diverse. Alexander Tocqueville (1805-1859) stressed the role of independent associations as civil society and saw them as schools of democracy, built voluntarily at all levels of society and promoting civic virtues. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) introduced a Marxist theoretical angle by stressing the potential oppositional role of civil society, separate from state and market in which ideological hegemony is contested. Jurgen Habermas (1929) saw civil society as a way for marginalized groups to articulate their interests (Paffenhols & Spurk 2006) while others emphasize the ‘fuzzy’ borders and interrelationships that exist between the state and civil society (Edwards 2004).

Contemporary American thinking about civil society is thoroughly dominated by categories drawn from Tocqueville emphasizing greater engagement, deeper commitment, more participation, and heightened solidarity as desirable in any social order (Ehrenberg 1999). Some reservations however have emerged regarding the capacity of civil society to revive communities, train effective citizens, build habits of respect and cooperation, and reinvigorate the public sphere—all this in an environment of small government and local politics (Ehrenberg 1999). The reservations stem from the anti-political character of civic engagement where social problems such as destitution and crime are increasingly being understood as non-political matters to be addressed by a more robust civil society. Indeed, a narrowed sense of public purpose and political possibility is central to contemporary public life and thought. Good feelings, volunteerism, nostalgia, and community constitute civil society in an anti-political period (Ehrenberg 1999: 287).

### **Civil society in decline? New understandings of civic practice**

The decline of civic engagement and civil society has been lamented by writers and social scientists in America. The withdrawal of the public from the auditorium of democratic politics has been described as a striking global trend, both in established and new democracies (Coleman 2005:1). Putnam attributes this decline in America to increased mobility, suburbanization, the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce, heightened pressures of time and money and greater emphasis on individuality to the expense of collective wellbeing (Putnam 1995). Reich (2001) argues that consumer cultures and neoliberal emphasis on the entrepreneurial self have also altered our understanding of civic engagement. He argues that the “bowling alone” analysis, failed to account for the most important aspect of what is happening. We’re still joining together – for child care, elder care, schools, health care, insurance, health clubs, investment clubs, buying clubs, recreational facilities, private security guards, and everything else that is too expensive to purchase alone. But we’re not joining as participants; we’re joining as consumers. “We’re pooling our financial resources to get the best deal” (Reich 2001: 195).

Putnam’s analysis has also been criticised for the limited attention given to the impact economic policies and access to job markets have on civil society and civic engagement (Ehrenberg 1999). The relationship between jobs and civic life, as pointed out by Wilson (1996) is more direct than what we are prepared to acknowledge:

Neighborhoods plagued by high levels of joblessness are more likely to experience low levels of social organization; the two go hand in hand. High rates of joblessness trigger other neighborhood

problems that undermine social organization, ranging from crime, gang violence and drug trafficking to family breakups. And as these controls weaken, the social processes that regulate behavior change (Wilson 1996:133)

Wilson's findings remind us how important it is to consider economic matters when we assess civil society's role in democratic politics. Promoting "common purpose" through a discourse of values can only reinforce the mistaken notion that social decay is a moral problem first and foremost and that a civic culture of correct orientations is its solution. In the end, reviving civil society requires the breadth of thought and action that only politics and an orientation toward the state can provide (Reich 2001).

Understandings of civil life and civic engagement are also shifting their emphasis. New questions are being asked regarding emerging practices of civic engagement especially by younger generations which challenge the belief that civil society has been on the decline in the last 20 years or more (Bennet 2008). The issue is rather one of focus: we have not been paying enough attention to new discursive, cultural and technological re-orientations on the meanings and tools for engagement and civil participation. There is also an inter-generational aspect to this shift. Bennet (2008) argues that understandings of civil society and social activism have been re oriented by new concepts such as 'self-expression' and 'actualization' and new encounters with politics through digital communication tools. Bennet identifies the new model of citizenship as an Actualizing Citizenship model, in which greater emphasis is placed on social ties maintained through interactive information technologies, loose networks of community action and mistrust of mainstream political institutions.

There seems to be two different paradigms operating here, as pointed out by Bennet (2008) one that views civil society and civic engagement as in decline and the other that recognizes a vibrant web of inter-relations and social networking around personal and political issues taking place at a global scale. The disengaged paradigm may acknowledge the rise of more autonomous forms of public expression such as consumer politics, protests in My Space while keeping the focus on data showing a generational decline in connections to government (voting patterns) and general civic involvement as threats to the health of democracy itself (Bennet 2008). Here the model of citizenship is more around duties and obligations. The engaged paradigm emphasizes generational changes in social identity: the growing importance of peer networks and online communities all within an environment of limited credibility on public institutions and discourses that define conventional political life. In this paradigm I guess we open new doors to our understanding of civic actions: from My Space to other online networks. As argued by Bennet in his paper 'Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age' (2008), if we are to design better engagement programs that use the attraction of online communities for young people, we must first try to resolve these competing views of young people and civic life.

