

Developing Program Leader Networks and Resources to Enhance Learning and Teaching in Multicampus Universities

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Project Rationale, Aims and Outcomes

It is internationally recognised that higher education is experiencing unprecedented change that is at once rapid, discontinuous and unpredictable (Kogan & Teichler, 2007; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Nowhere are the effects of this change more evident than in the evolving nature of academic work and the pressures this places on those charged with leadership responsibilities in universities. The ALTC-funded study entitled 'Learning Leaders in Times of Change' (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008) yielded a comprehensive analysis of a broad sweep of leadership roles across Australian universities. The rationale for the proposed project lies in the imperative to apply the findings of Scott et al's study in institutional contexts. This project will do so in three ways: first, it focuses on one leadership role in particular – that of Program Leader (or equivalent) – which was identified in the Scott et al study as one of the most pivotal leadership roles in the university; second, the project will road-test the online leadership tool, developed as part of the *Learning Leaders* project; and third, the study takes into account one of the most potent, yet under-investigated, factors shaping academic work and student learning, that is, institutional type.

The project aims to build institution-wide capacity among Program Leaders across disciplines in three large multicampus universities. As a result, this study will enhance learning and teaching by building capacity among those with front-line responsibility for leading teams of colleagues in curriculum design and delivery at department/school level. The project complements the UTas-led project entitled '*Enabling and developing leadership in multi-campus universities through the development of communities of practice*'. The latter will develop a quality framework for cross-campus teaching, providing broad support for leaders of learning and teaching, however it will not specifically focus on the role of Program Leader.

Using a systemic, organisational learning framework, key outcomes of the proposed project will be:

- a) development and evaluation of a model for capacity-building among early career and experienced Program Leaders in multicampus universities;

b) identification of the qualities of *effective* Program Leaders in multicampus contexts, based on feedback from supervisors, that will inform sharing of good practice and succession planning, recruitment and induction for future

c) generalisable strategies and resources for developing the broader organisational environment in which leadership for learning and teaching occurs (see Marshall, 2006).

Deliverables will include:

- 1 A comprehensive Program Leader resource website including nationally benchmarked good practice examples and an evidence-based module for policy makers to encourage a systemic approach to capacity building in multicampus contexts. This will be designed to complement but not replicate existing resources (eg the 'Building academic leadership for course coordinators' resource at Curtin).
- 2 A workshop manual (hard copy and online) with evidence-based resources to guide those responsible for inducting and supporting experienced Program Leaders, particularly in multi-campus environments.
- 3 Four half-day regional forums (in collaboration with the UTas project) to widen Program Leader networks and develop a community of practice among key Program Leaders and those who support them.
- 4 Consolidated Program Leader networks, applying strategies of sustainable stakeholder engagement in the three participating universities, yielding models for Reference Group institutions to adapt to their unique multicampus contexts.

2009 Project Dissemination Plan

- Representation and participation in the ALTC Leadership Program meeting, 18 – 19 February, 2009, including poster presentation;
- Co-presentation with UTas ALTC Multicampus Project, 6 – 9 July, 2009.

Progress to date

The team has had two telephone meetings and one face-to-face meeting with a combination of team members present. Follow up consultations and sharing of meeting minutes has occurred with all project team members. A P/time project officer has been appointed at the lead institution.

As a result of the meetings to date, the 2009 timeframe has been further developed and revised. Specific tasks have been discussed, mapped, and allocated to relevant team members. Communication protocols have been established for the remainder of the project including development of data collection tools for implementation phase.

The Reference group is being finalised and will include an ALTC representative.