

TAFE Directors Australia—
LH Martin Institute
Tertiary Education Missions:
USA, April 2011
England and Scotland, June—July 2011

2011

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LH Martin Institute

For Higher Education Leadership and Management





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The expansion of higher education in Anglophone systems is taking place in part through community colleges (United States of America and Canada), further education colleges (United Kingdom), polytechnics (New Zealand) and TAFE institutes (Australia). Higher education in these institutions is growing and will become an important part of each country's higher education system.

While each country is at a different stage of development, similar issues confront them such as the position of their colleges within competitive higher education systems; the extent to which policy supports them; responding to funding and quality assurance requirements; and, building scholarship and academic governance.

It is important that institutions in each country learn from others through developing links, exchanging perspectives, and comparing and contrasting the development of systems in their respective countries.

It is therefore with great pleasure that 2011 sees the launch of this inaugural joint Occasional Paper by TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) with LH Martin Institute, *Tertiary Education Missions: USA, April 2011; England and Scotland, June–July 2011*. It is testament to the interest by LH Martin Institute to widen collaboration with TAFE Directors Australia, as together we seek deeper professional development support for our TAFE membership and the wider sector which is experiencing widespread restructure and change.

Our collaboration involved two education missions: in April the TDA–LH Martin Institute Tertiary Education Mission to American Community Colleges, reviewed the experience of 17 states which have legislated to allow community colleges to offer degrees. Next, in June, there was a joint visit to

review Further Education (FE) colleges and reform in England and Scotland, by Pam Caven (Director Policy and Stakeholder Engagement, TDA) and Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan (LH Martin Institute).

United States of America

The Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) generously hosted the joint Tertiary Education Mission to the American Community Colleges. Representatives comprised executives from TAFE institutes, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and group training provider MEGT, who joined us and the Chair of TDA, Bruce Mackenzie PSM (CEO, Holmesglen Institute) to attend the 2011 National Convention of the Association of American Community Colleges (AACC) in New Orleans. The AACC Convention featured much discussion on reconstruction efforts in training across the city and regional states of the United States (US), coping with the continued economic downturn. The visit included a tour of the reconstruction effort through New Orleans, where we gained an appreciation of the horrific drama to so many thousands of residents when overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The US Mission proceeded to Miami, Florida, which has been recognised as a pioneer in supporting colleges offering degrees. The Florida Department of Education participated in a roundtable discussion along with senior executives from the Florida Community Colleges, at Edison College. Other visits included to Miami Dade College – including the Mission being invited as guests for the spectacular launch of its Miami Dade Culinary Institute – before a visit to Broward College, Florida.

Our thanks to Dr Beth Hagan, Executive Director of CCBA, who educated us about the US college system, brokered links with leading community

college representative bodies and leaders, helped organise the learned seminars and college visits so we could meet those leaders. Jeanne Westphal, formerly a director of Miami Dade College and an acclaimed leader in past US administrations in tourism policy, supported with expert advice, managed the logistics and planning for the visits to community colleges, and organised key aspects of our US visit at Miami Dade, and while based in Miami. Our sincere thanks to both Beth Hagan and Jeanne Westphal.

England and Scotland

We are indebted to Professor Gareth Parry from the University of Sheffield who identified and helped introduce Pam Caven and Leesa Wheelahan to key people and institutions in England, and to Professor Mike Osborne from the University of Glasgow and Emeritus Professor Jim Gallacher from the University of Glasgow Caledonian University who did so in Scotland. In addition to making these connections, all three were generous with their time and advice, and active participation in meetings.

We pay special tribute to John Widdowson who is the Chair of the Mixed Economy Group (which represents further education colleges in England with substantial provision in higher education) and the principal of New College Durham. John helped broker the TDA-LH Martin Institute joint visit to England, organised events, acted as chauffeur, and helped us to understand the tertiary education system in the United Kingdom, and the particular issues confronting mixed economy FE colleges.

The Association of Colleges (*the English analogue of TDA*) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service organised a half-day seminar with leaders of the FE sector and key stakeholders in government and agencies that support the FE sector. Julian

Gravatt, Nick Davy and Joy Mercer from the Association of Colleges in England and John McCann from Scotland's Colleges (*the analogue of TDA in Scotland*) provided support, advice and insights and helped organise and broker various meetings more broadly.

The literature about the community college system in the USA and the FE college system in England and Scotland yields insights into the complexity of these systems and the issues that practitioners face in implementing higher education in further education. These two joint study trips have afforded opportunities for the participants to achieve a deeper understanding of these systems and their similarities with and differences to Australia.

We hope that you enjoy reading the excellent contributions of those who participated in both these international missions.



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Thank you ...

We wish to thank the following people for participating in meetings with us.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

New Orleans visit

Association of American Community Colleges (AACC)

Dr Walter Bumphus, President and CEO, AACC

James F McKenney, Vice President of Economic Development and International Programs, AACC

Michael Allen, Interim Associate Vice President, International Programs and Services, AACC

Dr George Boggs, CEO Emeritus, AACC, and Project Leader, College Brain Trust (CBT)

League for Innovation in the Community College

Board members including: Dr Jill Wakefield, Dr Rufus Glasper, Dr Mary Spilde, Dr Anne Kress, and Dr Constance Carroll

Gerardo E de los Santos, President and CEO, League for Innovation

Cheri Jessup, Membership Services Specialist, League for Innovation

Community Colleges Baccalaureate Association (CCBA)

Dr Roy Flores, President, CCBA

Dr Beth Hagan, Executive Director, CCBA

Dr Malcolm Grothe, Seattle CC District, and Board member, CCBA

Florida visit

Ben Wildavsky, *Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation*

At Edison College: Kristen Zimmerman, Dean of Baccalaureate and University Programs; Dr Douglas Nay, Department Chair and Professor of Management; Dennette Foy, (former) Associate Dean of Professional and Technical Studies; Dr Mary Lewis, (former) Associate Dean of Health Professions; Dr Erin Harrel, Dean of School of Education and Charter Schools; Mary Myers, Dean of Edison Online; Dr Robert Beeson, Lee Campus Vice President for Instruction and District Dean of Arts and Sciences; Dr Eileen DeLuca, Associate Dean of College Preparatory and Developmental Education; William Shuluk, Director of Library Services; Gina Doeble, Vice President for Financial Services; Dr Edith Pendleton, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives; and Steve Nice, Director of Facilities and Planning

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Dr Monica Ramirez de Arellano, Dean of Academic Affairs, *Broward College*

Jeanne Westphal, President, *Jeanne Westphal Associates, Miami, FL*

ENGLAND

Dr Jean Kelly, Director of Professional Development,
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Susan Hayday, Director of Workplace Learning
Strategy, *Foundation Degree Forward*

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Department for Business, *Innovation and Skills*

Professor Gareth Parry, *University of Sheffield*

Ashley Langdon, General Manager, *MEGT (UK) Limited*

Professor Mike Campbell, *Senior consultant to government and international government agencies on vocational education and training*

Professor Neil Garrod, Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
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(Teaching & Learning); Shona Biggin, Marketing &
Communications Officer;
Christopher Groucutt, Subject Forum Chair;
Gemma Feaver, Assessments Manager;
Claire Deacon, Head of Faculty Administration;
Kassie Foran, UPC Student Experience;
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Dot Coe, Program Leader BA(Hons) Education
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At South Tyneside College: Patricia Stenhouse,
Head of Faculty, Higher Education and Professional
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SCOTLAND

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Linda McTavish CBE, Principal and Chief Executive, *Annie'sland College*

Susan Walsh, Principal and Chief Executive, and staff at *Cardonald College*

John McCann, Director – *Next Practice, Scotland's Colleges*

Ronnie Knox, Principal and Chief Executive, *North Glasgow College*

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TDA-LH Martin Institute
Tertiary Education Mission to the USA
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US Community Colleges and the development of 4-year degrees

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Bruce Mackenzie PSM,
*Chief Executive, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
Co-mission Leader, and Chair, TDA*

Bruce Mackenzie has been the Chief Executive of Holmesglen since 1982. In that time, Holmesglen has become one of Australia's pre-eminent tertiary providers with educational programs in secondary, vocational and higher education. Holmesglen has a range of international consultancies in the Middle East and India, as well as a large international student program.

Bruce was a founding member of TAFE Directors Australia, its Deputy Chair for nine years and Chair in 2010. He has undertaken national and international consultancies and has spoken at a number of national conferences on tertiary education.

He was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding services to vocational education in 2005.

Introduction

In the United States of America (USA) there are 987 community colleges with 11.8 million students, the majority studying full-time. Only 40 to 50 of the 987 colleges offer degrees, the rest offer associate degrees. The first community college degree was introduced in 1960, with growth accelerating since 2007. More than 300 community college degrees are now available.

Why a shift to degrees?

There are a number of reasons motivating the delivery of degrees in community colleges. One reason is that it has been a way of addressing local skills shortages, illustrating the local focus of community colleges. As well, colleges have sought to address skills shortages in specific areas. Across the United States (US), there is a shortage of teachers in disciplines such as biology. There is also a skills crisis in the health care sector. Many of the new courses offered by community colleges are in Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Cardio Pulmonary Science, Orthotics and Prosthetics. Of the colleges offering degrees, many run nursing programs which are strongly supported by unions, hospitals and universities.

The impact of technological advancements combined with high unemployment has encouraged many Americans to invest in their education by retraining at a higher level. There are also government targets to increase the population's education level. Currently, 54 million adult workers in the US do not have degrees. The result has been an increase in the demand for degrees over associate degrees. There are very few, if any, diplomas offered by community colleges. Across the US, there has been concern that community college graduates find it difficult to enter universities. Another factor

is that in some sectors, employers are seeking professional accreditation (for example, security). This has led to the creation of new degree-level courses.

Development of community college degrees

To get permission to offer a degree, a community college must demonstrate to the State Accreditation Agency that there is a skills shortage in their local community. The college must also obtain the permission of their local state universities. Permission is granted if the community college degree can be shown not to harm the university's offerings. Understandably, this has caused tensions between the community colleges and universities.

Once a degree is accredited, it never has to be re-accredited. It is only the institution that must be re-accredited and this is done on a five- to seven-year cycle.

All community college degrees are 'applied'; however, they also contain four General Education courses: literacy, numeracy, English and science.

A community college offering a degree is funded by the State at 85% of the university rates. State funding equates to about 50% of tuition costs, with the balance paid by the student. Federal government loans are available to students to assist with their education costs. Equipment and capital grants come from the State and, generally, the facilities are of a very high standard. Meeting with Faculty Heads, it became apparent that few seemed aware of the real cost of a degree. They knew the cost of staff and materials but had no idea of costs associated with equipment, facilities, corporate overheads, etc.

All community colleges seem to spend a lot of time pre-testing students to ensure that they have

the basic skills to succeed in a degree program. Student retention and compensatory support is a feature of community colleges. However, the overall completion rate for associate degrees is poor. Within community colleges, there is a focus on completion rates. Taxpayers' money is used to educate students and they are therefore expected to perform. Hence the focus on entry level assessment.

Students doing degrees tend to be adults and, as a result, many degrees are offered at night and on Saturdays. Because of the US recession, most programs are offered in a blended learning mode and online education is growing rapidly. A special delivery model for a 16-week semester is eight weeks of direct delivery and eight weeks of 'online' learning. The Online Centre can offer the program fully online if a Faculty does not want to take responsibility for that aspect of delivery. Online departments are seen as cost recovery or profit centres. In many colleges, the nursing simulation centre is also expected to be a cost recovery centre.

Teaching loads and qualifications are similar to those at Holmesglen (32 weeks x 15 hours). However, most staff are employed only for nine months and 480 Teaching Duty Hours (TDH). Because of poor salaries (USD60,000 for a nine-month contract), most teachers take on an additional three-month contract. Staff ratios were 60% permanent, 40% contract casual (Associates).

Class sizes were larger than generally found in Australia, typically 35 students per class. There is no requirement for scholarship and AUQA-type audits do not exist.

General impression

Australian TAFE institutes that offer degrees are subject to far more rigorous scrutiny than those

US community colleges offering degrees. There is no quality agency, no requirement to develop a scholarly culture, and no re-accreditation of curricula.

All community college degrees are funded at 85% of the University rate. They are able to offer degrees only in the skills shortage areas identified by the State. This is consistent with TAFE Directors Australia's (TDA) position that Commonwealth Supported Places should be available for degrees in areas of skills shortage.

Many community colleges developed their degrees on the basis of social constructivist theory using more problem-based and project-based curricula.

From a community college perspective, private providers are helping the market because they focus on enrolments not completions. That said, community colleges have little data on completions, although it seems inevitable that they will start to collect such data.

An interesting business model put forward by one college is outlined below:



Considering the institutions visited, some common themes emerged.

All colleges seemed oblivious to any emerging institutional issues involved in the shift to degrees, that is, staffing requirements, and scholarship. Most of the larger faculties (for example, Education, Business, and Health) have developed 'scaffolding' to

assist lecturing staff to get started (by the provision of support materials) and offer balanced learning.

Generally, the ratio of students was 60% females and 40% males. Again generally, community colleges do not offer apprenticeship programs but concentrate primarily on associate degrees.

Entry testing and remedial support appeared to be a major characteristic of all degrees. Online education is growing significantly.

Student fees are rising as government contributions fall. But student fees (that are capped) are not rising as fast as falling government revenue. I think that in each State there is likely to be a consolidation of the community colleges offering degrees. Selected colleges will probably become 'applied universities' or something similar, and have self-accrediting powers.

The economic recession is impacting significantly on community colleges and their students. With unemployment rates high, colleges are experiencing unprecedented demand for their programs. There is far greater marketing of fee and payment options for students than is typically found on Australian TAFE campuses.

Student Services were primarily focused on activities for students, occupational placement and financial counselling (course costs). Student Services were funded by student fees and, in some cases, through revenue raised from sources such as car parking fees. On many community college campuses there are University Study Centres (offices of local universities).

Implications for Holmesglen

Student fees will inevitably rise in Australia, therefore Holmesglen may wish to consider the

community college model for the student enrolment centre. This has three separate sections:

- Course Enrolment
- Financial Aid
- Academic Advisory.

Money raised from car parking could be used to fund security and student services/activities. There is also the possibility of running facilities as cost recovery centres, as with community college online departments and nursing simulation centres.

While the libraries in community colleges were not as spectacular as the Holmesglen Learning Commons, they had wall TV screens and lounge chairs to create a more informal atmosphere.