Greater understanding is also needed regarding the role of technology in animating new models of civil society. Is the trend towards new understandings of civic engagement away from traditional notions of duties and obligations and in favour of a loosely networked activism a technological

development or a political statement? We also need to ask the extent to which these changes in understanding and practice of civic engagement represent a global phenomena or a localised practice. One needs to be attentive here to the cultural dimensions and diverse theoretical understandings of civil society mentioned earlier. Civil society and civic engagement translate differently in different settings (contesting the tendency to make them universally applicable). Lowry (2008) argues that to understand the different dynamics of civil society engagement there needs to be an analysis of variables such as:

- The context specific history and pattern of growth of civil society organisations (CSOs)
- The legal framework under which CSOs are established
- The stage of political development of the respective country
- The capacity of CSOs to deliver on their mission ( Lowry 2008: 3)

In the US and Western Europe the debate that started in the 1990s on civic engagement links social capital to democratic participation and positive health and social outcomes (Andersen and Larsen 2006). Putnam emphasizes that civic community is built upon norms and networks: norms of reciprocity and networks of interpersonal communication and exchange (Bratton 1994) In Latin America the concept of civil society gained importance mainly in the fight against military dictatorship in the 60s – a Gramscian understanding that emphasized conflict and resistance between citizens and the state. This Gramscian vision of civil society as an agent for political resistance and struggle for power against the perceived abuses by the state is also evident in many Asian countries including Thailand as recent events demonstrate. Civil society organisation in Thailand as argued by Albritton (2002) is characterised as ad hoc and only responding to issues of immediate and practical concern. Essential structures of elite dominance over common people have persisted in Thailand meaning that mass mobilisation often responds to allegiances and loyalties to specific individuals (Albritton 2002). In African countries autonomous organisations and networks emerged in the 1980s primarily as spaces for popular upsurge against post-colonial autocracy (Bratton 1994, Chazan 1982). More recently some non-government organisations have assumed the role of overseeing government performance and electoral contests and helping keep governments honest and to educate people about citizenship (Bratton 1994).

### **Regulating civil society: Coercion and influence of the state in the Non-Government Sector**

The role of the state in the governance and regulation of civic engagement also plays a critical role on the manner and the extent to which individuals participate in public life. Formal expressions of civil life through the creation of voluntary and community organisations or the ‘third sector’ as commonly referred to in the UK are subjected to different forms of governance and surveillance according to the relationship between the state and society. A strong NGO sector has long been seen as integral to how a democracy operates. In most democratic models, the sector plays an important political role in shaping public advocacy. However, it also reflects a society back to itself through its social and sporting clubs, its cultural organisations, its social justice and environmental organisations.

Various forms of control and regulation of civil society exist in different countries. The Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Act of 2002 in Tanzania for instance limits the ability of NGOs to advocate social and political change. In Syria jail sentences are given to NGO members that advocate human rights for their citizens (World Movement for Democracy 2008). In Russia a lack of legal and economic conditions obstructs the development of non-governmental institutions and charitable organizations. Thus, the third sector has to rely on the international or corporate financial sponsorship. Authorities exert direct administrative pressure on "non-compliant" NGOs (Patridge 2001). In Japan permission to form is tied up to strict laws including accounting and financing reporting systems and civil society organisations can be de register without significant legal hurdles (Lowry 2008). In Colombia NGOs members who engaged in social advocacy and political activism are often victims of violent death or disappearances (World Movement for Democracy 2008). Concerns have also been raised regarding the increasing tendency of government sponsored NGOs in Latin America representing a threat to civil society, when they are used to monopolize the space of civil society-government dialogue, attack legitimate NGOs, and defend government policy under the cover of being "independent," (World Movement for Democracy 2008) Closer to home we have new anti-terrorist laws in the US that limit the ability of community associations to advocate on human rights issues. In Australia funding for NGOs during the Howard years was linked to service delivery outcomes. Howard instituted changes to the treatment of civil society organisations which included de-funding, forced amalgamations, and replacing organisational funding with contracts for services which excluded policy or research work. Funding contracts also restricted organisations from making public statements without specific permission from government (The Australian Collaboration 2009).

In addition to regulatory policies limiting the range of activities and influence of civil society organisation, neoliberal policies and agendas have also shaped the community sector. Gramberg and Bassett (2005) argue that civic engagement today reinforces economic agendas that emphasize individual and community responsibility for their own social and economic problems. Support for civil society organisations by the state is based on premises of empowering organisations to provide services previously under the responsibility of the state.

What all these examples highlight is the often problematic relationship between civil society and the state which cast doubt on statements depicting civil society organisations as utopian manifestations of a robust civil society and strong democratic institutions. Surveillance, regulation and financial dependency on government and overseas donors often limit the capacity of the non-profit sector to truly represent the interests of their constituencies or advocate for social, economic and political change. The significant achievements and contributions made by many civil society organisations in Western and non-Western countries often take place against a backdrop of government distrust, political compromises and rhetorical temperance.

This in turn raises questions regarding the capacity of civil society organisations to act as an effective bridge between civil society and the state. Emerging trends away from traditional civil society organisations may partly be due to scepticism about their political integrity and effectiveness to represent its citizens. Widespread public cynicism, according to Goldfarb is the 'single most pressing

challenge facing American democracy today' (1992: 2). Almost 20 years after this claim was made cynicism has been replaced by apathy and disengagement from the public sphere and intensification of individualist drives in many Western countries (Dahlgren 2001)

Citizenry itself is becoming more heterogeneous and, we are, according to Dahlgren (2001) seen a withdrawal into 'enclave consciousness', away from larger public engagement, collective political identities and community sensibilities. The origins of this fragmentation are linked to multiculturalism, ethnic and religious pluralism and the pluralisation of life-styles in late modernity (Dahlgren 2001). These centrifugal forces problematise a democracy predicated on a nation-state characterized by homogeneity, sharing a unified public culture. On the other hand, both of these cultural tendencies also serve to promote frames of reference and engagement beyond the borders of the nation-state. (e.g. global youth culture, transnational social movements, diasporic communities) (2001:4).

