Shaping Futures

Dennis O’Brien

If you were to ask me what really struck me most about the very early days of the college, I’d actually say it was the sense of excitement. It was almost like set of excitement bubbling underneath, as though we somehow intuitively understood that we were doing something really interesting and innovative.

Richard (Dick) Walker

The whole campus was bush, things always were in those days when you penned a new building or school it was bush, and a building sat on it, and from there on you worried about your paths and roads.

Elizabeth (Betty) Smith

The roadway up to the college was also unsealed so that was rather dangerous in very wet weather, particularly going downhill.

Pat Thomas

There were three hundred and twenty students I think in primary. They were alphabetically listed, 1A primary was all the Abbotts and Andrews and all the A’s. And if you were Zycowski, you were 1H.

Keith Tronc

I suppose in terms of general attitudes; it was like a big friendly high school.

There were very close relationships between staff and students. I can recall college camps existed from year 1 and the initial one was in November 1969. We’ve always got to know our students well, and there’s always concern for student welfare.

Elizabeth (Betty) Smith

On these trips, the students saw me in a different light. We just mixed more informally. In the early days the students called their lecturers by Mr or Miss or Doctor. But on these trips I was just plain Betty to these students, or in fact, lots of times, just Smithy and I didn’t mind that at all.

Keith Tronc

I played myself in the college Australian Rules Football team, I was ruckman there, and I also played in the college cricket team, so there’s a kind of bond between staff and students you don’t really see to the same extent today.

Elizabeth (Betty) Smith

Quite a few of our students were from country areas, away from home for the first time. I was the person I think they could come and just talk to about various matters, not only their academic life, but their personal life too.
Betty Smith, she was the Dean of Women, and we were a partnership in a sense, because she was looking after the welfare of females in the institution, naturally it fell to me to look after the males, to be truthful, she looked after them as well, she was a popular lady.

The social functions were excellent, we had all sorts of functions, social events, and some people who were science lecturers turned out to be excellent pianists. All sorts of people wanted to get up and sing, who were lecturers in other areas, the Phys Ed staff were always good dancers. And put the rest of us to shame. We had wine bottling.

The wine was pretty dreadful, the bottling was completely unhygienic, but on the other hand, the afternoon was incredibly successful.

Keith Tronc

The highlight of the year was the breaking up day assembly because on that day someone would come from the education department with all the appointments to schools for the following year and all the students and all the staff would listen as names were called out, and there’d be snorts of derision and catcalls as someone was appointed to upper Woop Woop creek, and everyone felt sympathetic for those drawing the short straw, but it was a very close, almost a family community, because it was so small.

(Unknown) There were some really exciting things going on, and I put a lot of that back to Andy Nimmo, because I think what he did was two really important things. The first was, he picked the staff he wanted to pick, and the second thing is, he brought a few older people over that he really trusted.

(Unknown) And nobody contradicted what Andy wanted to do, he was innovative, he was courageous, he had the kind of influence and power within the department of education that allowed us to build something to his image.

(Unknown) I look back now and wonder, how he had the insight to do what he did, because the 70s were exceptionally exciting times for the campus, and there is no doubt that Andy created the environment that enabled that to happen.

John Stevenson

Bill Hall was the director of the campus in Mt Gravatt College of Advanced Education times and he had an interest in research, and I understand he had very interesting sideline interest which was antique furniture, so he was an innovator and a pioneer. I’d say he was a very colorful person but a very contributing and innovative director. People on the campus were very supportive of becoming part of Griffith University; I think a large part of that was because of the research culture of being in a university, where research becomes central to our work. So it’s really quite a different faculty from the kind of faculty it was in those days.

Mike Davies

Special education dates right to the beginnings of the Mt Gravatt campus, so back 40 years is when special education started out, and I think it’s probably fair to say it’s been a flagship program for this campus and this university for a long time now.

Wendi Beamish
I think the strength of our special education program has always been the strong links made between the theory and the practice. There has been a emphasis on an evidence-based, a research base and that strategy base for working with a diverse range of kids with special needs.

Mike Davies

One of the prime trainers of special educators in the state, in fact the nation, so we would have a reputation up there with the best of those in the country.

Wendi Beamish

I still enjoy coming up the hill every day. I don’t see a great deal of difference from when I came up the hill in 1975 and I find it just as satisfying, only different, working with undergraduate and postgraduates, who want to, in and of themselves, go out and be very effective working with children, families and schools improving quality of life for students and for families with special needs. So yes, I’m as passionate and committed now, as I was in the past.