Maximum student attendance was for 12 hours in the first week followed by online instruction in the second week. This mode of delivery increases productivity and reduces staff costs.

Around the campus there were advertising signs about new degrees and promoting success: 'Finish what you have started', etc.

There may be an opportunity to establish student/staff exchanges with Miami Dade Community College (175,000 students) or Broward College. These would be faculty-specific, short-term exchanges.

There may be interest in developing specialist teacher education programs, for example, in maths, science and biology.

There is a parallel with the interest in health sciences in the US and the major focus on nursing at Holmesglen.

Conclusion

The trip was interesting. It confirms a world-wide trend to degrees in 'TAFE'-type institutions. At the Community Colleges Conference, there were presentations from Canada, UK, Australia, USA and Hong Kong. With the exception of Australia, *all* non-university degrees in government institutions are at least partially funded by government.



Leesa Wheelahan (PhD, MEd, GradDipEd, BA, GradDip ComDev)

Associate Professor, LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne Co-mission Leader

Leesa Wheelahan has about 18 years' experience in tertiary education in Australia, starting as a TAFE teacher at Victoria University in 1994. Following this, she worked in policy and academic development at VU, and as a teacher of VET teachers at Southern Cross University and at Griffith University. Her research interests include VET and tertiary education policy, relations between the VET and higher education sectors, student pathways and credit transfer, student equity, and the role of knowledge in vocational curriculum. She is now an associate professor in adult and vocational education at the LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne.

Introduction

I was the LH Martin Institute component of the joint TDA/LH Martin Institute Mission to the United States of America (USA) in April 2011 to study community colleges that offer four-year bachelor degrees and, along with Pam Caven (Director, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement, TDA), undertook an extended visit in June 2011 to the United Kingdom (UK) to study higher education in further education (FE) colleges. I've learnt a lot about both systems, and in particular, have been able to contrast direct engagement with practitioners and policy makers with the research literature that discusses higher education in community colleges and FE colleges. Overall, the research literature effectively outlines and analyses the benefits and difficulties of this sort of provision, and the dilemmas and opportunities that colleges face in both systems. I find this quite encouraging as a researcher. However, the literature can only go so far in providing insights into other systems and in understanding their complexity and the issues practitioners face. These two trips have been very helpful in deepening my understanding of the two systems and their differences and similarities to Australia. Rather than outline the specifics of each trip (as this has been done in other contributions to this *Occasional Paper*), this paper compares and contrasts the United States (US), UK and Australian systems, and identifies issues we need to think about in Australia.

Comparing the systems

On first blush, the Australian system seems to be quite different to the other countries because Australia has a much more differentiated tertiary education system than either the US or the UK. Until recently, our tertiary education sectors were differentiated by type of institution and type of program that they offered: TAFE institutes

offered competency-based VET qualifications; and universities offered degrees and postgraduate qualifications. In the US, community colleges have always been regarded as *higher education* institutions, and they have been differentiated from universities because the latter offer four-year bachelor degrees, whereas community colleges offer two-year short cycle higher education qualifications. In contrast, FE colleges in England and Scotland are not regarded as part of the higher education sector (and in this way they are similar to Australia), but they have always offered a broader range of qualifications than we do in Australia that includes FE qualifications, competency-based qualifications and higher education qualifications. They also have a much wider remit in teaching senior school qualifications to students aged 16–19 years than does TAFE in Australia (although TAFE is increasingly taking on this role). Australia's system is perhaps most similar to that in the UK.

While big and important differences remain, the systems are starting to converge because they are responding to similar economic and social pressures, and this means Australia's system is starting to look more like that in the UK and US (although there is a long way to go). TAFEs are still mainly identified as VET institutions and associated with VET qualifications, and universities with higher education institutions and higher education qualifications, but this is starting to change as institutions in each sector increasingly offer qualifications associated with the other sector.

The changes that are affecting Australia are having a similar impact on the UK, US, Canada and New Zealand because all are Anglophone countries that have similar liberal market economies. Each country is trying to increase the percentage of its population that has higher level qualifications to respond to

economic demands for a higher skilled workforce. Each country sees tertiary education as crucial to social inclusion because without higher level qualifications, people are more or less excluded from the labour market and from broader participation in society. Each country is using its more vocationally orientated tier of tertiary education to increase access to higher education.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, which was when the last big expansion of higher education took place, Australia and the UK grew their higher education systems through expanding their university systems, while the US just expanded all its higher education institutions, including community colleges. Now, FE colleges in England have a 'special mission' to increase access to higher education through foundation degrees, which are two-year short cycle vocationally orientated higher education qualifications, and they deliver about 10% of undergraduate higher education. Scotland's FE colleges deliver around 20% of higher education through higher national certificates and higher national diplomas which are respectively one-year and two-year short cycle vocationally orientated higher education qualifications. New Zealand's polytechnics are offering degrees, three provinces (out of 10 provinces and three territories) in Canada have authorised their community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees, and 15 of the US's 50 states have authorised their community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. Eleven TAFEs (which includes all of NSW TAFE) in five states and territories have been registered to offer associate degrees and degrees.

Rationale for the provision

Each country has a similar two-fold rationale for expanding access to higher education through its

vocationally orientated tier of tertiary education. The first is to expand access to higher education through more work-focused, applied degrees. In each country, the institutions claim that their provision is more vocationally focused than universities, can produce graduates who are more work-ready and can meet skill needs and shortages more effectively (and often more cheaply). They argue this is because of their closer links to industry.

The second rationale is they argue that their provision is more student-centred and can help expand access to higher education for under-represented students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is because they have more emphasis on preparing students who are academically 'under-prepared' and can offer a more individualised learning experience through smaller classes and more supportive pedagogy. In all cases, these institutions emphasise their orientation to their local communities, their capacity to welcome adults to higher education (as well as young people), and their understanding of the needs of local employers.

Relationships with universities

The position of all these institutions in the vocational tier of tertiary education places them in similar relationships to universities. The tertiary education systems in each country are hierarchically structured so that universities have more funding and status. The US system arguably provides more access to universities for students from community colleges than either the UK or Australia, because some states legislate to specify the percentage of community college students that universities must admit and also mandate the amount of credit they will be given in some programs, but this is not always as straightforward as it appears. Credit arrangements

are only specified for some programs, and credit is less available for vocational and technical programs than it is for academic programs. Community college leaders told us that one reason they were offering degrees was because community college students couldn't get access to universities – demand for places at universities increased as a consequence of the global financial crisis and community college students have had less success in gaining access to universities than other categories of applicants. Even so, one lesson we can learn from this is that universities that don't usually admit TAFE students can be forced to increase access for TAFE students and provide appropriate credit, and not just be bribed to do so.

In Florida, community colleges must demonstrate that there are skills shortages in the area of their proposed degree and apply to their state accrediting body for permission to offer a degree. However, universities are able to submit alternative proposals if they object to particular community college proposals. While in practice this has not been an issue, it does not give community colleges the same scope to offer degrees as universities.

In England, FE colleges must get their foundation degrees accredited (or validated) by a university, and generally speaking, funding for the foundation degree is routed through the university. This means that students studying at the FE college are students of the university, even if the FE college has developed the program. It also means that the university can withdraw places for their own use, as has happened in some cases recently because the English government has placed a cap on higher education places and universities are seeking to maximise their places. Foundation degrees are designed in collaboration with employers and must articulate to a three-year bachelor degree (which

the English call an 'honours degree'). In theory, this gives students access to full degrees, and this often happens in practice, but in some cases students have to compete for places in the degree. Since 2008, FE colleges have been able to apply to the Privy Council to accredit their own foundation degrees. No FE college has been granted this right as yet, but it is expected that a couple of FE colleges with a large amount of higher education provision will soon complete this process.

There are some very good examples of strong partnerships between universities and FE colleges (and there are some very bad ones). The partnership between the University of Plymouth and its partner colleges provides a potential model for Australia to explore. The University of Plymouth College Faculty provides representation of all FE partners on the faculty board, and separate governance arrangements exist between each FE college and the University. FE teachers who teach University of Plymouth awards are associate members of the university and have access to the university's library and professional development activities. Other arrangements are in place to support the development of subject areas, academic standards, consistent assessment practices, staff professional development and engagement of students in higher education life.

In Scotland, FE colleges get their higher national certificates and diplomas accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and so have more autonomy in developing their qualifications, but FE students don't necessarily have guaranteed access to universities or guaranteed levels of credit for previous studies. Degrees in Scotland are four years, unlike the three-year degrees in England. FE colleges are directly funded by government for their higher education provision. The Scottish government is

investing in 'articulation hubs' to improve student articulation and to deepen partnerships between FE colleges and universities. Some FE colleges are considering partnership or franchise arrangements with English universities where they deliver two-year higher national diplomas or foundation degrees that then articulate into the third and final year of a degree, but this seemed to be a controversial proposal among some colleges. An impediment to this may be that English universities will charge significant amounts of money for degrees (around GBP7500 on average, but up to GBP9000), whereas Scottish universities do not charge fees for Scottish students.

Similar challenges

There are similar challenges facing FE colleges in the UK, community colleges in the US and TAFEs in Australia. A problem for both England and Australia is that FE colleges and TAFEs feel that the accreditation process forces them into a 'university' mould of higher education qualifications. In England, this is because universities are the validating body for their qualifications, and in Australia, it is because the accreditation process includes university academics who are competitors on the accrediting bodies but also may have more traditional ideas about what degrees should look like. The requirements for accrediting degrees in non-self-accrediting higher education institutions also specify that degrees should be comparable with degrees offered at universities, and this is often interpreted (so it is argued) that degrees should be like those offered in universities.

Another common challenge is the need to build capacity within institutions to offer higher education qualifications. This includes strong academic governance arrangements, but also

teachers' capacity for scholarship, and the creation of cultures of scholarship within institutions. The literature identifies this as a problem in the UK, US and Australia: teachers report that they need lighter teaching loads to engage in scholarship to teach at the 'higher' level (including in the US), that they need to engage with their professional and disciplinary bodies, and that they need better library and other resources for teaching. Senior managers we spoke to in the US didn't seem to think this was a problem, and we didn't really speak to teachers. The US community colleges didn't seem to consider scholarship as an issue for them because they identified it with research (whereas we try to distinguish between scholarship and research in Australia, at least some of the time). It may be that they do engage in activities that would be regarded as scholarship, but it certainly is not an institutional imperative to develop 'scholarly cultures'. It is in the UK and in Australia where the notion of scholarship is hotly debated. We didn't speak to teachers in all of the six colleges that we visited in England and Scotland, but we did in some, and they reported difficulties in engaging in scholarship, particularly when they were also undertaking higher level qualifications. TAFE teachers also reported this in Australia when colleagues and I undertook the NCVET-funded HE in TAFE project in 2008–09.

All countries have challenges in supporting students moving into higher education. The literature, institutional leaders and teachers generally agree that students need to recognise that they are taking a 'step up' and that more demands will be made of them. The US has a vast literature on 'transition shock' which refers to the difficulties articulating students experience when they move to four-year degrees or four-year colleges (universities). This is because of the higher level demands that are

being made on them in new, more impersonal, learning environments, combined with managing the demands of study with the demands of their personal lives. Given that community college students are often from older and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds (as in the UK and Australia), they are likely to have more complex lives and less academic support they can draw on at home. The US places emphasis on 'remedial support' (an unfortunate term) to a much greater extent than in Australia, and invests in preparing students for studying higher education. England and Scotland also do this through incorporating 'personal development' subjects in their qualifications, which help students acquire the skills they need to study at a higher level. Australia does not do this as effectively, partly because only competency-based programs are publicly funded in TAFE, and training package qualifications generally don't have the development of study skills to study at a higher level in associated qualifications. The new Australian Qualifications Framework now specifies this as an outcome for all qualifications, and hopefully this will be reflected in the design of VET qualifications in future.

Institutions in the UK, US and Australia also face challenges because they will always be under scrutiny and have to defend the quality of their qualifications against those who regard them as second class higher education qualifications. This is because their students are more likely to be academically under-prepared; their staff have higher teaching loads, are less likely to engage in research and probably won't consistently be as highly qualified (usually interpreted as having a PhD); and, because they have tighter ties to industry which raises questions about their academic independence and overly 'applied' qualifications (such as applied

degrees). This may be unfair and unjust, but it is the way it is and institutions need to ensure they can demonstrate the quality of their provision to allay these concerns. Government policies, accreditation and quality assurance processes, and support for capacity building are crucial in supporting institutions to offer high quality qualifications, and to be demonstrably doing so.

Some key lessons for Australia

A key difference between Australia and the UK and US is that higher education in FE colleges and community colleges is publicly funded, whereas it isn't in Australia (with a small number of exceptions). Higher education provision in these institutions in the UK and US has been mapped into public policy and is being used to support government objectives to increase the skills of the workforce, tackle skills shortages, increase the percentage of the population with higher level qualifications, and widen access to higher education. It is also cheaper. Community colleges are funded by government at a lower rate than universities and have lower fees. The US doesn't have income contingent loans and charges real rates of interest on student loans, and this has been a big incentive for students to undertake community college baccalaureate degrees. England is about to embark on high fees for higher education, and FE colleges will not charge as much as universities in their emerging marketised system. The Australian government could consider funding higher education places in TAFE at a somewhat lower rate because they will not be funded to undertake research (as universities are). It is inequitable to withhold public funding for higher education in TAFE in Australia, given that students who undertake degrees in TAFE are more likely to come from

disadvantaged backgrounds compared to those in universities. State governments are increasingly mapping TAFE into their policies to increase access to higher education (particularly in the regions) and increase the skills of the workforce, but this will be hampered as long as TAFE does not have access to public funding for higher education qualifications.

Another key lesson, particularly from the UK, is the importance of developing policies to help ensure the quality of provision of higher education in TAFE. The Quality Assurance Agency in England has worked with FE colleges to ensure the quality of their provision (even if that's not how the FE colleges necessarily perceive it), and institutions such as the Higher Education Academy (the English analogue of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) have had dedicated programs to build capacity for higher education in FE colleges. Government has, in the past, funded a range of programs to develop consortia between universities and FE colleges to build institutional capacity for higher education delivery, and the research funding bodies have provided extensive funding to research higher education in FE colleges (by our standards at least).