### **Technology and new forms of citizenship practice:**

As pointed earlier in relation to the increasing role of internet based social networks, the ostensible political apathy and disaffiliation from the established political system may not necessarily signal a disinterest in politics per se. Instead – in this by now familiar narrative – this may represent a refocusing of political attention outside the parliamentary system, or even new definitions as to just what constitutes the political. In this emerging mode of 'new politics', as pointed out by Dahlgren (2001) the boundaries between politics, cultural values, identity processes and local self-reliance measures become more fluid. 'New politics' is characterized by personalized rather than collective engagement, and a stronger emphasis on single issues than on overarching platforms or ideologies (Bennett 2008). These developments are under debate, but they do open the door for new ways to think about the contemporary political landscape (Dahlgren 2001). Also as argued by Harris (2007) Climate change has begun to strengthen a global sense of collective responsibility, which ties-in other collective values (such as pluralism, respect, and social justice). Collective environmental concern has been at the forefront of the re-emergence of communities of interest, serving to expose weaknesses in our democratic systems. This strengthening sense of being global confirms, and is confirmed by, the connectedness that the internet affords.

These themes all point to fundamental issues regarding the shifting understandings of civic practice and citizenship, 'community', the global character of 'community', and the impact of global technologies and local political and regulatory frameworks on civil society development and practice. Traditional versus emerging views of citizenship need to be tested in the public arena through debates and discussions about the value of traditionally perceived core democratic acts such as voting and participation in government centred activities versus loser networks of community actions and reliance on information technologies. We need to ask what does it mean to be politically engaged today? And what does it mean to be a citizen? We need to explore the impact internet based social networks are having on extending democratic processes today. Stephen Coleman lists some democratising characteristics of the blogosphere including the provision of a

bridge between the private, subjective sphere of self-expression and the socially fragile civic sphere in which publics can form and act and blogs lower the threshold of entry to the global debate for traditionally unheard or marginalised voices. (Coleman 2005: 277).

### **Universities at the cross-road: Responding to change:**

Given the broadness of civic engagement's scope, argues Bennett (2008) universities need to deal with the prospect of being detached from the momentum of conversational, engaged democracy that is beginning to flourish around them. Therefore one important argument in this paper concerns the need for greater emphasis on civic engagement from the perspective of the students and understandings about emerging forms of citizenship and communication practices. According to Harris (2007) one important mistake to avoid is to assume that mainstream institutions such as universities and local government organisations need to take a lead, play a role, coordinate or in some way control or regulate these multiple voices that are emerging. "In practice it could be that what is most needed is for managers, mayors, councillors and officers to listen more, to tune in to these opinions and to adjust their style to the new culture of conversational democracy, to join in on conversations without seeking, or feeling expected, to dominate them" (Harris 2007: 26).

A second important argument emerging from these discussions is the need to reflect on the capacity and disposition of the university sector towards the merging expressions of democratic and citizenship practice around the world. I would argue universities are at the cross-roads, unclear on how to re-position themselves or negotiate the profound rearrangements taking place in society. As pointed out by Readings (1996):

It is no longer clear what the place of the University is within society nor what the exact nature of that society is, and the changing institutional form of the University is something that intellectuals cannot afford to ignore (1996:2)

This search for position has also called for reflection on the Universities' initial purpose, which as argued by Langworthy (2007) was not uniform across countries. The modern university in America for instance has its cultural roots in the nation building mission of the land grant universities in the late 19th century and on the ideas and values of John Dewey, Benjamin Franklin and Frances Bacon (humanistic concern). In Australia the cultural roots of the modern university, as pointed by Langworthy (2007) were linked to the colonial experience and the need to remove the convict 'taint' and combat crime and ignorance. The nation building strategies of the 1950s saw a dramatic increase in the number of students accessing tertiary education along with strong government financial support for universities. Greater emphasis was placed on building Australian human capital whereby the population was understood as a national resource to be harboured and developed (Marginson 2002: 2). In Latin America the modern university emerged in the 19th century as a reaction against the colonial heritage including the church. Political activism among Latin American students is an ingrained tradition dating from the 19th century law schools. It reached its peak with the Cordoba Reform Movement of 1918 that inaugurated the tradition of local autonomy and through collective bodies of professors, students and alumni (Schwartzman 1995). University

engagement activities in India are also informed by post-colonial ideologies and new relationships between education and community. The new environment seeks through non formal education to facilitate spaces for students to help civic efforts at healing community rifts.

These examples illustrate local historical and cultural influences shaping universities' purpose and social values. The challenges posed to universities by current transformations in understanding and practice of civil society, global neoliberal agendas and models of communication impact in different ways and raise specific challenges across institutions. Despite this diversity, mission statements from universities throughout the world tend to be dominated by global themes, including notions of the 'global community' and local emphasis on 'engagement' and 'community partnerships' against the backdrop of a perceived global decline in civil society and community engagement (Rhoads 2006). This trend towards standardization of university practice and policy and homogenization of discourse about the challenges universities face, I argue, reflects a larger project to standardize products in a neoliberal global market as well as the influence of policies and practices rooted on the experience of US higher education system and the social, economic and cultural challenges facing them (Rhoads 2006).

Renewed calls to implement formulas and prescriptions to address the challenges faced by the University in the 21st century fails to recognize the varied and complex landscape of political priorities, geographical locations, discursive practices and cultural and historic specificities that shape university's relationships with their community. There is a certain irony in discussing the need for universities to connect directly to the external world, and in particular to their local communities and civil society organisations when significant work has been done by many universities in this direction long before engagement discourses gained popularity.