Kay Hartwig

Here at Mt Gravatt, we train primary music specialists, as well as secondary music specialists, and now, over the last five/six years, we’ve trained instrumental music teachers, who go into schools, especially into Education Queensland, to teach instrumental music in the schools. Yes, we still use traditional instruments, even those little recorders, which have been used for many years, but we also have a great digital arts lab, where a lot the work has been done there as well. I’m the convenor of the international programs, and the new initiative that the mount Gravatt campus has is providing articulation programs for the Canadian college students. In education, they can come over here and do a Bachelor of Arts in education. For those who want to continue study, they’re able to stay on for one more year and do a graduate diploma of education primary and that qualifies them as teachers, so they can then seek work back in Canada or in fact around the world, so it’s a very exciting new development in education here at Mt Gravatt campus.

Donna Pendergast

The Gold Coast campus is the most recent campus, so the buildings here are relatively new. So too is the school then of Education and Professional studies. I think what makes it different is that it’s the growing campus a lot of student are choosing to come because of that newness and also we have a strong or large Canadian cohort here, so our Canadian students choose to come to the Gold Coast region and many of them are completing Masters of Teaching in either Primary or Secondary programs. So that gives us, a unique kind of profile on the coast.

Wayne Usher

I think that because it’s got the Gold Coast lifestyle I think it’s attracted a lot more casual type of atmosphere but in saying that, it still has a high level of expectations, from our students and there is a degree of professionalism we expect our students to have as they come in, and it's fully supported by the staff here, and it's an expectation that students are
professional in their approach and they are actually quite relaxed and it’s fantastic to see them coming through and implementing a lot of that professionalism in their careers.

Desley Bird

Today I’ve got the first years, and we’re working with a video clip, Mr President by Pink, looking at the semiotics of it, so we’re looking at the audio, the gestural, so we all share that together, what they could find in that one clip. Multi-literacies is more than one mode of communication in the text, so besides the print based text, they’re looking at the visual, the audio, the gestural, the spacial, all those things, so they all fit together to make it multi-literacies, so when these students go out to schools on pracs, they will take some of this knowledge with them and hopefully show some of the teachers in using multi-literacies in the classroom.

Glenn Finger

And it’s great that Mt Gravatt is celebrating its 40th anniversary because there’s a long tradition of making significant contribution to our community, not just our Queensland community, but our Australian and international communities. I was a member of the virtual faculty that started the Griffith Honours College and these are our best and brightest. The graduates from Griffith have played a major role in educating students who have become future leaders globally around the world. So this underpins to me, my philosophy around teaching, that it’s the most important profession on the planet.

Wayne Usher

I try to develop relationships with my students that are positive around cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual levels. In that respect, teaching is such a broad area that requires so many different hats to put on and to be successful, you have to be – you have to go beyond just teaching content, and address the students’ individual needs.

Barrie O’Connor

The Logan campus was set up 11 years ago, designed to pick up on that corridor between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Griffith is very fortunate to be within that region because the city and surrounding areas are quite diverse in the nature of its population. Very strong Pacific population, indigenous population, refugees from Africa. Mix of ages is very important for Logan. We have about 50% mature age students, and their wisdom and wide experience of life is lovely match to the youthfulness and recency of school experience for those who’ve just left year 12. One of the major points of difference about Logan is actually has cows on the campus. They occasionally break through the fence and stand at the doors and watch them open and close and we wonder they’ll travel down the corridor at any time. But importantly, we have a course that’s a double degree for the bulk of the students. But some elect to do a double degree in Human Services and Primary Teaching. One of the exciting initiatives that have come out of Logan has been the work of Dr Judith Kearney; she has worked with local school children and elders in the Samoan community to develop a set of readers. This gives students an opportunity to create artwork and to read material in their own language. That initiative has been picked up by other schools on the north coast and those readers are being transferred into electronic media, so they can be accessed on the web. Our outreach into the community is really important. We have a number of ways of
reaching into the community, one of them is particularly targeting students who have not probably thought of coming to university, and so we do some mentoring with our own students who have reached that point, and go out to the schools and say, hey, you can come uni, it’s something you might like to consider doing.

Greer Johnson

Griffith generally has a philosophy, a mission of social justice, and it particularly so in Education, in the research centre here, that is basis of our work. We look at social disadvantage and we look at ways we can intervene to close the gap. And most of the research that we conduct does produce practical outcomes in that manner. We look at disadvantage across the lifespan, and so, we have researchers working in early childhood, looking at early intervention into children with autism, we have then some projects looking at youth transition, particularly youth who are at risk, and we’re looking at mature age workers and the sorts of knowledge and competencies they need, they report they need to stay in work.