Another key lesson – from all countries, including Australia – is that it takes institutional effort to build capacity to offer higher education programs. It is necessary to invest in staff development, scholarly cultures, a higher education experience for students, and academic governance. There also needs to be greater investment in academic support (all institutions in all countries report that students find essay writing and referencing to be agonising) and in resources such as libraries. Partnerships with supportive universities may be one way of contributing to this capacity building, but institutions will need to dedicate sufficient time and resources to develop their higher education

provision. This may be difficult when higher education is still only a small part of what they do and the main funding and institutional effort goes to their 'traditional' programs.

Finally, and in conclusion, while there are important differences between each country, there are sufficient similarities and common interests to support the development of an international community of practice of institutions that offer higher education in community colleges in the US and Canada, FE colleges in the UK, polytechnics in New Zealand and TAFEs in Australia. Such a community of practice would support institutional and policy learning in all countries, support the development of networks, and facilitate exchanges of staff and students. There is much we can learn (and have learnt) from these other countries, just as there is much they can learn from us.



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Introduction

The visit to the Florida Community Colleges emphasised a state approach to the delivery of the baccalaureate program. It also highlighted inconsistencies between states as there is no parallel federal higher education protocol governing the delivery of higher education in the United States of America (USA).

The baccalaureate degree, delivered in the United States (US), is a four-year degree as opposed to the notion of the International Baccalaureate and its equivalency to the NSW High School Certificate. It is a four-year model whereby students would complete the first two-year, lower division, at college and then articulate into a four-year college to complete years three and four. All colleges visited in Florida during this trip offered four-year bachelor degrees as well as the more common '2 + 2'.

As a recently registered higher education provider, TAFE NSW Higher Education has commenced delivery of a three-year bachelor degree. An associate degree is included amongst programs in development, along with the three-year bachelor and a one-year graduate diploma programs. This is being developed as part of an initiative titled 'Tertiary Pathway Degrees'. Not unlike the philosophy of the baccalaureate degree, the Tertiary Pathway associate degree has been introduced as part of the strategy to make higher qualifications academically accessible to those who might not usually choose to undertake such a qualification. The associate degree programs are being developed in partnership with universities, who will then offer graduates automatic articulation into their third and, possibly, fourth years.

What could TAFE NSW Higher Education gain from this examination of the baccalaureate degree model and, in particular, the Florida context?

As much as it was an opportunity to look at the baccalaureate model, it was also an opportunity to evaluate the regulatory systems in place. Obviously all issues raised in this paper are relevant to the Australian national environment, such as the more sympathetic funding models found in the US. But for the benefit of TAFE NSW, what elements of academic and administrative management could we exploit in the development and delivery of our own higher education programs, principally the Tertiary Pathway associate degree? Or is it simply a case of comparing two very different systems and/or environments?

The relevant issues to TAFE NSW and regularly addressed by our colleagues in the US included the impact of the inter-sectoral working relationships in accreditation and articulation, academic support of students and funding.

Accreditation and the inter-sectoral working relationships with universities

'The college must engage in discussions and coordination with public universities and regionally accredited private postsecondary institutions, as outlined in the section of statute below. The proposal must provide evidence of these discussions and coordination.'

Section 1007.33, Florida Statutes (6)(c) requires that prior to developing or proposing a new baccalaureate degree program, all Florida colleges... shall:

1. *Engage in need, demand, and impact discussions with the state university in their service district and other local and regional, accredited postsecondary providers in their region...*¹

The issue of sectoral creep and overlap in the Australian tertiary space is well documented. The

Florida system has a legislated process ensuring that community colleges are delivering what universities do not consider to be within their responsibility. The colleges request that local universities deliver the course. If the universities do not intend to deliver, colleges are free to develop the course. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that this is not always straightforward, this system does define 'niche' to an extent that cannot be debated.

Florida legislation dictates that any student who graduates from an associate degree will be guaranteed admission into a public university degree program's upper two years. That is, the first two years are recognised as a block, in accordance with legislation and underpinned by the Statewide Articulation Manual which is applicable to any institution participating in the Statewide Course Numbering System (SCNS). The SCNS system:

is now used at all public and selected non-public institutions of higher education in Florida (10 state universities, 28 Florida College System institutions, 25 participating non-public postsecondary institutions, and 40 area technical education centres are included in the SCNS).²

Another college visited outside the scope of the delegation, the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), is part of the City University of New York (CUNY). It provides further variation on the baccalaureate model. BMCC offers only the lower level (first two years) of the baccalaureate with articulation into CUNY for the upper level. The governance structure in place oversees both CUNY and BMCC business, including pathways.

There is a broad range of baccalaureate degree programs but dominating all colleges visited are the disciplines of nursing and teaching, reflecting both the skill shortages and the universities' philosophy

on delivering these disciplines. In Florida, 67% of all nursing degrees awarded annually are awarded by Colleges.³

TAFE NSW's Tertiary Pathway degree program, by nature of the agreed developmental relationship with universities, is to some extent putting the question to the universities regarding their intentions to deliver. However, if getting to the point of legislating pathways, both in qualification development and articulation, as seen in Florida, is considered a more consistent approach, it would take some considerable lobbying of the Australian Government and a sizeable realignment in the way the higher education institutions intersect. Could we see a time when the non-university sector is obliged to 'check' with local universities their delivery intentions? US demographics obviously support this model in a way that urbanised Australia and NSW might find difficult to sustain and with the introduction of uncapped places, the environment in which this could be developed is somewhat postponed.

Academic support to students

One of the challenges in developing the Tertiary Pathways associate degrees, with their targeted demographic, is embedding support methodology and/or foundation subjects to ensure students' skills, as required at the AQF 6 and 7 levels: analysis, evaluation, interpretation, etc., are developed at the same time as delivering the skills and knowledge required in the discipline subjects.

How do the US colleges deal with this?

The combination of remedial education and a mix of general education and discipline subjects delivered in the associate degree are firmly established as methodology.

Students who score below the minimum cut-off scores in the state's college placement tests must enrol in remedial courses. At Broward College, one of the colleges visited, figures on applicants requiring remedial education were at 74% in 2009.⁴ Remediation studies are widespread throughout the colleges visited and remediation costs at Florida community colleges are quite considerable (USD118.3 million during school year 2004–05).⁵ The high cost of the remedial programs nationally is the subject of much debate in the US.

In the main there are two generic associate degree qualifications in baccalaureate programs: the Associate of Arts (AA) and the Associate of Science (AS). The difference between the two is the number of general education subjects delivered compared to discipline subjects. That is, an AA consists of a majority of general education subjects (less majors/electives) whilst the AS has the reverse ratio.

An example of the general education subjects can be found in the Florida SCNS handbook which was referred to at a meeting with Edison Community College. The following are subjects offered under the scope of English Language and Literature general education units: 'American Literature', 'Creative Writing', 'English Composition', 'English – General', 'English Literature' and 'Literature'. A look at the description of the American Literature outline on the Miami Dade Community College website, for example, clearly indicates 'competencies' required to pass this subject include critical reading, analytical and interpretive writing and communication.⁶

A clear understanding of how a student might choose to undertake the AA or AS was not clear. In fact, during the visit to BMCC, a senior staff member stated that students were not always clear as to why they would choose an AA over an AS, or vice versa. Once a student is considered ready for placement,

they are free to enrol in the AA or AS, and select subjects. This can be seen as a situation where students are setting themselves up to fail and on more than one occasion senior college staff rued the fact that they were not able to make certain subjects 'mandatory'. On two occasions, at a conference session in New Orleans and at Broward College, the line 'in the US students have a right to fail' was despondently quoted as a prevailing inalienable right.

Could the general education model be implemented in the Tertiary Pathways model?

A significant factor lies in the program prerequisites and evaluation of the student capability and, as with the baccalaureate program, applicants will be assessed and, if necessary, encouraged to enrol in a Certificate IV. This will ensure readiness for the first year of the associate degree which is also underpinned with foundation units.

Funding

State funding to Florida colleges is at around 85% of the level funded to universities. However, conversations with colleges suggested this was being reduced and money was being generated by other means. How did colleges manage financially and support other fundamental activities such as course development? Costs were subsidised by a number of means including student parking fees and taxes paid to upkeep college buildings but only one college visited actually was prepared to admit to a 'surplus' gained from student fees. The bottom line though is that although the baccalaureate degrees attract student fees, due to the subsidisation by the government, costs to students are very low compared to what they would pay at a university. Loans systems are in place.

Conclusions

As with any comparison of systems, the visit to the Florida colleges posed more questions than answers.

The regulatory systems in place in Florida give the colleges some degree of security in both the product development and the articulation pathways. But is it a model that could work here or is it too heavy handed and overregulated?

As an approach, could it play its part in best delivering the level and number of qualifications desired in the national agenda? Is it a strategy, packaged with student academic and non-academic support that might assist in delivering to low SES and the regional population with arrangements with local universities? If ever considered, and until then, conversations and agreements such as those carried out with universities in respect to the Tertiary Pathways degree, must continue.

The question of academic support to students was fundamental in my questioning to colleges visited but it was difficult to assess the academic level of content in the general education subjects. The well-established remediation culture highlighted the fact that students were in need of basic academic skills, as well as that delivered in the general education subjects. From discussions at colleges and a desktop audit, this does not always translate into completions.

It would be short-sighted not to consider a four-year model as a possibility of a future iteration of the Tertiary Pathways degree; however a major consideration will always be an appropriate funding model, sympathetic to the student.

Endnotes

- ¹ From Baccalaureate Proposal Approval Application – The Florida College System, viewed 15 May 2011, www.fldoe.org/cc/students/doc/bpaa.doc.
- ² Statewide Articulation Manual: Office of Articulation, Florida Department of Education, 325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1401, Tallahassee, Florida 32399–0400. For more information on the articulation system, visit www.fldoe.org/articulation/.
- ³ The Florida College System Annual Report 2011.
- ⁴ Viewed 15 May 2011, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/13781/>.
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Kim holds a number of diploma qualifications together with a Bachelor of Education and a Graduate Diploma of Management. She has undertaken a number of research projects for embedding literacy and numeracy into vocational learning; project managed programs for retention and attendance; and designed and developed a number of best practice VET delivery strategies. Kim is passionate about the VET sector and is committed to ensuring a quality environment is created and maintained for both students and staff.

Sustaining the Australian VET sector in the 21st century: how do our learners want to learn?

Introduction

The recent TDA-LH Martin Institute delegation to the United States of America (USA) provided an opportunity to look at some of the challenges facing VET managers and faculty leaders. These challenges are on our Australian horizon and we must prepare, respond, and most importantly act with a real sense of urgency to address these issues. I attended a number of forums at the 91st Annual Convention of American Association of Community Colleges, and found one in particular to be of most significance. It was this particular session 'The Vanishing Classroom: five trends that affect your college' that inspired me to undertake further research and ultimately, to share my findings in this paper. The session reported on a white paper commissioned by the USA National Council for Continuing Education & Training that describes the current gap which exists between the way today's school leaver learns and the type of teaching and learning opportunities offered by USA community colleges.

It wasn't brand new information, but suddenly it appeared to be very urgent and I felt if one were to take a snapshot of Australian VET, it could be determined that we are facing a mirror image of these challenges. From this one session I embarked on a journey of research and have determined the time is now for VET leaders and VET practitioners to seriously plan and implement ways to enable us to connect with 21st century students.

Providing quality learning opportunities

Providing quality learning opportunities within challenging environments has always been of

importance to me. As teachers and managers within the VET sector, how do we provide the type of learning programs that students and industry are seeking and also balance the budget?

During my 20-year career with TAFE this question is always discussed at some stage, and by all levels of the organisation. Thinking back over these years we have designed and delivered programs to address a number of diverse client learning needs. However, is what we currently offer in 2011 close to what the client wants? Students entering VET today from high school have always lived with technology. They are confident and comfortable with technical devices and often use these devices as their primary means for accessing information and communicating. These students want to learn in particular ways involving technology. If this is so, how do we move an aging workforce into the 21st century world of technology? Current programs are often teacher-centred, meaning the teacher is the content expert. The students know they can access information from any number of technical sources and can often access more detail than any one teacher could ever know. Given this reality it can be seen as a traditional classroom environment not meeting their needs. Many questions can be posed and arguably we could defend these questions in a number of ways. For example, we can state and quote figures of online programs and can put forward statistics that would demonstrate that we are advanced in regard to online programs. But are we? Or are many of our online programs little more than an electronic version of the paper-based learning guide uploaded to a web-based platform? This raises the question about the capacity of the VET sector to respond to today's new learners.

If much of our technological learning is in fact lacking in cognitive stimuli, and our face-to-face

classes are delivered in the traditional teacher-led manner, then how can colleges engage and retain today's students? The new student is diverse and digital, with today's high school graduates being 'digital natives' whose native language is the world of the internet, computers, video games, iPods, iPads, iPhones, face-time, facebook, twitter, wikis, and podcasts along with others. Oblinger and Oblinger (2005, p. 58) suggest this new student displays several characteristics that are unique:

- they intuitively use technology and navigate the internet with ease
- they are constantly connected and always 'on'
- they have fast response times, often preferring speed to accuracy
- they prefer to learn by doing (and hence have little time for traditional lectures)
- they are highly social and prefer to work in teams
- they prefer engagement and experiential learning.

From our own experiences, we know that they like working in the wireless world using small portable digital technology in comparison to sitting in a traditional classroom or computer lab. These new students expect interactive learning at their fingertips 24/7. We are in the century where many things are instant; for today's learner even the microwave is too slow, and if expected to wait in a queue to be served, this is almost unbearable for them. They are familiar with instant online live help and have complemented their schooling by accessing readily available information through Google and online programs such as 'my tutor' at a time that suits them, not when a tutor or teacher tells them. The mere thought of having to wait several days or even weeks to hear from their VET

teacher is unthinkable to them and not a learning environment that they want to participate in. Michael McQueen (2009, p. 130) points out to us that 'a teenager today with access to the internet has more information at their fingertips than entire countries did just fifty years ago'. Students are more travelled, 'worldly-wise' and informed than ever before. 'Just two words typed into a Goggle search can return well over 100,000 articles in 0.37 of a second. All this means one thing — teachers as the source of knowledge are becoming increasingly unnecessary. Educators, parents and managers must turn their focus from being fountains of knowledge to being facilitators of learning.'