There is a compelling and laudable call for universities to engage more with their communities. Recently, especially in Australia, Europe, Japan, and the United States, there is an increasingly powerful vision of the university-community relationship as beneficial to both and critical to build citizenship qualities among students and assist communities addressing local issues. All this is done within an assumed consensus about what constitutes the 'community', and the apolitical character of engagement practice. The experience of many universities in Latin America highlights a different understanding of the relationship between the university and society. Engagement practices of many universities in Latin American and other developing countries with grassroots organisations opposing state policies and global economic agendas, position the university as a more emancipatory and inclusive institution. Universities here, as explained by Slocum and Rhoads (2008) were especially cautious about a unilateral view of knowledge transference and spoke of the need to build relationships that foster mutual cooperation and meaningful dialogue in the tradition of Freire (1970). What these examples show is that global mandates to embed the university in society for the purpose of addressing social needs can translate as calls for direct involvement by students and academics in grass roots political movements for reform. The discourse and practice of community engagement takes place here within a different understanding of civil society and community development. The political and transformative nature of such practices collide with narratives that

position community engagement as tools to build citizenship values within established models of social, political and economic governance.

## **Conclusion**

At the 2005 Talloires Conference Strengthening the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education (Talloires Network 2005), delegates from universities across the world stated their commitment to and priorities for civic engagement. There was general consensus as stated in the Talloires Declaration that

Higher education institutions exist to serve and strengthen the society of which they are part. Through the learning, values, and commitment of faculty, staff, and students, our institutions create social capital, preparing students to contribute positively to local, national, and global communities. Universities have the responsibility to foster in faculty, staff, and students a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to the social good, which, we believe, is central to the success of a democratic and just society (Talloires Network 2005: 12)

I believe these goals, although laudable, were short of addressing the urgent need for universities to play a more vital role in supporting collective values and social justice projects as opposed to the emphasis given on the benefit individuals gain from 'doing good'. Also absent from any discussion were the different roles, capacities and relationships of civic society organisations to the state and the university sector across localities. Neither was any significant discussion or statements about emerging understandings of civic engagement and citizenship practice and universities' responses to the challenges and opportunities they present for engagement. These are urgent matters that need to be addressed by international and national conferences and forums on the role of universities in the 21st century. Whilst there seems to be agreement that "higher education institutions exist to serve and strengthen the society of which they are part" (Talloires Network 2005:2), less certainty and consensus exists as to the makeup and character of this 'society'. Profound changes are taking place in society, civic engagement and civil society organisations' purpose and governance. Globalisation, economic rationalities, technological innovations and new understandings of citizenship practice are affecting society in ways not yet fully understood. There is also a need to recognize that the social totality shaping civil society at the local and global level, is a sphere of inequality and conflict and that, as argued by Ehrenberg (1999) maybe revitalizing civil society requires heightened levels of political struggle over state policy rather than good manners and 'civil discourse' and 'service' to society.

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## **The Good Partnership: When Senior Secondary Colleges and Universities Share a Mission - Associate Professor Anne Langworthy, Kathy Cameron, Steve Allen**

### **Abstract**

Schools and universities share an interest in education quality, pathways and participation. Beyond this they share an understanding that education is a key indicator of regional sustainability. For the individual, continued education provides significant personal benefit vocationally, socially and culturally, in health and wellbeing, and in life satisfaction. For the state and nation educated population contributes to a more equitable, cohesive, economically successful and environmentally aware society capable of addressing the problems communities face.

Nationally and statewide ambitious targets have been set for higher educational participation, particularly regional higher education participation. However, whilst the mission is clear so are the problems; a large proportion of young people are not engaged in any form of post compulsory education and training and many parents are part of a mature aged population with no post year 10 educational qualifications. The problem is one that cannot be solved by one sector alone.

This case study outlines a state-wide, inclusive schools university partnership pilot project that aims to increase pathways to and preparation for university. Whilst a number of early indicators of success have been identified, it is the partnership between the educators in both sectors that has recognised as the critical success factor.

Within the context of defining the “good” partnership, the case study examines the pilot project from the perspective of the school, the students and the university.

**Keywords:** partnership; schools; participation; pathways

### **Introduction**

Many studies demonstrate the benefits of university education for both individuals and the community. These studies contend, for example, that higher education fosters democratic participation (Harper cited in Benson, Harkavy & Hartley, 2002; Kezar Chambers and Burkhart, 2005). Other studies find that graduates are more likely to participate, and accept diversity, in their communities; and are over three times more likely to be members of voluntary organisations than non-graduates (Purcell et al., 2004) Not only are graduates more likely to accept diversity and be active in their communities but they have better health and wellbeing (Hillman & McMillan, 2005; King, 1999; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; and others) and are less likely to be involved in crime (Chapman B, Weatherburn, Kapuscincki, Chilvers & Roussel, 2002). Degree holders are significantly more likely to hold positive attitudes to race and gender equality (Purcell et al., 2004).

In addition, graduates live healthier lifestyles, are less likely to smoke, less likely to be obese, 40% less likely to suffer from depression and more likely to report “excellent” health (Wilberforce, 2005). Higher education qualifications are associated with less physical decline, depression, loneliness, social loss and positively associated with continuous growth in aging people (Steverink, Westerhoff,

Bode & Dittman-Kohli, 2001; Miech & Shanahan, 2001). The benefits of higher education are intergenerational. Graduates are more likely to take an interest in their own children's education and to be involved with their children's school – factors which are predictors of schooling success (Purcell et al., 2004)

The importance of education beyond the vocational is well understood by educators in all sectors and is a driver for the current education reform at the national level of government, where the Bradley Review of Higher Education and the subsequent Federal Government response has thrown the issue of higher educational participation, particularly regional higher education participation, into the spotlight, setting ambitious participation targets overall and for low socio economic and disadvantaged groups specifically (Bradley, 2008; Australian Government, 2009).