Rod Gardner

Applied linguistics, it’s an academic discipline that looks at language and how language is used, and the main areas of research that I do are in conversational analysis, which is looking at how people talk together and so some of that work is with indigenous Australians. So we do field work up in the Northern Territory, it’s an indigenous community and we’re looking at language in the classroom there, and we’re really trying to say is there kind of a cultural divide between the indigenous kids and the mainly white European teachers.

Dale Kerwin

Now my area of interest is Australian history, the shared reality of these history, the clash of cultures, and there’s a lot of stories that should be told and we need to embrace aboriginal people within the history of this country, there’s a shared history and it’s a history that should now be told. Today we’re now included in the preamble of the Australian constitution, however we need to take that step further and inscribe us on the body of history, a bit like how our aboriginal people inscribe their history on the bodies, and we need to do this, so we feel good about the contribution we’ve made to Australia.

Penny Bundy

This is the first university in Australia to offer a degree in applied theatre and the first faculty to which is looking at theatre for other purposes, usually social justice agenda which this school is very strong with. So we have students who work with refugee populations, we have people like myself who work with adult survivors of institutional abuse, we’ve got students in the valley at the moment working with homeless people, working in the hospital, so lots of different contexts where theatre is being used for some purpose other than entertainment.

Bruce Burton

These are the theatre direction students and they’re both applied theatre students and drama education students who are starting to direct and rehearse the plays they will stage
publicly in about 8 weeks time. Students work together, the education students and the
applied theatre students work together and work with each other and learn from each other.
The applied theatre is a very new and unique program to Griffith but as well as that our
drama teaching program has been more and more successful and we’re busy taking of the
schools in Queensland and elsewhere with our drama teachers.

Julie Dunn

Because of our international reputation in the field of drama, we’re invited to form a
partnership with the Hong Kong Arts School to offer a Master of Drama education, so each
year, our staff members travel to Hong Kong and we implement a Master of Drama
Education. The students in Hong Kong graduate with a Griffith degree which they are very
excited about, and they have all of the access to Griffith’s fabulous resources. We hope that
a lot of non-Western theatre can be learnt by our applied theatre students here so that they
don’t become so culturally narrow in their knowledge of applied theatre and enhance our
program as well to ensure our students have a broader understanding of world theatre and
we’re very excited by that connection.

Glenn Finger

The best part, the best part of my job has been to work with the students and I go away, I go
home a very happy person at the end of the day because I get energized by the energy of
my students, I think our students at Griffith University, the education of our young people is
in really good hands.

Greer Johnson: I was born in North Queensland, and I guess I’ll talk most directly
about my work with first years in the faculty, first years who want to be English teachers,
mainly, and I love that, because a lot of our students come from families that haven’t been to
university before, and much I guess, like I was, and I get a huge amount of satisfaction, out
of seeing them develop and enthusiasm, and become enthusiastic for the profession.

(Unknown) In a sense, it’s the beginning of a new era, life does begin at 40, in my view, for
the college, it’s very forward planning now, we have a vision for the future in terms of
shaping futures, it’s certainly not as though we’re banking on our laurels, but in my view the
foundations that were put down over 40 years are very very strong and will serve us well
into the future.

Dale Kerwin

In 1985 I came to this institution hoping to have a conversation with mainstream. Griffith
University has given me the skills, the self-esteem, and the encouragement to continue my
grandfather’s conversation, and I see in the future, that we’re going to have more of that
conversation, and will actually be going along hand-in-hand, instead of an arm around
picking me up and walking with me, it’ll be a shared relationship, based on respect, and
tolerance.

Claire Wyatt-Smith

We have new understandings about knowledge, about learning, about the needs of students
in the 21st century. We’re looking increasingly at the relationship of creativity, analytic and
evaluative skills, and of course working to develop communication practices in new ways,
new uses of technology. So it’s not hard to stay energized in the profession, especially when you’re working with such a wonderful group of people, who constitute the staff of Griffith Education.

Marilyn McMeniman

I’d like to send a message to all who have worked in this wonderful faculty of education as we celebrate the 40 years, we started with a very strong boutique campus here, that extended to Logan and the Gold Coast of course, I just want to assure everybody that I feel that the strengths that’s currently here, both in research and learning and teaching and the wonderful engagement with our communities, with our schools, with the profession, with the VET sector, with early childhood, to all those education sectors, I think that that relationship will get stronger in the future, I expect it will and I’m sure it is, so congratulations on the 40 year anniversary. Onwards and upwards and ever better.