Because of technology, this situation creates conflict between the learning styles of today's students and the teachers. Greg Whitby is described in *The Bulletin* magazine (cited in Whitby 2008) as 'Australia's smartest, most innovative and creative person working in education today'. In a video recording of Whitby (2007) he suggests 'the pedagogy DNA is so deeply buried within teachers because it's been used over centuries. There is a fundamental mismatch between today's teacher and the learner. We need new DNA. Let's get a pedagogy DNA for the 21st century. What's going to happen if we don't get a new DNA? We are going to condemn future generations of teachers because we haven't changed the fundamental building blocks of what we are on about.'

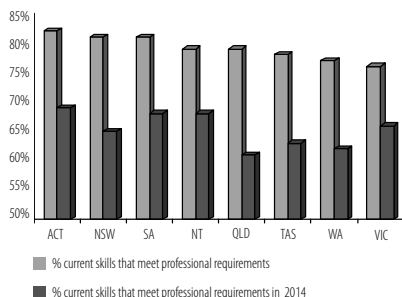
National VET practitioners skills

In the Australian National VET Practitioners Skills Report, John Mitchell (2010) identified significant skills gaps within Australia's current VET teachers. The demand for skills development identified 17 common underdeveloped delivery skills. These include:

- using technology to enhance the learning experience
- developing and designing learning resources for an online environment
- developing and designing learning strategies in an online environment
- online assessment
- ensuring learning and assessment materials meet educational requirements
- facilitating e-learning
- kinaesthetic learning
- facilitating flexible learning
- facilitating work-based learning
- visual learning
- sensitivity to diversity in culture, learning styles, abilities and experiences
- facilitating action learning
- auditory learning.

Mitchell's research substantiates the high demand for professional development for VET teachers in technology-based skills. Furthermore, in line with the low skill levels in the learning styles skills set, there is a high level of demand for all learning styles skills (kinaesthetic learning, visual learning and auditory learning) within a technology-based learning environment. In addition, Mitchell states 'The notional "traditional supply-driven VET practitioner" which emerged in the 1970s, was focused on delivering great teaching and required the student to meet the VET organisation's expectations'.

The graph demonstrates Mitchell's suggestion that the VET skills gap will increase significantly by 2014. With 2014 being less than three years away, VET leaders and practitioners must take serious action to



address the situation. Mitchell (2010, p. 18) outlines 'while these findings are a cause for concern, they are not unexpected'. He further states that 'in most dynamic skill markets, old skills are continually being superseded by new ones. Professionals working within skill markets usually maintain their professional currency through participation in professional development'. Mitchell's research indicates that a reasonable percentage of Australian VET practitioners have not kept up-to-date with the level of professional skills required to service client needs, and unless assertive action is taken this gap will significantly increase.

This position which the Australian VET sector finds itself in is not unlike the current position of practitioners of higher education in the USA. Prensky (2010, pp. 121-23), describes the college practitioner in the USA as 'digital immigrants', teachers who have selectively adopted some new technology but have a blending of the comfortable old ways with a reluctant acceptance of the technologically new. The current aging generation delivering higher education went through the education system that eventually made them teachers and lecturers. For them, the system was and is comfortable – it worked – and thus they tend to perpetuate that system in their teaching. 'Those extended formal learning experiences are

the prism through which they form perceptions of any new form of education that arises. They may not appreciate the preferred learning styles and methods of the natives, and make the dangerous assumption that the way they learned will work with the new generation – the digital natives'. McQueen (2009, p. 129) reminds us of the origins of our current systems of education and 'tracking back through history, you find yourself in a time when the responsibility for distributing information and knowledge was held almost exclusively by the Church. During the Dark Ages clergy were charged with the duty of imparting information, knowledge and truth to the uneducated masses. To be a "teacher" meant that you were the source or fountain of knowledge'. Over time, this task was gradually relegated to academics. 'Professors and learned men shared the responsibility of gathering, evaluating and imparting knowledge. You can still see evidence today of the old links between academia and the Church'. From those early origins through to today's organised systems of education, we see one common thread – the role of teacher as the source or fountain of knowledge. To be fair, this approach was both appropriate and necessary in past times. After all, books were valuable and rare, information was held by those in power and access to education was often reserved for the wealthy.

The vanishing classroom

In the USA higher education sector and the Australian VET sector, the classroom is becoming an increasing domain for frustration, where today's learner meets the traditional teacher. A survey conducted by CDW-G in the USA in 2009 (cited in Flynn 2010, p. 8) found three-quarters of faculty respondents stating they used technology in almost every class and two-thirds saying they were

pleased with their own professional development in this area. However, the student survey results did not have the same opinion of the faculty level of competency or the role technology plays in their education. Less than half the students believed technology was integrated in their curriculum and stated the biggest challenge for higher education is lack of faculty knowledge when it comes to technology. It is this divide that VET leaders and practitioners must reduce, by firstly acknowledging that this is a real issue in the VET sector, and then determining a course of action for professional development.

The new generation of student ultimately finds the current education system and its teachers to be wanting. Flynn's (2010, p. 9) research tells us that 'today's learners have grown up with the capability to process information in a radically different way than their parents. For the VET sector to assume that today's students think and learn the same as previous generations would be a major mistake'.

The 2007 recording 'A vision of K–12 students today' states that '76% of teachers have never used technology such as wikis, blogs or podcasts'. I encourage you to watch this YouTube video presented by a cast of 16 digital natives. Please keep in mind that the student data is out-dated, and that this was substantiated at the American Association of Community Colleges convention session presented by Flynn (2011) where he shared with us the latest research conducted in 2010 which discovered that 'people aged 8 to 18 years of age actually use technological devices for 10.5 hours a day, which includes 4.25 hours of television'. These figures are a vast increase compared to the 2007 findings.

If there is a major conflict between the learning

styles of today's high school graduate and the VET practitioner educated in another era, and if the cognitive differences between the two become so great, Flynn (2011) tells us that the 'digital natives will simply choose to go away all together'. How does the VET sector respond to this?

Responding to meet the needs of today's learner

The video 'Learning to change – changing to learn' is a collection of 14 leading educationalists who share with us that 'schools are like factories, they are control and order' (Whitby 2008). 'Kids are very rich content developers through their social networking sites. They are big communicators through email, instant messaging, SMS, facetime, facebook, etc., yet all these are banned from their schools' (Evans 2008). 'Every turned off device is potentially a turned off child' (Heppell 2008). 'We have to accept as educators technology is not really a choice. It has created a world. It is just not there to help you teach traditional subjects, it has invented a completely new environment' (Yong Zhao 2008). 'Children are living now in a different space' (Heppell 2008). 'You have to start with the teachers, educational and VET leaders have to give the professional development and the tools to the teachers first' (Baker 2008).

Hoping that a new generation of tech-savvy teachers will be able to deal with the new generation of students may not be the answer. The Australian VET sector has an aging workforce and recent statistics indicate that these teachers are not exiting the workplace as originally predicted. Therefore, vacancies are not opening up for younger recruits. This age pattern can be attributed to a number of reasons, including past recruiting practices, the global financial crisis, low turnover rates, low retirement rates and legislation ending

mandatory retirement. Australian VET leaders must recognise the impact of today's employment decisions on the faculty of the future by reconsidering their personnel policies and engaging in strategic planning, not to just fill positions when they become open, but to select new teachers who are ready to deal with a technologically sophisticated and diverse student body.

In the past, VET leaders have tended to focus on content expertise, followed by teaching ability. A small shift away from this has developed as VET leaders took a stronger focus on the VET teacher's teaching and assessment ability, and adopted the stance that you are now in the profession of VET teaching and your content experience just happens to be your subject matter.

As already highlighted, the VET leaders must make firm decisions when recruiting for the future and ensure that VET teachers are employed who are tech-savvy and can connect with the 'digital native', be 'on' and provide fast response times. Serious consideration must be given to including a selection method which demonstrates the interviewee's technological ability in a teaching and learning environment.

Conclusions

For the Australian VET sector to maintain and increase its current level of VET participation and to grow and strengthen its higher education delivery, we must offer more technology-based learning and assessment environments. This can only be achieved through the professional development of existing teachers and the future employment of techno-savvy teachers. Only then can Australia create a strong foundation for the future. If Australia is to move forward, we must address the same trends that the USA is also facing.

Finally, I encourage and challenge VET leaders and teachers to respond to today's digital learner and redesign delivery and assessment to meet their learning needs. Think about it: we can have all the VET programs, higher education, dual sector arrangements and baccalaureate degrees we want; but unless we connect with the 21st century learner, our classes will be empty.

'It is the death of education but the dawn of learning' (Heppell 2008).

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Kaylene Harth

*Institute Director,
Metropolitan Institute of TAFE*

In various contexts, Kaylene Harth has been involved in vocational education and training for over 20 years. She is currently the Institute Director at Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE (MSIT) and has been in this role since 2008. From 2004 to October 2008 Kaylene was Institute Director of The Bremer Institute of TAFE during which time the institute won a number of state and national awards, including the Australian Training Provider of the Year in 2006. Other key roles have included leading the implementation of user choice in Queensland in 1998, followed by the position of Director, Infrastructure for the Department of Employment and Training from 2001 to 2004.

Modes of engagement between Australian TAFE institutes and US Community Colleges

Introduction

International engagement for Australian TAFE institutes has been largely driven by their commercial approach to international education, with a focus on full fee paying inbound students. Over the past decade demand for skills-based training, predominantly from our neighbours in Asia, has grown enormously. Whilst we recognise the broader internationalisation benefits of international education and exchange, it is not our primary driver. This commercial reality is starkly contrasted with the United States of America's (USA) approach to internationalisation in community colleges, largely driven by a softer, people-to-people approach.

Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE's (MSIT) interest in North America is fairly recent and I took part in the TDA/LH Martin Mission with the goal of exploring models of cooperation with United States (US) community colleges and other industry partners. This paper will share MSIT's current approaches to engagement with the USA as possible modes of engagement that other Australian TAFE institutes may consider when working with US community colleges. I place two caveats around my analysis (1) I recognise that we are a new player in US-Australia VET partnerships — many of our Australian counterparts have been active in this space for some time, and (2) that any reference to US community colleges as a homogenous group does not adequately represent the diversity of colleges operating across states and communities.

The US Community College approach to 'international'

There are over 1150 community colleges in the US, with the core mission, in the broadest sense, to serve the needs of their local communities. Across the country colleges interpret the meaning of 'serving their community' differently. For some, this means that there is no space to fund international activities on their campus, as funding must serve local needs. However, there is a growing awareness that international issues have a significant impact on the local workforce, and that students need to be aware of and equipped to respond to these changes. Colleges are keen to incorporate more 'international perspectives' into their curricula and campuses but are not always entirely clear on how to achieve this.

As a generalisation, US colleges tend to be far more inward-looking than Australian institutions. Partly this may stem from our drivers for becoming internationalised. In Australia these drivers are largely commercial with a shift to public diplomacy and in the US these are grounded in public diplomacy shifting to commercial. It may also be impacted by our geopolitical realities, Australia's position in Asia, and for the US position as a global world power, with one of the largest and most developed higher education systems in the world, colleges have not seen the need to look outside the US to learn from other countries.

The US community college focus and funding for study abroad dwarfs that of Australian TAFE's engagement in this field. For example, 6000 community college students from California alone may be the programs funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations undertaking mobility and exchange. One indicator may be the programs funded by Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations

(DEEWR) under the Endeavour VET Mobility Grants. In 2010 these grants supported 350 VET students, at Certificate IV and above to have an international experience as part of their program.¹ There exists a great opportunity to increase the mobility of students, with fewer than 5% of US study abroad students choosing Australia as their destination.²

Australia-US modes of engagement

MSIT is considering five modes of engagement for the US market. These may have application for other Australian TAFE institutes and US community colleges seeking to improve global connections:

1. student mobility programs
2. teacher and staff exchange/professional development
3. joint bidding for international projects
4. public-private partnerships
5. networks.

This next section investigates each mode and offers some examples of how MSIT has been leveraging these to engage with US counterparts.

Student mobility programs

Opportunities exist for colleges to develop a range of programs (both short term and long term) to encourage student mobility between US and Australian colleges. Typically, community college students have been under-represented in study abroad activity, however with increased funding and programs to support minority students undertaking an international experience, this is growing. Short term study tours are usually three to six weeks in duration and fees depend on the type of program and number of students. Australian TAFE programs

at the diploma and advanced diploma levels offer great opportunities, particularly for junior college students to enhance their learning and knowledge. Options to combine this experience with an Australian plus Asia Pacific learning experience may also be explored.

Opportunities for our Australian students to undertake study tours as part of their Diploma or Advanced Diploma program are growing. Currently we offer programs for our fashion students to Japan and photo imaging students to Brazil. We hope to add a US location to our portfolio for students in health and community services and in creative industries. Full semester abroad exchange is an area still on the drawing board; as our partnerships develop we are seeking programs and partners where we can offer semester exchange programs, fully recognising the overseas learning component and being able to offer credit to the students who are involved. During the conference I was pleased to be able to officiate at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between MSIT and Volunteer State College, Tennessee, with the goal of developing a range of inbound and outbound programs between our colleges.

Teacher and staff exchange/professional development

We recognise the importance of global mobility for our teaching workforce, and for the US market, this is a relatively straightforward way to start collaboration. In April 2011, MSIT welcomed a Professor in Early Childhood Learning from Oklahoma Community College (OCC) for a three-week placement with our Children's Services team. This was a first for both colleges and demonstrates the importance of people-to-people linkages, industry-focused engagement and a low cost way

for our institute to engage with the USA (the visit was paid for from OCC's professional development budget). With the Australian Government opening up the Endeavour Executive Awards to now include North America, teachers and administration staff from both sides may consider applying for these awards to support professional development activities in colleges and industries.³

Joint bidding for international projects

US community colleges are active partners in a range of USAID programs and other development-funded projects including the World Bank, Africa Development Bank and UNESCO. The increasing involvement of USAID in coordinating donor investment in the Asia Pacific means that there may be increased opportunities for joint tenders and consortia across the US and Australia. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton announced the opening of a USAID office in Fiji this year, with a budget of USD21 million to support climate change mitigation efforts in the Pacific. This is a landmark decision, following a 15-year absence from the country.⁴ USAID's network in Asia is strong and further enhanced by President Obama's views on engagement with the region. With Australian institutions' knowledge of the local market and the reputation of Australia's VET system in the region, working together to access funding through USAID and other donors may be an option for some institutions active in the development space.