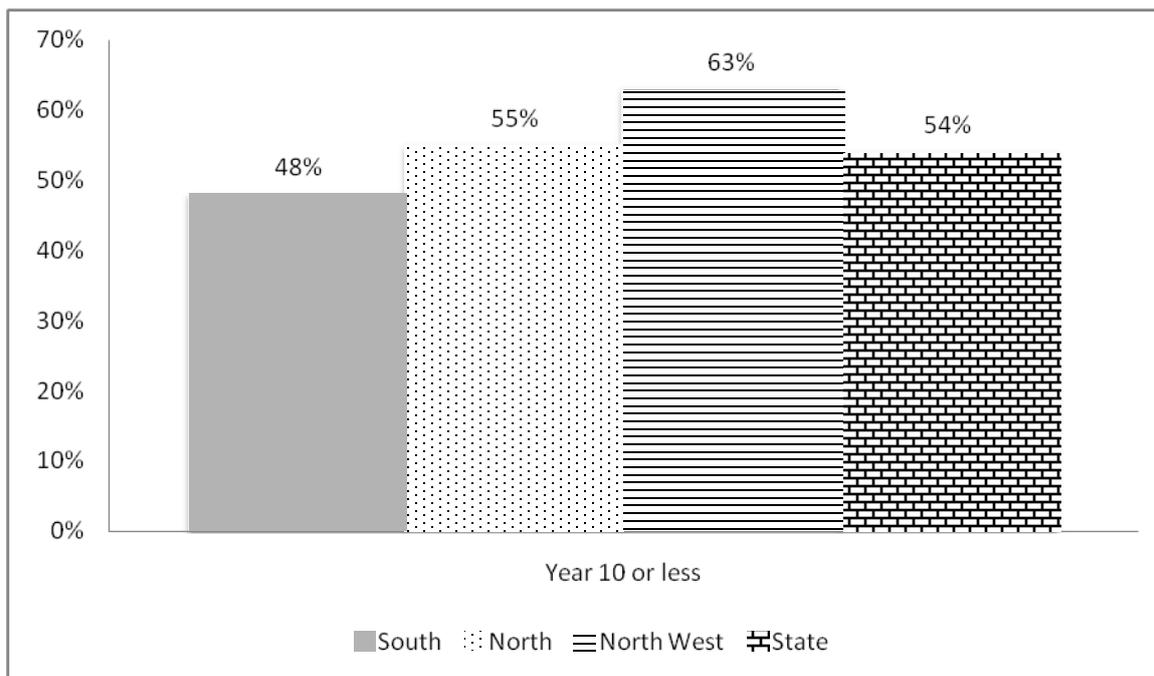
At the State level, the need to increase participation and educational outcomes has driven strategies which include raising the school leaving age to 17, and providing for increased vocational programs and pathways in the senior school years. The persistent low participation rates in Tasmanian education beyond Year 10 led to the Tasmanian Government's Tasmania Tomorrow educational reforms which in 2008 established the three post compulsory educational institutions, the Tasmanian Academy, the Tasmanian Skills Institute and the Tasmanian Polytechnic.

At the heart of the drive to increase participation is a shared understanding that education is a key indicator of regional sustainability. It is particularly important for regional communities facing structural adjustment where old industries, often reliant on routine and semi skilled process work, are in sharp decline and it is clear that the future survival will rely on a more educated general community and a more highly skilled workforce for Tasmania this is a challenge when a significant proportion of the population has no education qualification beyond Year 10. Within Tasmania regional differences are similar to those experienced generally in regional and rural Australia where there is a growing disparity socio –economically, socially and in higher education participation – up to seven times more students engage in higher education in metropolitan areas than outer urban and regional areas (Langworthy, 2003)

The impact of skills shortages in regional and non-metropolitan areas has been significant and the body of recent research concerned with the skill requirements and deficits in regional areas attests to this (DVC, 2006; DOTARS & BTRE, 2003 & 2006). It is the lack of human capital that is the greatest barrier to regional progress (Garlick, Taylor and Plummer, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008); an educated population contributes to a more equitable, cohesive, economically successful and environmentally aware society capable of addressing the problems that communities face and this is a challenge universities and the education sector must meet.

Regionally success breeds success and thus regions where the 'requisite skill and knowledge capacity are in place are more likely to attract viable and dynamic industries' (NIEIR, 2004 cited in Langworthy & Brunt, 2005).

The size of the challenge in Tasmania is illustrated by Figure 1 below which shows the proportion of the population aged over 15 with no educational qualification beyond year 10. The Tasmanian region with the highest proportion of the population (63%) with no post Year 10 qualification is the North West. The North West is the home of the Hellyer Campus of the Tasmanian Academy.



**Figure 1: Percentage of adults aged 15 or over in each Tasmanian region with year 10 or less as their highest level of schooling (Source ABS Social Trends 4102.0 2008)**

### The common mission

This case study outlines a schools–university partnership pilot project that aims to increase pathways to and preparation for university. The partnership has been established because there is a shared view that the participation challenges in Tasmania is one that cannot be met by any single educational institution alone.

Figure 2 below demonstrates that on average over the three year period 42% of year 12 graduates enrolled in university which may appear to approximate the Government target of 40% of all 25 to 34 year olds holding a qualification of bachelor level or higher (Australian Government, 2009) if all of these students complete the degree. The problem in Tasmania is that only 60% approximately of the age cohort completes Year 12. For many Year 10 marks the completion of their formal schooling.

