

**LA TROBE UNIVERSITY**  
**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the first meeting of the Student Engagement Advisory Committee held on  
**Wednesday 28 May 2008 at 3:00 pm in the Chamber of the John Scott Meeting House,**  
**La Trobe University.**

Present: Dr Kerry Ferguson, Chairperson, Mr John McDonald, Dr Linsey Howie,  
Dr Diane Kirkby, Mr Patrick Testa, Dr Jennifer Sheed, Mr Robert Stephenson,  
Mr Simon Gibson, Ms Ngaere Blair, Ms Val Sandeman, Dr Michael Shortland,  
Ms Kara Sheehan, Ms Cecilia O'Halloran, Mr Michael Torney, Mr Dennis Bainger,  
Ms Ruth Delagas, Ms Sally Went, Ms Jane Tran, Ms Simone Morrissey

Secretariat: Mr John Mrakov

Apologies: Ms Anne Kuypers, Ms Liz Lavender, Ms Anne Stansfeld, Mr Garry Thomas,  
Ms Debra Langton, Mr Peter Boyle.

ITEM	DETAILS	ACTION
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1 INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairperson, Kerry Ferguson welcomed and introduced all the members of the committee.

2. APPROVAL OF DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Kerry Ferguson discussed the draft terms of reference and asked the committee members for any feedback, comments or recommendations. The responses were as follows:

- John McDonald advocated that we formulate and adopt a definition for the term 'student engagement' to enable the committee to perform their role with a clear and defined mandate.
- Patrick Testa suggested the terms and reference include the capability to identify and capture existing activities and programs undertaken by students within the University.
- Robert Stephenson suggested the committee consider expanding the term 'student engagement' to 'student engagement and development'. He argued this would provide a broader scope to improve and promote student engagement programs and activities.
- Michael Shortland advocated the importance of including student engagement programs and activities that can produce measurable and reportable outcomes. By offering programs which record and measure outcomes the student is more likely to gain greater recognition and possible accreditation for their participation.

The committee agreed that the above recommendations be included and adopted in the terms of reference.

Linsey Howie noted that no reference was made in regards to who the committee will be reporting to. The two options currently available are for the committee to report directly to the Vice Chancellor or alternatively to the Academic Board. No recommendation was made and this matter will be discussed at the next meeting.

### 3. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

#### 3.1 Leadership Programs

Ruth Delegas provided a background to the rationale for developing student engagement programs and its importance to Alumni. She stated there was substantial evidence to suggest that if students did not have a positive experience at University while studying they were less likely to be associated with Alumni when they graduated. From an Alumni perspective, it is important for students to be engaged and participate in worthwhile programs and activities in order for the University to foster relationships with them after they have graduated.

Ruth Delagas outlined the details of the Aquila Leadership Program which will be piloted in 2009. This program is targeted to provide 30 highly motivated students from all disciplines the opportunity to engage more actively with the University and the local community. The program will be available to undergraduate students in their third year of study, post graduate students or to mature age students who have demonstrated extensive community or industry experience. The program will consist of three main components which includes a 2 day residential retreat, a series of leadership seminars and a final project.

Ngaere Blair discussed the Student Leaders Program and outlined its aims and objectives. This program will aim to improve existing student engagement activities, provide support, training, and mentoring to students who participate in them and also provide recognition to students for their contribution to the University or community.

Ngaere Blair also highlighted the Peer Mentoring Program which is coordinated and managed by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering. She endorsed this program as being highly successful and that other faculties within the University are exploring the possibility of establishing a similar program for their students.

#### 3.2 Consultation / Audit

Ngaere Blair stated a key objective of the committee will be for representatives from the faculties, departments, colleges and student organisations to liaise and consult with each other to adopt a more unified and consistent approach when designing, developing and implementing student engagement programs and activities.

#### 3.3 Student Summit

Ngaere Blair informed the committee that a student summit will be held later this year. The summit will be an opportunity for students to provide feedback and input in the development of student engagement programs and activities. The summit will consist of approximately 100 students from all campuses and it will be facilitated and driven by students. The facilitators will be provided professional assistance and training.

Kara Sheehan asked what the selection process would be for the students participating in the summit. Ngaere Blair stated the selection process would be open to all students including regional campuses and would involve the input of student organisations such as the Guild and the regional student bodies.

Jane Tran noted that the International Programs Office often worked with student associations to promote their programs and services to international students. She said they found this approach to be one of the more effective ways to connect and engage with students.

John McDonald advised that we encourage a diverse representation of students for the summit because it is quite common for the same cohort of students to participate in a range of different programs and activities. He argued we need to encourage greater diversity and new ideas to develop student engagement programs that will appeal to a

wider student audience. The committee endorsed this view and agreed that we need to focus on delivering programs and activities that will attract broader sections of the student population.

#### 3.4 Staff Colloquium

Ngaere Blair also noted that a staff colloquium will be held in 2009. This will provide staff the opportunity to contribute and offer their knowledge and expertise to the development and improvement of student engagement programs.

#### 3.5 Formal Recognition

Michael Torney requested an update on the progress of discussions with Academic Services for establishing a framework to formally recognise students participation and contribution in extracurricular activities on their academic transcript. Ngaere Blair reported that the Director of Academic Services was responsive and supportive of this initiative and that further discussions would continue.

Jennifer Sheed suggested whether it would be possible to include the skills and attributes many students develop in paid employment to their academic transcript or e-portfolios. Many students have part time or casual employment and to formally recognise and capture these skills would essentially assist them with career opportunities.

John McDonald noted that formal recognition of student engagement programs and activities in the academic transcript and e-portfolios would be 'adding value' to a degree. This would also contribute to the validation of student engagement programs as being a valuable experience for students to assist them when they enter the labour market to seek a career.

#### 4. INTEREST GROUPS

Ngaere Blair invited the committee members to participate or to nominate staff in the various interest groups such as the Leadership Program Steering Group, the University Transition Group and specific projects such as the Staff Colloquium. Ngaere Blair stipulated that these groups are seeking involvement and would welcome the participation of both students and staff.

#### 5. NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.