Public-private partnerships

I was also able to visit community colleges that partner with ELS Educational Services Inc. ELS is part of the Berlitz Group, a global leadership training and education company. The public-private partnership illustrated a good model of supporting students in

the transition to formal studies and in leveraging the knowledge and expertise of a global education network with trusted experience and infrastructure of community colleges. The example I saw at Eckerd Community College represented a 30-year partnership whilst the purpose-built facility at the University of Tampa was already exceeding student enrolment expectations since opening in August 2010. Both partnerships were impressive examples of how a mutual interest in education pathways can provide enormous benefit to students.

Networks

The US education and business cultures thrive on networks and personal communication. As part of the catalyst for getting MSIT engaged in the US market we joined Community Colleges for International Development (CCID). Many of our college partners have been recommended through the CCID network and we are looking forward to further enhancing our involvement in the network.

To the future

After our fleeting visit to the US there are a few things that have been reconfirmed for me:

1. the Australian system of quality, accountability and portability of training is world class
2. the US community college approach to international education as public diplomacy is a unique feature of their system
3. there is a great deal that we can learn from each other, particularly in international education, finding some middle ground between the hard (economic) and soft (social and cultural) approaches to international education.

Endnotes

- ¹ The Endeavour VET Mobility Grants offer up to AUD50,000 as a grant to Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or industry bodies which want to offer international programs such as study placements, exchanges and internships to domestic students. Students must be at Certificate IV or above. Grants are called for annually. For more information, see www.deewr.gov.au/endeavour.
- ² Institute of International Education 2010, 'Open doors fast facts.'
- ³ Endeavour Executive Award provides professional development opportunities (of one to four months) for high achievers in business, industry, education or government from participating countries. The Awards focus on building skills and knowledge through a host work environment rather than through formal enrolment in a study program at a host organisation. Applications open twice yearly in May and December. See www.deewr.gov.au/endeavour.
- ⁴ DEVEX, viewed 19 May 2011, www.devex.com/en/blogs/development-assistance-under-obama/hillary-clinton-confirms-usaid-s-re-engagement-in-pacific.



Kim Hawkins

Executive Director of Health, Education and Social Sciences, West Coast Institute of Training (WCIT), Joondalup WA

As Executive Director, West Coast Institute of Training, Kim Hawkins' role is to provide strategic direction to the areas of health, education and the social sciences. This involves engaging with industry to develop new programs and meet the needs of the workforce in this growing sector. With a focus on upskilling existing workers and developing capability, we are currently researching the introduction of associate degrees at West Coast. The purpose of Kim's visit to the USA was to look at the impact associate degrees and degrees had made on their community colleges, and what can be learnt from their journey. This paper provides an overview of observations made.

Kim holds a BSoc.Sci. (Family and Children's Studies); Grad.Dip.Ed. (Adult Education); MEd. Stud. (Training and Development), and a Dip. Dis. Work.

My findings

For West Coast Institute of Training (WCIT), it was timely to visit the United States of America (USA) to see how their associate degree and degree programs are working in their community colleges. It was also an opportunity to hear from other providers from Australia (as part of the delegation) regarding the challenges they are facing. As WCIT is currently researching the Associate Degree potential, I was able to talk to a variety of people about the challenges, the impact, and where-to-next for WCIT. For the purpose of this paper, I would like to share my findings as they relate to WCIT, and some other points of interest along the way.

Overall 'mission'

It was very clear that the 'mission' of the community colleges was to 'serve the community'. This came through loud and clear when visiting the colleges and talking to representatives from the various colleges. In my view, community colleges provided a structure and ethos that focused on student support, with dedicated spaces and very traditional settings. In comparison, with Australia's focus on workforce development, a considerable shift has been made in the VET sector to increase workplace delivery and to and to focus on upskilling existing workers. It is anticipated that WCIT associate degrees will meet a workplace need versus a more traditional classroom face-to-face environment. The community college model focuses very strongly on access to education for all — whereas our system is strongly related to productivity.

Open enrolment

With an open enrolment approach in community colleges, support services were an integral part of their operation. In Western Australia, we don't have an open enrolment approach — entry into many

qualifications is competitive, as ongoing funding cannot be guaranteed and demand is very high. It appears that in most programs offered through the community colleges they take all who apply. This, of course, brings with it funding challenges as well as increased support for literacy and numeracy. With 37% of students below the benchmark, there are strategies in place to provide students with the tools needed to succeed. One college in particular quoted 80% of their students needing some form of remedial classes. With a strong focus on completions in Western Australia, a discussion around open enrolment would need to be had. In my view, we are measuring output compared to community colleges measuring input. However, completions are certainly on their agenda based on some of the presentations that occurred at the meetings and the conference.

Organisational structure

One of the key areas I was keen to observe was the structure of the organisation to support what we traditionally know as Higher Education. It was of great interest to me and for the journey WCIT are about to undertake to consider the impact of offering associate degrees and degrees in a VET institution. I could listen intently to the questions asked by the Australian delegates that are already operating in this space; however, I didn't realise the impact on the organisation around resourcing, and culture for teaching staff. For example, during the meeting with a variety of community college representatives in Florida some interesting points were raised, in particular:

- One community college talked about the challenges with moving into four-year degrees. Internally, they needed to change their student support model, look at their financial assistance models, increase support for library resources, and determine how they would market their programs.

- They engaged with the local population early, and hired consultants to look at a new branding strategy.
- They needed to send a message to community college students that they still count regardless of their level of study.
- Lecturers teach across degree and other programs to ensure equity.
- They have a 'one college' approach, so those teaching at any level are all treated the same, and there's no difference in salary.

Some community colleges have a University Centre that offers ongoing support for students enrolled in the four-year degree programs to ensure they have every chance of success. When visiting these centres it was clear that it was an important facet of their environment, and strongly contributed to overall college life.

Relationships with universities

During the tour, there was considerable discussion around the relationships that exist between community colleges and their neighbouring universities. Each place visited talked about the level of recognition that the university offered those articulating with an associate degree, and the views were very mixed. At WCIT, we work hard to develop relationships with all the universities so that our students can have a seamless transition from VET into Higher Education, with Advanced Standing where applicable. Given the constant upgrading to courses and training packages, it does make it challenging and requires considerable effort. We also engage in reverse articulation so that university students can have exit pathways at the end of the first and second year where applicable. At WCIT we are not in the business of duplicating the offerings from our universities. It was, however, clear that

there are some strained relationships between universities and community colleges, in some cases the relationship is managed between CEOs of the organisations: in particular, if a new degree program is going to be offered by a community college, the CEO will make the initial contact. Some universities put the community college through quite a gruelling process if they want to set up articulation arrangements, yet some associate degrees are guaranteed into university programs. It is very state-dependent, and any degree program is based on local workforce need. Workforce Boards assist by providing the information for the development of a degree program; there didn't appear to be any clear funding allocated unless an industry sponsor had a vested interest in the program to meet a specific need. One community college stated that advisory committees drive the curriculum, and that an agreement is in place that community colleges wouldn't charge less than 85% of the university fee of the nearest university. With uncapped places in universities in 2012, it is an interesting time in Australia to be moving into the higher education space.

A national system?

One of the key findings, from my perspective, was the lack of a national training system. Each state in the USA is responsible for their own curriculum and course development, with students from out of state considered almost international! By comparison, Australia has a national system for VET that enables portability and transferability as people move around the country. This makes registration in some professions a little easier, such as nursing. We also have a quality framework which ensures a common standard; something I believe was missing from the system in the USA.

Where to from here?

In the wrap up of the Australian delegation, these are the points I took away:

1. Good benchmarking opportunity for Australia
2. More rigour in Australia and a quality framework
3. Much greater support from the State in Australia
4. High demand for education in the USA
5. US online delivery is rapidly increasing
6. Community colleges are funded less than universities
7. Retention and completion are priorities
8. Celebration of success was strongly evident
9. On all levels, there is considerable variation from state to state
10. Their costing model is not sustainable
11. LLN is an issue
12. Relationships are extremely important as they move into four-year degrees
13. Transfer shock is an issue, students transfer from community college to university.

Overall, it was a very worthwhile program and experience that provided me with insight into another model and way of thinking. I learnt much from the Australian delegation that are already operating in this space, and have since posed some questions to our Corporate Executive for further consideration and discussion. I feel the study tour validated that as a nation and locally, we are heading in the right direction, and producing quality workforce-ready graduates who contribute to the productivity agenda.



Coralie Morrissey

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Faculty of Technical & Trades Innovation,
Victoria University*

Coralie Morrissey has held various positions within TAFE institutes in Western Australia, including as General Manager Swan TAFE (now Polytechnic West). In 2007, she relocated to lead the Faculty of Technical & Trades Innovation at Victoria University, a dual-sector institution with a distinctive mission to engage Melbourne's burgeoning and disadvantaged west, and driven by relationships with community and industry and a focus on work-integrated learning.

Coralie has observed and led institutional change in vocational education, and is interested in how the sector can enhance its collaborations. Her objective is for Victoria University to become a national centre of excellence in technical and trades education, starting with innovations in apprenticeship training through the TradeApps program and enriched industry liaison.

Introduction

I returned from the trip to the United States of America (USA) with big words in my head: *collaboration, innovation and engagement*. While we as a sector do these well in particular contexts, I was interested in exploring how we might move from these words as catch-cries to more tangible action and embedded models. How can we implement better collaboration across our TAFE sector and develop stronger engagement with government, industry and enterprises? Michael O'Loughlin's sanguine perspective from the 2009 TDA delegation to the United Kingdom (*TDA Occasional Paper One 2010*, pp. 42–44) about appreciating what we have, along with the current national skills policy focus (which at times sidelines Registered Training Organisations), got me thinking about *building* on what we have and fostering links and innovation.

Currently, we have no TAFE equivalent of the Go8 or U21 as coalitions of institutions that collaborate, advocate, and exchange or are distinguished by their specialist skills training. The TDA and, in Victoria, the TAFE Development Centre provide networking and peak representation and support for the interests and development of institutions. What we need to consider building is a framework for wider and deeper collaboration, interaction, joint projects or exchange. The United States (US) model of the League for Innovation in the Community College could be one from which we can learn and to which we can connect.

I met some Leaguers at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Convention in New Orleans and these discussions led me on a side trip to Seattle, Washington. It was here that I met with Dr Jill Wakefield, Chancellor of Seattle Community College District and a Board Director of the League for Innovation. In addition to hearing

about the impact of the League on the sector and for individuals and communities across the country, I learned more about the Seattle Community Colleges' Professional-Technical Advisory Committees as a useful case study of industry partnerships to develop a skilled workforce.

The League for Innovation in the Community College

For more than 40 years the League has been a dynamic and galvanising force, enhancing the capacity and quality of over 800 community colleges in its alliance, across the US and internationally. Through a range of activities and projects, it provides collaborative opportunities for innovation, experimentation and institutional transformation which lead to positive changes for students and their communities.

The League is focused on developing an educated citizenry which is encompassed in its completion agenda and active facilitation of access, opportunity, and quality. Its impact and reach have been recognised through a range of education leadership awards, and is reflected in its critical collaborations with government and reputable, high-profile Foundations and companies.

Key aspects of its programs include executive leadership and college management approaches; workforce development, ICT applications to improve learning and teaching and student services; model curricula and a range of programs and publications to develop more learning-centred community colleges.

The League was critical across the late 1960s and '70s in a period of community college proliferation, and continues to be a driving force of innovation for community colleges.

Seattle Community Colleges (SCC)

The grouping of the community colleges in Seattle provided an interesting insight into the success of the League and its collaborative and innovative application in a local context. This was particularly relevant for Victoria University and other institutions which have a regional perspective.

The parallels for Victoria University include a diverse student population enrolling in a range of courses across academic and work-based professional and trades study. The Seattle Community Colleges (SCC) have strong connections to local industry needs and actively foster community and school liaison. Just as Victoria University has a distinctive mission for the west of Melbourne, the SCC pursue a strategic agenda for their region.

The SCC aim to provide excellent, accessible educational opportunities to prepare their students for a challenging future. Critical goals include student success, partnerships, innovation and district-wide goals that include worker retraining. These objectives ring true for Victoria University and our intent to be accessible, excellent and engaged. Like most TAFE institutions, we are increasingly endeavouring to engage with industry in more formal and meaningful ways to contribute successfully to wider social and economic objectives. Our Victoria University Industry Clusters have been one example of such commitment, but the model at Seattle seemed to go a few steps further.

The Professional Technical Advisory Committees at SCC

The overarching ambition is a partnership model for the development of a skilled workforce. The primary function of the advisory committees is to 'promote partnerships among profession-technical

education, business, labor and the communities they serve, and to strengthen these programs by input on program structure, curriculum, technology and student preparation'. Assuring industry currency and relevancy of courses and graduates is a critical objective.

There are currently close to 800 external people acting as committee members for around 100 courses. They volunteer in a formal advisory program that is all-encompassing. The role of a Committee member is not simply to attend an ad hoc forum here and there or to provide token feedback. Members are actively engaged in and participate in activities that are aligned and connected to Faculty processes and student business, and determined by an annual action plan.

The Committees' role includes:

- curriculum recommendations including development and program reviews and the validation of competencies and student and graduate standards
- evaluation of equipment and facilities against industry standards and the provision of acquisition assistance
- support for student development and organisations, including judging of events, sponsorship, and recognition ceremonies
- staff development including industry internships or instructor participation in training, return-to-industry opportunities or cooperative forums
- community and civic awareness and assessments including public relations to promote, gather and provide advice on skill needs of industry and the community
- legislative or licensing advice in specific industries

- marketing, recruitment and placement support, including mock interviews, shadowing, careers fairs, internships and work experience.

Committee involvement is not predicated on an industry person having enrolled students, like the kind of relationship we might have with employers of apprentices, for example. Alumni are well harnessed but the membership net is cast widely amongst the community and professional organisations. Appointments are made for a three-year term.

The success of each committee is well supported by formal structures and links but can be variable dependent on the experience and commitment of the appointed people. Where it has worked well, practical placements, graduate feedback, input into program development, etc., have equated to better completion rates, better outcomes to secure jobs and an ongoing reputation of the quality of SCC graduates.

One example of how the committee made demonstrable improvements was to the Hospitality stream where concerns were raised initially by industry and employers about generic, maths and English skills of graduates and their capacity for important cash register work, purchasing stock, and customer service and presentation. These components were further embedded into the course and emphasised in practical placements which led to better completion and graduate outcomes.