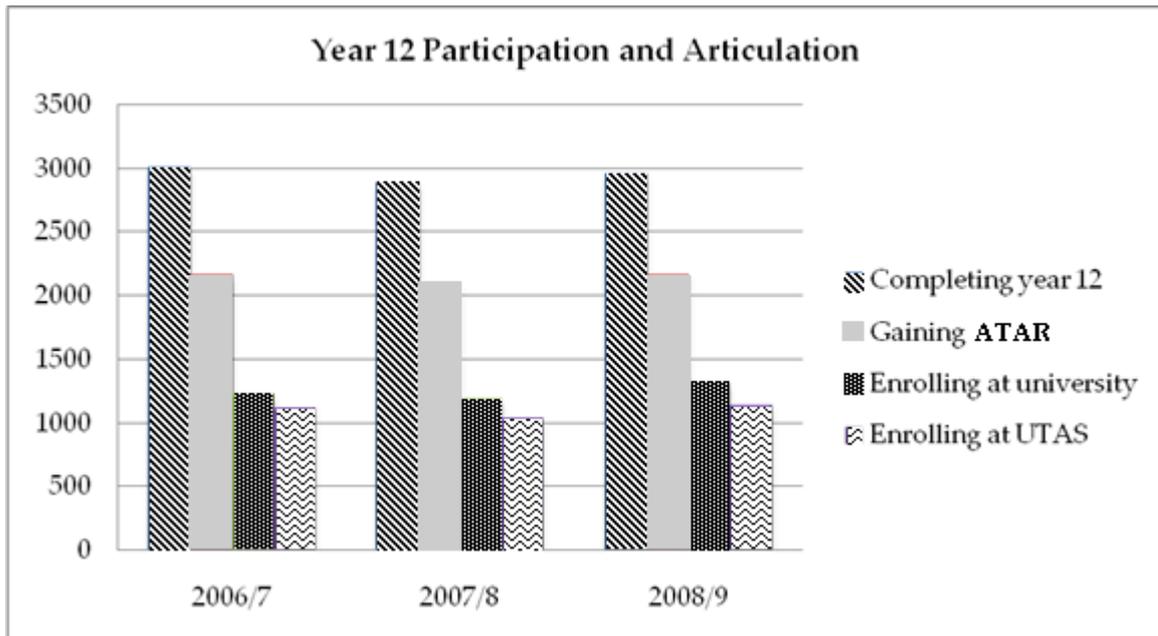


Figure 2: Year 12 Participation and Articulation to University (source TQA and DEEWR)

### The Academy

This is something the Tasmanian Academy, the Institution established by the Tasmanian Government for University bound post Year 10 students, seeks to address with the mission clearly outlined as providing

... the highest quality education to all students who could successfully undertake higher education. It will be highly valued in the Tasmanian community as a national leader in post-Year10 education, as a centre of inspired learning and teaching and as a champion of the role that education plays in transforming people’s lives. (Tasmanian Academy 2008 Inaugural Corporate Plan 2009-2011)

The Tasmanian Academy is in the midst of a 3 year transition plan, which began in 2009, which is restructuring the senior secondary colleges and TAFE. In 2010 there are 5 operating Academy campuses – Hobart and Elizabeth in the South and Newstead, Don and Hellyer in the North of the state. They cater for Year 11 and 12 students who are contemplating study in higher education. The curriculum is holistic and students are supported in their learning by a full range of learning services. Students are working towards attaining the best possible Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) and a Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE).

The Academy is focussed on preparing students to be successful in higher education. Strong partnerships with the University of Tasmania are central to this goal. The Tasmanian Academy Corporate plan details this aspirational goal for all campuses that ten percent of Academy students are enrolled in University units of study or University organised programs.

Whilst the Academy and the University are collaborating in a number of ways – through representation on the Academy Board and research initiatives, for example – an important focus of the collaboration is the UTAS College University College Pilot Program.

## The University

The establishment of UTAS College in 2008 arose from the 2008-2010 University Plan, (EDGE2- or Excellence, Distinctiveness, Growth and Engagement). The initiative was specifically designed to contribute in particular to the aspirations of 'Distinctiveness, Growth and Engagement', while being guided by the imperative of 'Excellence'. The EDGE institutional goal 4, 'to increase the proportion of graduates in the Tasmanian workforce to at least the national average' is particularly relevant to UTAS College whose key objectives are reflected in EDGE 2 priority B, '*Create and implement a distinctive UTAS teaching and learning model*', and represented in two action areas:

*B1 Develop the UTAS college model, in partnership with the State Government, to provide an integrated year 11 to PhD educational framework for Tasmania;*

*B2 Review and strengthen tertiary preparation programs and entry pathways to support a broader range of students (University of Tasmania, 2008).*

## The UTAS College University College Pilot Program

The UTAS College University College Pilot Program is a joint venture between The University of Tasmania (UTAS), the Tasmanian Academy and senior secondary schools/colleges which allows capable and motivated students to undertake university study either in conjunction with or alongside their studies towards the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) or the International Baccalaureate (IB).

When the university unit is taken in conjunction with TCE, students are enrolled in a TCE pre tertiary level 3 subject the curriculum for which correlates directly with the UTAS first year unit. To satisfy the requirements of the correlated UTAS unit the student undertakes extension work which is provided by and assessed by the University. When the university unit is taken alongside the TCE the students study a complete UTAS unit either through the High Achievers program or with a school or campus based facilitated class. These units are best suited to high achieving students. In both cases the senior secondary school assesses the student as capable of completing work at first year university level and must along with the parent or guardian approve the UTAS application for enrolment.

The program encourages students to attempt a university unit in a relatively sanction-free environment; students are provided with a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) scholarship and students who do not pass the university unit are withdrawn without academic penalty. Although the program in 2010 includes unit offerings from three Faculties, provision is dominated by units offered through the Faculty of Arts. Language units and most of the Visual and Performing Arts units are mapped against the TCE subject undertaken by the student.

The program grew rapidly from its inception in 2008 when 11 units of study were offered to 264 students. In 2009, 26 units of study were offered to 588 students, more than doubling the size of the program. Student performance also improved with the program demonstrating an 83 percent pass rate with 59 percent of students receiving a credit or above. Concurrently, the withdrawal rate fell from 29 percent to 17 percent.

