



Newsletter

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor
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Design for Learning

Implementing the White Paper Proposals

With the White Paper, *Curriculum Review and Renewal*, at La Trobe University approved at Academic Board in May, we have moved swiftly to the next phase – implementation. The complex set of projects which need to be undertaken have been renamed *Design for Learning* to capture our key aims, which are that by 2013:

- every La Trobe program will offer a curriculum that has been intentionally designed to promote clearly articulated, measurable learning outcomes,
- every La Trobe student on every campus will have equitable access to opportunities to learn *by design*, and not by chance; and
- that evidence of learning (rather than student satisfaction or perceived teaching skill) will be at the core of all of our curriculum review and renewal and related efforts.

A Steering Group, chaired by Professor Tom Angelo, and comprising the Associate Deans (Academic), a senior Library representative and an NTEU representative, has been assembled to set the overall agenda and co-ordinate the efforts of a number of working groups that are currently being established.

All four University-level Design for Learning working groups have representation from faculties,

student organisations, student services and the Library. By end of November 2009, their expected outcomes are:

(1) First Year Experience Working Party – to develop a comprehensive plan for providing all first year students with the opportunities, experiences, information and resources necessary for high quality learning and academic success;

(2) Curriculum Design Guidelines Working Party – to develop University-wide design guidelines for the development of graduate capabilities through cornerstones, midpoints/checkpoints, and capstones subjects and recommendations for the design of additional aspects of the curriculum structure;

(3) Program Mapping and Review - to develop a consistent and flexible University-wide process for mapping all undergraduate programs and related processes for reviewing programs against the to-be-designed La Trobe curriculum quality criteria and standards; and

(4) Learning Outcomes and Standards - to develop the University-wide system of indicators, measures and standards required to provide evidence of the levels at which students are achieving graduate capabilities

If you are interested in being involved in a Design for Learning working party within your faculty, please contact your Associate Dean (Academic)

From now on my Newsletters will begin with an update on *Design for Learning*.

Curriculum Pilot Projects

The guidelines and measures that will be developed by the working parties will not only be based on contemporary educational research but on the findings from ten pilot projects currently being conducted across the University. These projects were established earlier this year to build on local expertise in curriculum review and redesign, and to inform upcoming decisions about

how best to tackle related challenges that lie ahead.

While most of the pilot projects are focussing on aspects of the first-year experience and the development of cornerstone subjects, there are also projects on mapping and evaluating graduate attributes and learning outcomes. A website on the pilot projects is in development and presentations on project outcomes will be a highlight of this year's Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Colloquium on 3 & 4 December.

Climate, Sustainability and Change, one of these pilot projects, is a new cross-disciplinary, cross-campus subject based on the *Design for Learning* principles. It is being offered for the first time this semester, as a first year subject which introduces students to economic, scientific and sociological approaches to sustainability. It is being taught collaboratively by the Faculties of Law and Management, Science Technology and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences from the Albury-Wodonga and Bendigo campuses and has 170 enrolments.

The teaching takes a problem-based approach, and also builds on a series of public lectures by leading thinkers who represent a range of approaches to issues of sustainability and climate change in different contexts.

Searching for Project Staff

La Trobe is the first Australian university to implement a curriculum reform agenda of this scope and scale. Given the complexity of the task and the ambitious timeline we've set for the project, we need a senior, experienced project manager to oversee the enterprise. This position, and that of the project's administrative officer have been advertised this week. Please bring these advertisements to the attention of any well qualified project management staff you may know. www.latrobe.edu.au/pc/vacancies/all-vacancies

Design for Learning Seminars

We are inviting a number of internationally and nationally significant researchers to visit La Trobe this year to help us design and deliver the best possible learning environment for our students. Since my last newsletter we have had two of the biggest names on campus, and if you missed their presentations you can catch them on the web <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/studentengagement/forum09.html>

Professor George Kuh, Director of the Centre for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University (home of the National Survey of Student Engagement, the basis of AUSSE) was the keynote speaker at a one day conference on Student Engagement – on the theme of 'it takes a campus to educate a student'.



And thanks to the Faculty of Law and Management, Professors John Biggs and Catherine Tang (authors of one of the most respected books on learning in higher education) gave not only a lecture on 'Constructive Alignment – you can't live without it', but also an over-subscribed hands-on workshop for interested staff. <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/lawman/about/teaching-and-learning/seminars-2009>



[L to R] Professor Belinda Probert, Professor Raymond Harbridge, Professor John Biggs, Professor Catherine Tang, Professor David Spencer

Staff Development & Training

Many academic staff took advantage of the opportunity to be trained before the start of semester in using new AV equipment in their teaching spaces. As a result we have had less stress, fewer complaints, and happier students generally. We will offer this training again before each semester as we will be progressively upgrading AV equipment across all campuses.

Over 100 continuing academic staff have now completed the new 3 day workshop *"Effective Teaching for Higher Learning: Practical, Research-based Strategies"*, and again the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive – even from some who approached the experience with considerable scepticism.

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ctlc/workshops/schedule.php?fldWorkshopTID=3>

The Vice-Chancellor, and other senior academic managers, plan to enrol later this semester. Meanwhile, there are two dozen participants in the new Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

Donydji Project – from little things, big things grow.....

In my last newsletter there was a small article about a long-standing relationship between La Trobe and the Donydji Homeland Centre in North East Arnhem Land. In June, four undergraduate students with an interest in community development spent two weeks with the community. They report that this was a life-changing experience, and two of them now hope to enrol in postgraduate education courses so they can return to the Northern Territory to teach in remote communities.

At the same time, the Dean of Education, Professor Lorraine Ling, met with the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training to determine ways in which La Trobe can assist in the training and education of Indigenous assistant teachers. This may also lead to opportunities for education students to undertake teaching

practicums in remote communities in the Northern Territory.

Plans are in place for archaeology staff and students to visit later this year, and if these initiatives are successful for both the University and the community, we hope to expand the exchanges to other areas, such as health sciences, linguistics and tourism. The principle behind these exchanges is that they not only provide unique professional and personal experiences for students and staff, but they enable us to provide the young people of Donydji with additional skills for developing meaningful and ongoing employment in their community.



Stephanie Woollard (2nd year International Development Student) with Erica, on a recent visit to the Donydji Homeland Centre