Applications for the Australian context

With demand-driven funding and contestability, we have seen the emergence of a plethora of private education providers. In this context, quality, standards and outcomes for the student and community as a whole become critical, at a time

when relative government funding opportunities are diminishing and the social and economic value of education needs an evidence base. The League for Innovation and the SCC Professional-Technical Advisory Committees provide broader and specific examples of how to involve stakeholders in the education and training process to make it more of a collective responsibility with recognised shared outcomes.

The League for Innovation could be an interesting model to bring institutions together in a spirit of collaboration, rather than competition. The intent would include a policy or lobbying role akin to that which our existing peak bodies fulfil, but it should primarily be focused on practical efforts to inspire, share and support innovation, leadership, educational improvement and institutional capacity. It could promote real and tangible engagement with communities that will increase outcomes and enhance appreciation for the impact of TAFE on the community in both economic and educational terms.

The 2011 report, *Skills for prosperity – a roadmap for vocational education and training* (http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications_and_Resources/Skills_Australia_public_papers.htm), and subsequent budget commitments, have been viewed by some as recognition that VET has finally arrived and its important role has been recognised. For some commentators however, there is a less positive view that the sector is still being perceived as a minor stakeholder in the skills-productivity-participation agenda, rather than a full partner with industry and government.

Speakers at recent conferences in Australia reiterated the need for the tertiary sector to engage with and build relationships with industry. All institutions

have these types of plans and activities under way and there is collective policy and advocacy from our peaks. But perhaps we need a mechanism or framework for more strategic engagement at a practical, sector-wide level to advance work-integrated learning, enhance industry currency, and to be proactive about reform and innovation.

The League and the SCC are making a difference in the quality and job readiness of graduates, which are important concerns for the tertiary sector, government, industry and policy makers. It is important for us to continuously collaborate and engage on skill development, productivity, and graduate capabilities.

More solid links could be made across the TAFE and tertiary sectors to support collaboration and experimentation, and to build capacity in an industry-relevant and engaged framework.

Further links with the League for Innovation could be a useful starting point and I believe that there are many opportunities available to us to strengthen these relationships. Opportunities or ideas I would encourage are:

- more formalised study tours
- staff sabbaticals or exchanges
- study tours for teaching staff
- student exchange within designated study areas
- an international community of practice.

Given the parallels and opportunities, I am certainly looking to solidify links with my Faculty at Victoria University. I found the observations from the TDA trip to be wholly worthwhile and relevant.



Martin Riordan

Chief Executive Officer, TAFE Directors Australia

Martin Riordan is Chief Executive Officer of TAFE Directors Australia, the peak incorporated body representing Australian TAFE and technology institutes. Martin was appointed to head up "TDA" in December 2005, having previously worked at executive levels in vocational education, and communications, in Australia and through the Asia-Pacific. Immediately prior to his appointment, Martin was an executive with Federal Education (DEST), and was a guest lecturer in communications at Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE NSW. He was awarded an Australian American Fulbright Professional Scholarship in 2009 to review leadership skill sets and innovation in the American Community College system. His BA (Hons) undergraduate qualification was gained at Macquarie University, and MBA from the University of Technology Sydney.

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Many in Australia's education sector are experiencing pre-budget nerves.

For higher and vocational educators, there will be one key signpost tomorrow night: whether Treasurer Wayne Swan plans to review the uncapped places universities offer undergraduates enrolling with Commonwealth supported places (CSP).

Rumours have swept university corridors that Treasury may limit a Gillard pledge from budget 2009 that, at huge cost to taxpayers, unleashed massive domestic overenrolments at universities while containing higher education contribution scheme places to just two TAFE institutes and a handful of nursing and early childhood education degrees – and almost locked out private colleges entitled to offer degrees.

This uncertainty follows an address to a Universities Australia conference in March by Education Minister Chris Evans, who cautioned that quality, not quantity, was his measure of success when looking at the future of the uncapped CSP undertaking.

Contrast this unfolding Canberra debate with developments in the United States, where 17 states have legislated to allow colleges to offer degrees. It has spread like wildfire. In the past eight years, 180 of 1200 community colleges have been funded to offer one or more degrees. State and city budgets are the main source of funds for college degree courses. Student tuition fees with loan support provide the balance of funding.

Community colleges gaining legislative support must demonstrate how the new degrees will help with skills shortages in the community.

Enrolment focus is on professions experiencing skills shortages including nursing, health and allied sciences, engineering, information and communications technologies, digital media and television production, and teacher education.

The differences in the educational public policy divide between the US and Australia looks otherwise less stark. Both Labor in Australia and the Obama administration in the US have endorsed policy targets to double degrees and lift post-school training participation.

The same goes for quality standards: US community colleges offering degrees must meet the same accreditation requirements as the state universities and demonstrate that they can meet the same educational standards.

Yet while Australia has critical skills shortages, uncapped funding to universities has not been tied to skills shortage criteria. Those 17 states in the US that allow college degrees must show evidence that courses will meet skills shortages.

And there is a funding offset: community colleges offering state-funded degrees operate in many states with different funding – and price differentials – to university degrees. The college degrees are funded at about 85 % of the corresponding state university degrees offered in the local county or state. The deal allows students to pay far less in fees than they would at a state university.

Although state government funding for degrees overall has declined during the US budget crisis, states have still been rapidly expanding funded community colleges to offer degrees that support workforce development.

This funding was essential to support more affordable education than at universities. No

comparable social equity structural reform has reached Australia.

For states such as Arizona, which is yet to agree to legislation for college degrees, innovative college leadership such as that of Rufus Glasper, chancellor of Maricopa Community Colleges, has led to the launch of “Community” – a multi-public and private university shopfront on college campus, which has contracts guaranteeing full articulation from matching college to university programs.

Glasper, who has led Maricopa’s cluster college system since 2004 and is a former finance director in US education, displays two honey pots in his Phoenix office. One is labelled “creative funding”, the other “miracles”.

“Welcome to creative college funding,” he says.

At a time of budget constraint, while US states have embraced community college degrees at a more competitive price, Australia’s response has been that it is “not yet” time for full endorsement of the vision of Denise Bradley’s review of higher education, guaranteeing more open student access to CSP-funded degrees and funding spread across an internationally competitive higher education sector – not just universities.

The budget will test the Gillard government’s appetite for education reform as Australia stares down austerity and skills shortages.

The Treasurer could do worse than pick up the US college experience and extend to TAFE institutes and competitive non-universities the chance for Australian students to access wider CSP-funded degrees than are now on the student menu. It makes economic and educational sense.



Denise Stevens

CEO, TAFE Development Centre, Melbourne

Denise Stevens leads the TAFE Development Centre (TDC) having developed extensive educational management experience over the past 25 years working in the VET sector. She has had a variety of management and leadership positions in that sector with responsibility for strategic change management projects as well as oversight of teaching and learning practice. Highlights throughout this time have included the establishment of teaching departments, establishing an industry liaison centre of excellence, working in the Middle East and developing and implementing vocational degrees in TAFE.

Her practical approach to education and training is predicated on the philosophy that education provides a pathway to both personal and professional development.

Introduction

This paper presents some observations on staff accreditation and continuing professional development (CPD) in community colleges visited in April 2011 as part of an Australian delegation to the United States of America (USA). The primary purpose of the delegation was to attend the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) annual conference in New Orleans and to visit three selected community colleges in Miami, Florida. The visits to the community colleges included discussion of key issues associated with the development and implementation of bachelor programs in a vocational environment, and consideration of commonality of experience between Australia and the USA. There were many broad and varied issues discussed but due to the nature of TDC activity, my particular interest related to staff accreditation and CPD.

Degree development

Community colleges have been developing and delivering degrees in Florida for the past 5–6 years and eleven of the twenty-eight community colleges in Florida now deliver four-year bachelor degree programs across a range of discipline areas. The colleges have been delivering two-year associate degree programs for many years that offered an articulation pathway into university and/or an employment outcome. The development and accreditation of the bachelor degree program provides the seamless articulation from the associate degree into the bachelor degree within the same college, providing a 2+2 model.

As has been the case with the development of degrees, particularly in Victoria, the degree program has to be 'applied' in nature and linked to specific workforce development shortages or in a discipline

area not covered by the local university. In Florida, this is very specific in that it relates to the localised workforce need or shortage in the geographic community surrounding the college, identified in consultation with local industry groups as well as the community. The community college mission is very clear in that the college is to serve the needs of the local community, first and foremost. The development of the degree programs at the community colleges we visited has often been a lengthy process taking up to three years for the design, development and accreditation process. However, once finally accredited the community college does not have to complete a reaccreditation process, however extensive annual reporting is required to the State accreditation body and the colleges indicated that they also conduct their own regular in-house auditing and quality control methods. Extensive and ongoing consultation with their community and industry partners ensures that the degrees maintain their relevance.

One of the local community colleges was provided with USD1,000,000 to develop and pilot their degrees but, in other instances, the community colleges met all of the development costs. The accreditation process is lengthy and State-mandated and during the initial Expression of Interest stage, the local university has the right to inhibit the development. To ensure that this does not occur, the community colleges we visited stressed the importance of constant dialogue with their higher education neighbours. Many of the colleges have excellent articulation arrangements with their local or State-based universities and in some cases delivered the same subjects. As has been the case in Australia, there are many examples of university students undertaking community college subjects on completion of their degree program, particularly

in very technical areas. This close contact between the college and the university was not echoed in all community colleges and, in some cases, quite competitive environments were acknowledged. However, in most instances the bachelor programs in community colleges are in fields of study not delivered by the universities. Growth in the bachelor programs has been extensive and as an example, Broward Community College exceeded the annual plan and targets within the first semester of enrolments.

Staffing considerations

The community colleges that we visited have had many years' experience delivering associate degrees as pathways into their local universities. Consequently, staff have been well credentialled, usually at masters degree level. The accreditation requirements for the delivery of the four-year degree programs stipulate that 25% of staff delivering any degree program must have a doctorate and the remainder with masters qualifications, so the employment of appropriately qualified staff has not been such a critical issue as has been the case in some Australian institutes. However, a main difference between the staffing cohorts is that for the most part the community college staff do not have formal teaching qualifications; the only requirement is their discipline expertise. This has required quite extensive preparatory instruction in delivery methodology and instructional design prior to staff undertaking teaching responsibilities. Extensive use is made of student feedback regarding teaching quality, and staff may be regularly observed in the classroom environment to support the development of their teaching practice. In some instances, peer mentoring support as well as teaching and classroom materials are provided.

This has occurred for several reasons – the lack of staff teaching qualifications, high reliance on casual adjunct staff and because the curriculum is specific to each community college.

Industrial relations considerations are also quite different compared to the Australian experience as the community colleges we visited pay staff the same salary and offer the same conditions regardless of the academic level being taught. As these colleges were university preparation institutions, for the most part, the staff were already teaching at a high qualification level and were well credentialled. In many of the Australian TAFE institutes, staff may have been teaching in the VET programs Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma, prior to undertaking degree program delivery and while they have their Certificate IV TAA and a discipline qualification, it may only be at undergraduate level. Also depending on the field of study, particularly in new areas, it is unlikely that staff have anything post certificate or diploma level as their vocational qualification.

Teaching conditions were similar across the three community colleges visited – 15 hours of teaching per week for 32 weeks. Staff are effectively paid for only nine months, although they can annualise their salary. The pay scale is also quite low starting at approximately USD50,000 (with a Masters qualification) and depending on length of service and higher credential (PhD), can increase to around USD65,000. Consequently, staff will take on extra summer classes and be paid as adjunct (sessional) staff. Staffing ratios have changed over the past few years due to budget restrictions and it is not unusual to have 40% faculty staff and 60% adjunct (sessional or part time) staff. Salary levels for adjunct staff are approximately USD40 per teaching hour and classes are often scheduled for just 70

minutes at a time so it is often hard to find staff. There is a 'hard to hire' clause which allows for a higher pay scale for difficult or specialised areas but it appeared difficult to justify. The issue of recency of qualification was commented on and staff are expected and supported to maintain their discipline qualification through graduate programs. The most common bachelor programs have been in education (K–12), nursing, applied engineering, film and business/management. The student profile is older with an average age of 30+ and most studies are undertaken in a part-time mode with an increasing reliance on e-learning. The shift to e-learning is as much to meet student demand as it is to contain delivery costs. Considerable CPD has been initiated in an effort to ensure that staff are competent in e-learning delivery as the teaching age profile is older and many have had limited exposure to the application of technology in an e-learning environment.

Implications for TAFE in Australia

Whilst we observed many similarities with the bachelor programs discussed, there were considerable differences. As noted, the similar pay scale and teaching conditions within the same community college allow for some flexibility in timetabling and programming. Due to the standardised VET industrial relations approach in Victoria, institutes have developed site-specific arrangements for their degree program delivery. In most cases, they are using the Multi Business Agreement (MBA) as the underpinning award and either paying over-award payments and/or allowing a different load calculation. To allow for the acknowledged teaching differences between VET and higher education delivery, there is a need to have a specific higher education award or the ability to recruit and employ staff teaching in degree

programs that is separate from the VET award arrangements.

The culture within the community colleges did not alter enormously with the introduction of the bachelor programs, partly because staff were already teaching associate degrees and teaching conditions were the same. However, there were concerns expressed about 'mission creep' in that the core reason for a community college to serve the immediate community need may be lost with the move to becoming a quasi-university. Similar concerns have been expressed in Australia regarding the role and purpose of TAFE institutes to provide specific vocational qualifications rather than higher level qualifications, and also the possibility of a cultural change within an institution. Institutes have addressed this issue differently in terms of their operational aspects and within the context of their own culture, but this is an area that needs further study.

The lack of any requirement for staff to have a teaching qualification in conjunction with their vocational expertise means that the community colleges have addressed CPD in a slightly different manner to Australia, with the need to have a greater emphasis on initial teacher preparation and support. Budget allocations for CPD were not explicitly discussed but one community college indicated that 1% of the annual budget was allocated to CPD and that staff were supported financially to complete PhD qualifications. There did not appear to be any centralised or systematic approach to CPD as is the situation in most Australian States, even if they have varying approaches and funding methodology. To date, this centralised focus has been around VET qualifications, in particular the AQTF, assessment and moderation and maintaining industry relevance and currency. As most community colleges are

offering applied bachelor degrees and not focusing on research, the issue of developing a 'scholarly culture' amongst faculty was not deemed a major focal point; in addition, staff already have masters and doctorate degrees. The community colleges are teaching-only providers of bachelor degree programs, again similar to Australia, but there has been considerable discussion as well as identification in accreditation and audit processes that the TAFE institutes should be developing a culture of scholarship. This may change as more TAFE staff undertake higher qualifications and the bulk of their teaching load is in undergraduate degree programs and equally as the discussion matures about the role of TAFE and university as complementary providers of post-secondary qualifications.