Table One below provides an overview of the 26 units offered and the performance of students in those units in 2009

**Table 1: UCP Individual Units and Awards 2009**

<b>Unit of Study</b>	<b>NN</b>	<b>PP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>DN</b>	<b>HD</b>	<b>WW</b>	<b>Total</b>
BFA103 Accounting and Financial Decision Making	0	2	3	1	0	4	<b>10</b>
FCE141 Small Ensemble 1A	0	0	13	4	0	3	<b>20</b>
FCE142 Small Ensemble 1B	1	0	3	5	0	0	<b>9</b>
FCE241 Small Ensemble 2B	1	0	2	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
FCM111 Keyboard	0	0	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
FCG110 Foundation Musicianship	0	1	0	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
FCP110 Foundation Practical Study	0	102	70	42	15	12	<b>241</b>
FCP120 Advanced Practical Study	0	14	23	23	6	1	<b>67</b>
FCT110 Tonal Theory	0	2	1	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
FFE102 Introduction to Two-Dimensional Studies	0	15	14	7	0	9	<b>45</b>
FFE103 Introduction to Three-Dimensional Studies	0	14	14	7	0	9	<b>44</b>
FPB103 Theatre Skills 1	0	16	8	10	0	27	<b>61</b>
FPB105 Technical Theatre	0	15	8	10	0	27	<b>60</b>
FPB107 Contemporary Dance: Composition and Performance	0	0	1	2	1	0	<b>4</b>
FPM111 Ensemble A	0	11	4	1	0	0	<b>16</b>
FSA112 Core Studies in Art and Design 1B	0	1	5	9	1	1	<b>17</b>
HAB102 Contemporary Indigenous Australia	0	0	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
HPA103 Critical and Creative Thinking	1	4	7	8	8	0	<b>28</b>
HEF101 French 1A	0	1	10	12	5	5	<b>33</b>
HEF102 French 1B	0	0	10	14	3	4	<b>31</b>
HEG101 German 1A	0	1	5	4	2	2	<b>14</b>
HEG102 German 1B	0	1	5	4	2	2	<b>14</b>
HMC101 Chinese 1A	0	1	7	9	5	5	<b>27</b>
HMC102 Chinese 1B	0	2	2	10	4	5	<b>23</b>

HMJ101	Beginners Japanese 1A	0	3	13	11	5	16	48
HMJ102	Beginners Japanese 1B	0	2	16	11	3	15	47
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>872</b>

### **The principal's perspective**

From the perspective of the principal, the University College Program helps create better understanding between the university and the colleges. It can be conceptualised as a transition program that blurs the boundaries between secondary school and university thus reducing the size of the step for many students who would otherwise be discouraged from studying at university.

The program makes students more aware of issues such as curriculum alignment, standards and helps prepare them for being successful at university, providing an introduction to study at university in a more supported way. Students realise that first year study takes their learning to another dimension; the program raises the bar and challenges students in a way that bridges the gap rather than raising barriers. It also counters the total focus some students have on their ATAR score as the 'make or break' indicator of their Year 12 success and helps develop forward thinking and the identification of pathways.

The combination of the Pre-Tertiary curriculum and University College Program has the potential to build student resilience, capacity for conceptual thinking and more depth into their learning.

Close contact engenders a good partnership. For teachers the partnership provides an opportunity to refresh their learning and update knowledge; opens their eyes to university curriculum and curriculum alignment. Lecturers develop a better understanding of students in year 12 and both teachers and lecturers alike build a better understanding of the curriculum links, required standards and how time is used for both. The collaboration and understanding of standards builds respect.

However, Principals need to have the time to engage in the UCP. A close link between the university and college principal is vital. At Hellyer, time for the University College Program is built into the timetable and to teacher's load thus providing the optimal conditions for student support. If students are to undertake the University study they need to be able to do this in a way that balances their other TCE studies, part-time jobs, family commitments and social lives.

Parents have responded very favourably to the University College Program with some very surprised at their child's motivation.

In many ways the University College Program is just a beginning but already there is a certain level of surprise at how much aspirations have been raised. The future should see the program fully integrated with the TCE curriculum and further development of the collaborative learning model that will enhance university preparation.

## **The students' perspective**

The evaluation of the pilot program is in its early stages and the qualitative study of student perspectives has only just commenced. However the following vignettes taken from two case studies of 2009 students from Hellyer College begin to reveal potential outcomes.

### **Vignette 1**

Amy is characteristic of many young women who live in the North West of Tasmania where retention rates to higher education are very low. She lives in a small hamlet outside Burnie in North West Tasmania and works part-time at a local national retailer. Her father has been a shearer for most of his working life, but now owns a farm and occasionally does some contract shearing. Her mother works for a local window blind manufacturer. Amy has a younger sibling who is at primary school. Neither her father nor her mother has post-year 12 qualifications nor does she have any close relatives who have higher education qualifications. Prior to her experience with the UTAS College program she had no experience or knowledge of what university education was about.

Amy knew that she wanted to have a job or career in business prior to the UTAS College program. She thought that she might get a job with a local business. Amy undertook a UTAS College program in the Accounting area. She found that through her Tasmanian Academy study of Accounting and her UTAS College program that she had an aptitude for accounting related tasks. Her UTAS College program consisted of a series of tutorials that were conducted alongside her study of Accounting at the Tasmanian Academy. She also had to complete additional assignment work and sit an exam. From her point of view, the UTAS College program gave her an insight into what it would be like to study at university. She also felt that the credit that she obtained for one unit into a degree was an incentive to undertake the UTAS College Program.