Summary

There is a high level of maturity in the delivery of degree programs in Victorian TAFE institutes with several providers having had prior experience in delivering university degree programs under auspicial arrangements prior to undertaking their own program delivery. In my experience and also from my knowledge of the Victorian TAFE institutes delivering degree programs, the facilities and staffing arrangements are excellent. The three community colleges' campuses we visited were all different and site-specific but there was nothing outstanding compared to what I have seen in Victoria; we have much to be proud of. Staffing issues are different in that it appears that the community college staff are, for the most part, more highly credentialled than Australian TAFE staff but this is changing as the TAFE institutes increase the number of degree programs on offer and consequently increase the faculty size and the ability to recruit new staff directly into their programs.

The opportunity to visit and compare the development of community college degrees with the TAFE experience was beneficial in that it highlighted many of the common issues: the TAFE/university cultural divide and competition for students; staff perceptions and differing VET and higher education cultures; the accreditation processes; the need to have bachelor degree programs that meet specific and localised industry skills shortages or for new and emerging industries. It also allowed us to consider some of the differences, particularly the industrial relations approaches and the different funding and methodology with respect to CPD.



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Community College Baccalaureate degrees in Florida: observations and opportunities for (Western) Australia

This paper outlines the background to the introduction and growth of community college baccalaureate degrees in the state of Florida, USA. Some of the main features of the community college baccalaureate system there are outlined and implications and opportunities for VET higher education in Western Australia are listed. Observations are premised on information collected during the TDA Study Tour Delegation to the United States (US) in April 2011, as provided by Miami Dade, Broward and Edison State Colleges in Florida.

Introduction

By the late 1990s, the Florida economy was maturing and moving from a predominantly agricultural base to a more technical focus. Against this background, it was evident that not enough skilled, higher qualified people were available to meet workforce demand. Universities were therefore not meeting the needs of the state of Florida in providing for the required education levels for economic development; there were specific issues with producing enough teachers and nurses, and meeting the needs of the IT industry. Illustrative of this dilemma, in 2005 Florida was 46th out of the 50 states in producing bachelor degrees.¹ A strategy was needed to bolster the quantum of higher education qualifications.

Florida therefore legislated (in 2001) to pave the way for community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in specific areas 'to meet local and regional workforce need', as long as the colleges continued

to meet traditional access and pathway objectives, and continued to offer associate degrees as a university pathway option. Activity was cautious at the beginning and trials were funded by the state, however momentum soon gathered and community colleges in Florida now offer 124 degrees.²

The success of the program is evident as 'Community colleges in Florida are in the forefront of developing baccalaureate programs to meet the critical needs of the state in areas of teacher preparation, nursing, and applied sciences to supplement the crop of professionals that colleges and universities are already producing.'³

Florida Community Colleges

Community college baccalaureate programs in the US tend to be made available in response to local workforce needs, and indeed the community colleges are required to prove this need prior to any registration application to offer the qualification. The community college is also required to liaise with local universities to ensure there are no objections and that the colleges are not competing with the universities. In Florida, however, this does not appear to be an issue; data from the Florida Department of Education indicate that during the past ten years, while many of the community colleges have been offering degrees, the number of students studying at universities has also substantially increased.

Universities have a period (usually 100 days) to submit alternative proposals to the Approving Authority should they not support an application by a community college to offer a degree program. Anecdotal information from administrators interviewed indicated that universities rarely challenge proposals as industry/community demand is strong and the community colleges ensure close liaison with the relevant universities prior to submission.

Industry need and evidence of demand are therefore primary considerations for the approval of a baccalaureate program, and the community colleges place great importance on working closely with industry and the community to ensure qualifications are relevant and will result in employment outcomes. Submissions are also underpinned with state workforce demand data, and student and employer surveys are integral evidentiary requirements in this regard.

Florida's community colleges remain the primary point of access to higher education, with 66% of the state's high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education beginning at a Florida (community) college, and 81% of freshmen and sophomore minority students in public higher education attending one of Florida's 28 colleges.⁴

In considering the increasing proportions of underprivileged and minority students accessing these programs, a recent review by the Pappas Consulting Group cited the advantages of the community college baccalaureate degree as a way for these students to access higher education, while also emphasising the importance of community colleges to maintain their traditional mission.

From another perspective, the community college baccalaureate programs present little competition to the universities as they tend to target a different student age cohort. In the traditional universities, the age distribution of bachelor degree graduates tends to be in the lower age brackets whilst the community college baccalaureate programs tend to serve a higher age bracket: 25–34 and 34–44. This is a reflection of the fact that the bulk of students at the community colleges are also working and/or studying part-time. For instance, at Miami Dade College the average student age is 33, 69% are

over 25, and 23% are over 40 years old; and 615 of the students are part-time.⁵

Consequently, the community college baccalaureate programs are offering alternative pathways for a wide range of student cohorts, thereby increasing higher education participation and general access rates. According to the Florida Department of Education, 'data reveals that baccalaureate programs at community colleges tend to target and attract time- and place-bound students who might not otherwise pursue a degree at a four-year college or university due to varying personal constraints'.⁶

Another consideration is that tuition, even at the upper level, is less costly at community colleges. Structural arrangements are in place in Florida to ensure that the student fees for community college baccalaureate programs are less than the fees charged at universities. Indeed, the state sets a cap on community college fees and in most instances the state provides 50% of the tuition costs. The community colleges are also only able to charge a set proportion of fees charged by universities and in this regard enjoy a price 'competitive advantage'.

Affordability is, consequently, a key access attribute. Grants and financial assistance are also features of enabling access to the community colleges. A recent report from the Florida Department of Education (March 2011) indicated that 67% of students received some form of financial aid to assist with costs associated with paying for college. Community colleges are also unashamedly 'teaching not research' institutions, contributing to the ability to cap costs to students. It is also worth noting that community colleges in the US enjoy great support from philanthropic sources, enabling the provision of cutting edge infrastructure and equipment at many institutions.

The community colleges have encountered mixed success with qualification completion rates. Initially, completion rates for baccalaureate programs were low and this may well have been a product of their 'open entry' policy in line with their social responsibility goals for access. Qualification completion rates are, however, becoming a critical issue for the colleges and will attract wider attention with performance reporting and foreshadowed funding realignment. As one college President stated, the focus has shifted from a philosophy that 'students have a right to fail' to a 'finish what you start' mentality. Whilst some colleges had reported improved qualification completion and student retention rates, such success has been underpinned by healthy levels of investment in student support associations, mentoring programs, counselling, and dedicated literacy and numeracy programs. Colleges were also reporting that the 'open door' access policy may soon be replaced by entrance criteria initiatives as the state manages budget pressures. Notwithstanding such debate, there was a widespread contention by senior administrators that the real objective is to 'get people jobs, not qualifications completions'.

The Florida community colleges have also been very successful in supporting student learning and meeting the needs of their diverse (part-time) student cohort through a range of blended learning and online delivery practices. There was evidence of widespread take up and availability of technology infrastructure and solutions. Their ability to invest and provide effective product in this regard is another outcome of the myriad of options available for funding support.

To provide for a seamless system of articulation and facilitate an easier transfer of students between institutions, the Florida Department of Education

has introduced a Statewide Course Numbering System. The system has legislative support and was implemented in the mid-1970s in response to the difficulties encountered in assigning course credits to students transferring from lower-division colleges to the upper-division of universities, or to students changing institutions midstream.⁷ Through the system, there is a reduction in unnecessary repetition of courses by students; hence the system has also reduced the time required to complete a degree, resulting in substantial savings for the students and taxpayers.

Implications and considerations for VET higher education delivery in (Western) Australia (not exhaustive)

- The importance and utility of having in place a government-supported and coordinated strategy for the expansion of institutions offering higher education qualifications. This demonstrates a commitment by the state and by its very nature becomes the imperative for change. Indeed, Florida had enacted legislation to drive the initiative.
- The importance of establishing clear industry and community demand for degrees through detailed analysis (and data gathering) of workforce requirements (focus on skills shortages; hence, the link to employment opportunities) and the need to have a strong 'localised' focus with such information.
- The importance of forming consultative industry reference committees (Advisory Boards) to ensure program relevance and be a vehicle for on-going, relevant industry input.
- The need to consider and plan for transition issues when implementing new types of qualifications. Of particular importance is the need to keep all staff informed early and regularly, and address 'culture' issues.
- Establish, and maintain, healthy productive relationships with relevant tertiary institutions, particularly at the early stages of any initiative.
- The importance of considering funding issues. The cost to the student needs to be an 'enabler', not a barrier: establish a cap on what can be charged to the student. Community college baccalaureate programs are very 'cost attractive' to students as the colleges are only allowed to charge a percentage of the tuition charged by universities. A higher level of support flows from the state for the degree programs (similar to the level of VET investment in Western Australia).
- The need for effective course and student review processes, ensuring also that this is 'joined up' with industry, government and strategic priorities.
- Teaching (not research) institution status. This has funding implications (that is, will keep the cost down for students) and promotes the institution's status as distinct from the established university sector.
- Ensure focus on the primary mission: access, affordability and opportunity.
- An 'applied' (problem-solving) focus for higher education qualifications. Graduates are therefore 'work ready'. This philosophy also promotes the community college higher education 'products' as a point of difference from the established university sector.
- A focus on qualification completion. This will also address student participation and retention, and will also require significant investment in student support initiatives.

- A high proportion of part-time (adjunct) well qualified staff which allows greater flexibility.
- A strong focus on student support initiatives; a percentage of funding is also made available from student fees for a dedicated unit to organise student support and related activities.
- A cap on class sizes to maintain effective learning environments and support frameworks.
- A strong focus with online and 'blended learning' modes as many of the students are part-time and are already in the workforce.
- Investment in professional development. This is an important element of employment at the college; the strategy assists in the up-skilling of staff and facilitates currency.
- A healthy level of infrastructure support provided by the state. This is to ensure that facilities are industry standard and cutting edge (although funding flows from a number of sources, including donations and philanthropy).
- A culture of philanthropy is well established in the US and provides healthy financial augmentation.
- A centralised (state-sponsored) approach to unified course numbering eases the management of articulation/credit both within and between education institutions, and results in active (increased) pathways for students.

Summary

There was widespread comment and belief (according to the colleges visited by the study delegation) that the ability of the community colleges to offer baccalaureate programs is a successful initiative.

Florida's decision to allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees was premised on positioning the state to meet the burgeoning workforce development needs through increasing the number of people holding higher level qualifications. The initiative also creates 'social' opportunity and improved employment outcomes for a wider range of Florida's population. The objective and approach in this regard is not that dissimilar to a number of the recommendations outlined in the Bradley Review.

The introduction of baccalaureate programs into the business of the Florida Community Colleges has certainly resulted in more people possessing higher level qualifications, and all colleges have plans to expand the number of degree programs offered. Anecdotal information from the colleges also indicates that graduates are gaining employment. The challenge now for the Florida colleges will be to manage the rate of growth whilst maintaining standards, and remaining true to the community college mission against a backdrop of tightening funding availability.

There is expectation, however, from a US national perspective that there is still work to do, and that the community colleges have a role to play. In 2009, the US President challenged the higher education sector to double the number of college degrees conferred by 2020. Furthermore, this challenge called upon the nation's community colleges to be 'instrumental in this initiative, as they have the capacity to provide the education necessary to produce a competitive workforce'.⁸

Although the context for Australia and Florida differs markedly, there are also many similarities and many of the community college higher education initiatives have relevance and application potential

to VET higher education providers in Australia.
Selective shopping is required!

Endnotes

- ¹ American Association of Community Colleges, www.aacc.nche.edu.
- ² Florida Colleges, www.college-scholarships.com/index.html.
- ³ See *Baccalaureate programs in Community Colleges: a program review*, p. 2, www.hccfl.edu/media/124606/baccalaureate20%programs20%community20%colleges.pdf.
- ⁴ Florida Colleges, www.college-scholarships.com/index.html.
- ⁵ Miami Dade College Facts Sheet, www.mdc.edu.
- ⁶ See *Baccalaureate programs in Community Colleges: a program review*, p. 7, www.hccfl.edu/media/124606/baccalaureate20%programs20%community20%colleges.pdf.
- ⁷ Florida Department of Education, *Statewide Course Numbering System Handbook*, www.fldoe.org/articulation/pdf/statewide-postsecondary-articulation-manual.pdf.
- ⁸ Ferris State University Newsletter, April 2011.



Kellie-Ann Williams

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Kellie-Ann is an Associate Fellow and Certified Practising Marketer of the Australian Marketing Institute with a strong track record of achievement in business growth. She has over 16 years' experience in strategic planning, business/market development and cultivation of brands in both the public and private sectors including Energex, Austrade, Brisbane River Ferry Service and Yellow Pages Australia.

Introduction

As a relative newcomer to the VET sector, I jumped at the opportunity to travel to the United States of America (USA) and learn more about their community colleges. My role as Chief Marketing Officer at the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE (GCIT) sees me responsible for our market strategy and the delivery profile and, as such, I considered a chance to examine its various product offerings would be highly advantageous.

My short time at GCIT has given me a professional interest in the Australian education industry and the change it is undergoing due to policy and funding shifts. I have also developed an acute interest and passion for how organisations such as mine will evolve and grow in these changing times and, in particular, with the competitive onslaught of universities as 'Goliaths' and their power in the marketplace and how, as 'Davids', we respond.

So it was with this lens that I embarked on the visit to the United States (US), keen to observe the system and the role community colleges play in their communities.

Getting a good college education

As an Australian we hear a lot in the American mainstream media about going to 'college'. It's definitely the 'dream' in the States to send your child off to get a good college education and the price tag that goes with it can be quite hefty. My American friends concur that indeed a good college education can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It wasn't until I started to read more about community colleges that I discovered that the 'college' the Americans refer to is actually a university (or a four-year degree college) and the hard-working community college is somewhat the poor cousin.