Amy is now successfully studying the first year of a Bachelor of Business degree with UTAS. She is blending her study with some part-time work. She has adapted well to University study and thinks that she would like a career in Accounting and maybe travel to work overseas. Amy believes that the UTAS College program helped her to realize that she could study at university level and work towards a professional career.

### **Vignette 2**

Adam, who was brought up in a rural and regional area, provides a slightly different personal story about the UTAS College program. Although neither of his parents have a University degree (his mother works in the human resources area and his father is a tailor), all of his siblings are studying or have studied at University; his elder brother is studying multi-media, his sister is studying graphic design and his elder sister has completed an education degree and is teaching currently.

The UTAS College program that Adam undertook was related to the fine arts area. He explains that the UTAS College program was centered around his normal year 12 Tasmanian Academy subject in the arts, but was augmented by additional tutorials and additional assessment work. The UTAS College program also included a colloquium whereby students from across the State met together on a weekend in order to undertake a program that included talks from arts practitioners and participation in other applied learning activities related to their program. Adam found this to be a particularly exciting aspect of the UTAS College Program.

Adam is currently successfully studying in a fine arts course with UTAS. Although he is aware that he could count the credits that he obtained from the UTAS College Program towards his degree he is not really concerned about doing this. He really wants to follow the same pathway through University that students from the same intake follow. When asked about what he saw were the benefits of the UTAS College Program, he concentrated upon the word 'opportunity'. Adam saw the UTAS College Program as a way to discover how university study in the arts 'worked'. In this respect he found the program to be particularly valuable. Although he found the additional workload of the UTAS College Program to be challenging at times he thought the Program was 'pretty good' and met his needs.

### **Challenges and lessons learned**

Some very good student results have been achieved in the first two years of the University College Program which works well where professional relationships had already been established or were established during the program with UTAS College staff. In these cases a team approach focussed on the best student outcomes. Where relationships had not existed previously and were not fostered during the program, outcomes were less favourable.

College students who enrolled were 16 years of age and over, some in Year 11. These young people are often more immature than their university counterparts, and unlikely to have a holistic view of their educational direction. Subject choices are often made on the basis of what is easier and "where my friends go". They are also used to having a closer relationship with their teachers (remote tutors cannot easily establish such rapport) and unused to distance, self-paced learning, but rather expect to be chased for work as a matter of course (an example was given of one student who was withdrawn from Japanese for no other reason than she did not hand in a culture assignment, despite frequent badgering by her teacher on the spot).

Student and parent feedback highlighted their lack of knowledge of university systems and disappointment at an apparent lack of support, particularly when they thought they would be facing academic penalty for late withdrawal.

Many of these issues have been addressed through the building of closer relationships with the colleges/academy campuses. The best case scenario exists in Academy campuses like Hellyer where time allowance is built into teachers' loads and the timetable.

Student preparation varied but most received guidance only in relation to the unit undertaken. The need for on campus experience and university orientation has become clear. The context of wider university preparation is still an issue to be addressed.

Communication was an issue during 2008. Contact with students and colleges varied, there was some confusion about point of contact and the UTAS 'message' and difficulty with online access.

There was an inherent expectation that, given access to a UTAS email address and the University online learning system (MyLO), communication would take place. This was not the case and communication was a major stumbling block of the program. Students who did not sign on had to be contacted through their teachers. Some students admitted at the end of the year that they had trouble with MyLO or computer problems, but made no attempt to contact the UTAS facilitator directly or through their teacher (all of whom knew the facilitator professionally).

Results in the languages were delayed due to the need to moderate with TCE results. In addition, there was an expectation that students would know how to access their results online.

Formal letters were sent out to inactive students to encourage their involvement. Text messages were sent to encourage workshop participation or to urge withdrawal with no penalty. These often went unanswered.

Students did not appear to attempt to negotiate time off from part-time work to attend the workshops. When they couldn't get off, they did not inform the university facilitator or seek to find out what alternate work might meet the requirement. In 2009 and 2010 this issue has been addressed through early notification of workshop dates and improved communication with college staff.

In 2009 communication systems were refined and results provided in a timely fashion and early moderation negotiated with the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority. A UTAS College newsletter was developed and has been provided regularly to all stakeholders. Additional effort has been invested in MyLO sites and exercises and initial workshops ensure that students link their UTAS email to their private emails. The system is better understood but the differences in the two educational bureaucracies including timetables and term times still create stumbling blocks for the unwary.

Assessment remains an issue for some academics who would prefer an exam even for students already sitting a TCE exam in the same subject area. Where exams are used for assessment problems arise in second semester where there is a potential overlap with TCE exams and accommodations must be made by systems that are unused to operating in partnership.

College teachers responded in varying ways to the program. In the best case, teachers have worked with students to ensure assignments are done. These teachers see themselves as partners in the program and look to improved student results and pathways as outcomes. In the worst case, some teachers see the enrolment of their students in the University College Program as an additional workload and resent perceived unrewarded involvement.

Although all academic issues have not been resolved, the partnership has enabled the systematic resolution of many academic issues. High levels of participation and cross sectoral collaboration are evidenced by: engagement in the two cross sectoral Symposia held in June 2009; the establishment planning and review committee with involved school/college representation in the School of Visual and Performing Arts; and the process for teacher accreditation and collaborative assessment being developed by the Conservatorium, for example.

'Thank you' events are held at the University annually for involved principals and college staff, but a method for formal recognition of the contribution of teachers has yet to be agreed. The formal evaluation of the program to be completed in 2010 will address this issue and others in order to inform future directions for the program.

## **Conclusion**

Partnership between the university and senior secondary sector is a critical success factor of the University College Program and it is hoped that the collaboration and relationships established will

lead to us all addressing student retention and participation challenges in Tasmania in a far more effective and cohesive way.

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