One of the most insightful visits was to Maricopa Community College in Phoenix, Arizona where the Chancellor, Dr Rufus Glasper, facilitated my visit and shared with me the reputational challenge that community colleges face.

In the US, community colleges are seen as 'second choice' for education compared to a traditional college or university. As anyone can get in without rigorous testing or months of preparation, there's a perception that a community college provides a low quality education standard for students who are underprepared and unable to cope with studying at college. This stigma is deeply ingrained and not unlike its Australian counterpart, those studying at community colleges often have to deal with the perception that they are somewhat less intelligent or capable for their choice.

The truth is refreshing and inspiring. American community colleges are not only delivering an impressive cohort of graduates into the world, they are doing the hard yards of providing those students who aren't study-ready with developmental programs to prepare them for college-grade education. Many of the colleges have seamless articulation programs to many of the four-year colleges and universities and are delivering the first two years (of the four-year education) at a fraction of the cost. Colleges also provide for students to study in a more relaxed environment where their performance is uncompromised by the pressure of university thus allowing them to excel.

Growing up and going to university

In Australia, the 'dream' for many parents isn't too different from the American version. As a child of Baby Boomer parents, it was ingrained in me that you finished high school and went off to university. For some of us it didn't matter what you did as long

as you did something with 'Bachelor' in front of it. My father told me, 'university teaches you to think'. All well and good but what about those of us who would prefer to 'do'?

The truth is and research by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) can verify this, TAFE (as we know the VET sector in Queensland) is considered a second-rate education and for some the education choice for those who couldn't get into university. Whilst perceptions of the VET sector and its institutions vary from state to state, in Queensland TAFEs share many of the perception issues that the community colleges experience. Lower quality teacher, dumbed-down classes, a qualification that no-one values, unqualified teachers, no prospects, out-dated learning resources, and the list goes on.

A recent article in *The Australian* quoted Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan of LH Martin Institute as saying that universities are beginning to encroach more on VET as they capitalise on demand-driven funding arrangements. The NCVER report shows 14% of training at the diploma and advanced diploma level, traditional turf for the VET sector, being delivered by higher educational institutions. This is an astounding figure but no surprise. The reality is that the universities are starting to steal market share and whilst TAFEs continue to experience 'image' problems, it will be harder to convince the paying public that a TAFE education is a valid and equal choice to a university one.

First choice education

So, what's it going to take to attain the rightful position of an education provider considered as a valid choice next to university in the mind of the consumer?

My view is that we need to focus on four broad pillars:

- our products and modes of delivery
- the student experience
- strong linkage with industry and corporations
- strong brands that promote our value and differences.

Products that deliver on wants and needs

Like our American counterparts, developing education products that allow students to prepare or study to articulate to university need to be the bread and butter. The delivery profile needs to cover courses for professions in demand yet also ensure that the community has access to the courses they want to do regardless of job outcomes. In short, becoming more demand-driven is key.

Secondly, in a service industry, the teacher is critical to the product. American community colleges are all experiencing workforce development issues. Their teaching communities are aging and there is a limited flow of new workers into the system. There also exists the issue of teachers that have limited technology skills and a resistance to technology. Innovating in product is going to take a quantum shift in the teaching community to increase their capabilities to respond to the learning styles of students (said to be characterised by short attention spans, high preference for one-to-one and less traditional teaching methods) and their preferred modes of delivery (for example, online) whilst also maintaining their 'practitioner' status.

Give me a life on campus

It would appear the American university ideal of 'life on campus' is alive and well and almost expected

within the community college. Pastoral care is a strong focus, counselling services are prominent, social and sporting programs are all areas in which colleges invest a modicum of money, and if money is limited, energy. The sense of 'community' is strong.

Australian TAFEs of substantial size and with large cohorts of international or residential students could benefit a lot from implementing strategies to create a 'life on campus'. Long considered the hallmark of universities, I believe there are some very real benefits for students and teachers alike to activate campuses and foster the social aspect of an education. A vibrant, accepting, inclusive education environment is surely an attractive choice.

Working with industry

Industry connection is vital for the VET sector given that industry-qualified is the very foundation of its training system. However, not limited to the design of the training, industry has a major role to play in supporting, partnering and advocating for our education institutions within our communities.

American community colleges don't appear to be as linked to industry as the Australian system but they have strong corporate support in the form of sponsorships, donations and philanthropic ventures. Australian VET organisations could benefit from being closer to corporate Australia to support them as the training grounds for their future workforce.

The battle of brands

Someone once said, 'a good product markets itself'; however, increasingly it's also how effective the organisation selling the product is positioned against its competitors. The key is to understand and promote its advantages, its differences.

The benefit for both community colleges and TAFEs is that they do offer something truly unique in their respective marketplaces. Rather than try to be like a university, they can celebrate the very things that make them excellent choices when deciding on an education: attributes such as high quality education, industry-connected teachers, affordable and practical courses, pathways to university, strong job prospects and a non-pressurised learning culture.

In recently rebranding GCIT, we considered if we should move away from the TAFE brand and the negative perceptions that accompany it. The decision was to continue to be associated with TAFE but not be defined by it, and instead, use the positive brand perceptions GCIT would generate (with the great work it's doing) to *redefine* TAFE. TAFE, after all, is our heritage and to discard it would seem improper when it has carried us so far. I would call on all my marketing counterparts across Australia to consider how we could improve the perception of the VET sector through our individual organisational efforts to truly promote the sector as a valid educational choice next to university.

Summary

The journey through the US with some of my VET colleagues was both intriguing and inspiring. I'm always immensely proud to be an Australian when I travel overseas and even more so on a trip like this when I see just how progressive we are compared to the US.

The value of trips such as these is learning and reflection. Their benefits last for many months and years after you return for having seen things from a different angle. As I draft the delivery plan for the next 18 months, I'm considering all present government and organisational priorities but also where we can meet the market, where we

can innovate and where we can build value for the community. The American trip has given me perspective for which I am grateful.



LH Martin Institute

For Higher Education Leadership and Management

Media Release

Communiqué

TDA/LH Martin Institute Tertiary Mission to US Community Colleges

Government funding supports 17 US states offering Community College Degrees in skill shortages occupational areas. What are the implications for Australian public policy?

Media Release – for immediate release

EMBARGO Wednesday 20 April 2011

TAFE Directors Australia and the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne, today released a Joint Communiqué following an 8-day Tertiary Education Mission to American Community Colleges.

The Tertiary Mission was hosted by the American Association of Community Colleges and the US Community College Baccalaureate Association. It included network meetings with the League for Innovation in the Community College (USA), and roundtables and briefings in Florida, the inaugural State which legislated to allow Community College degrees. It included discussions led by Florida's Department of Education Baccalaureate division, and Deans and Presidents of 10 of the 18 Florida Colleges offering degrees.

A key finding from the Australian Tertiary Mission was the extent to which US Community Colleges were being granted legislative authority to offer 4-year degrees – and the rapid growth of these degrees within and across more US states. Seventeen states have legislated to allow Colleges to offer degrees, and some 180 Colleges across the 1200 American Community Colleges are now allowed to offer one or more degrees. Further findings were:

- **GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO DEGREES** – State and city funding provide the main source of funding for the cost of College degree courses. Student tuition fees with loan support, provide the balance of course funding.
- **WORKFORCE SKILL SHORTAGES DRIVING GROWTH** – Community Colleges gaining legislative support to offer degrees are required to demonstrate how the new degrees would support skill shortages being experienced in the community and/or region.
- **NURSING & HEALTH SCIENCES, ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGIES AND TEACHER EDUCATION** – Enrolment focus is dominant in skill shortage areas across nursing and health and allied health sciences,

engineering and ICT technologies, digital media and TV media production, and teacher education. In the case of nursing, the American nursing professional bodies reported support for nursing degrees in Community Colleges.

- **EDUCATION COURSE COMPLETIONS AND EQUITY IMPORTANT ISSUES IN CASE FOR COLLEGE DEGREES** – The Obama Government agenda 'Achieving the Dream', which seeks to double the number of America's graduates, and its emphasis on student course completions of Community Colleges across equity groups are key criteria for Federal funding, and provide an important educational context for the US states supporting Community Colleges offering degrees.
- **ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS** – American Community Colleges offering degrees must meet the same accreditation requirements as the state universities and demonstrate that they can meet the same educational standards.
- **SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH** – American Community Colleges are not research institutions, and this remains the role of US public and private universities. However, various scholarship criteria were noted by the Mission, and this detail will be incorporated into the proposed TDA/LH Martin Institute Occasional Paper, to be published as a result of the US Mission.
- **FUNDING FORMULAE, PRICING DIFFERENTIAL TO UNIVERSITY DEGREES AND STUDENT SUPPORT** – Although state government funding for degrees overall has declined during the current US Budget crisis, states nonetheless funded community colleges to offer degrees to support workforce development. This state funding was essential to support greater educational attainment at a more affordable price than universities. Community college degrees are funded at approximately 85% of the corresponding state university degrees offered in the local county or state, with students often paying far less in fees than they would at a state university. Funding for student support was also a highlight of the visit, with evidence of significant extracurricular activities and extensive remedial support for students to support educational progression.

The Australian Tertiary Mission was led by TDA and the LH Martin Institute, and included the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER), along with representatives from TAFE Institutes in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Western Australia, and MEGT which is one of Australia's largest Group Training companies and private registered training organisations.

According to Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan from the LH Martin Institute, the Tertiary Education Mission to review baccalaureate degrees in American Community Colleges will assist in the development of public policy in Australia to support the expansion of higher education in TAFEs and non-university educational providers in Australia.

"In particular, we saw how governments can support these degrees to improve access to higher education and achieve equity objectives. Many US states have much stronger relationships between their community colleges and universities than we do in Australia, and this is because governments insist on it."

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive Officer of TDA, said the US Tertiary Mission was timely, in light of the upcoming Federal Budget 2011 and review of extending Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) for TAFE and non university HEP providers.

“The Tertiary Mission highlighted that Community College degrees were being government funded on a wide scale throughout the United States, and tied to tackling skill shortages and workforce development needs” he said.

The Australian Tertiary Mission wishes to acknowledge the support of the US Community College Baccalaureate Association for facilitating access to networks throughout the 8-day official visit, as well as the support of the American Association of Community Colleges, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the State of Florida Department of Education, and leadership of Florida Colleges which hosted visits: Edison State College, Miami Dade College and Broward College.

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Detailed information on the Tertiary Education Mission can be found here: <http://www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au/conferences-and-events/44-international-delegation-to-usa-community-colleges-reviewing-four-year-degrees-and-the-tertiary-agenda>

**TDA-LH Martin Institute
Tertiary Education Mission to England and Scotland
June–July 2011**



University of Plymouth, Roland Levinsky Building.



Glasgow Caledonian University offers a stimulating, vibrant and accessible environment for learning, teaching and applied research. Nearly 17,000 students from the UK and abroad study here.



The University of Sheffield prides itself on working with local communities.



At the University of Glasgow, the Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning (CRADALL) provides a coordinated focus for R&D in broad areas of adult and continuing education.



New College Durham's GDP35 million campus offers an impressive range of buildings, facilities and resources to give students a modern and stimulating learning environment.



Over 17,000 students choose to study at South Tyneside College every year – from the local community, across the UK and over thirty countries worldwide.

TDA-LH Martin Institute
Tertiary Education Mission to England and Scotland
June–July 2011

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Opportunities and challenges for further education in England and Scotland

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Pam Caven took up the position of Director Policy and Stakeholder Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), in May 2007. Her career has included being a secondary school teacher, teachers' college lecturer, TAFE teacher, senior manager in State and Federal Government departments, and author. She was a Director in the Victorian Department of Education and Training prior to moving to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) as Project Director. At TDA, Pam has drawn on input from members to develop formal TDA submissions to a range of government and departmental enquiries and consultations. She has managed significant national projects and organised a range of seminars and the annual TDA national conferences.

Pam holds a BA (Hons), Dip Ed, Cert.IV (Training & Assessment) and a Masters degree in Education – Leadership and Management.

Introduction

In June–July 2011, Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan, LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne, and I spent over two weeks travelling in England and Scotland, including London, Plymouth, Bristol, York, Durham and Glasgow. In the course of this trip, discussions were held with a wide variety of key people from universities, further education (FE) colleges (principals, senior managers, coordinators and teachers), officials from government agencies and statutory bodies including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), Foundation Degrees Forward, the Institute for Learning, and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in England, and Skills Development Scotland. Meetings and discussions were also held with the Association of Colleges in England and Scotland's Colleges which are the sister organisations of TDA, and with the Mixed Economy Group which represents FE colleges in England that have a substantial component of higher education load.

Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan and I presented papers on higher education in FE in Australia at a lively session in London, hosted by the Association of Colleges. The willingness of United Kingdom (UK) colleagues to share insights and provide hospitality was both impressive and generous.

This trip coincided with a period of considerable flux for the UK FE system – a period of recovery from the GFC with the Coalition Government implementing measures to curtail government spending. The priorities and directions of the Government were articulated in the White Paper, *Students at the Heart of the System*, published in late June 2011.

It is a period of opportunities and challenges for FE colleges.

Purpose of the study trip

Overall, the purpose of the trip was to build collaborative networks and enhance LH Martin/TDA's understanding of the policy and operational implications of FE colleges delivering higher education in the UK. In particular, it was to:

- gain insight into the English and Scottish systems and specifically, the extent of higher education in FE, how it is funded and how it is administered, and to consider the implications for Australia
- examine the policy implications of higher education in FE, particularly in relation to issues of governance, quality assurance, academic standards, staff development, student support and IR
- document UK definitions of scholarship as an essential component of the delivery and assessment of higher education in FE – a particular focus of the TDA Board
- consider UK institutional partnerships, strategies and programs
- develop networks with a view to international collaboration, further study tours and professional development opportunities/staff exchange between the UK and Australia.

Background

In Australia, and similarly in the UK, government policies, the economic environment and industry practices are providing the impetus for an increasing number of people to seek higher level qualifications, particularly higher education qualifications.

The mid-level technical, para-professional and professional occupations for which TAFE institutes have traditionally provided training increasingly

require or expect higher education qualifications for entry to the occupation or for career progression.

The Bradley Review acknowledged the emergence of a more diverse tertiary sector. TDA responded to the Review's recommendations in the *Blueprint for Australia's Tertiary Education Sector*, published in July 2010. Since that date, there have been further changes in the Australian higher education policy landscape: the Australian Government's decision to uncap undergraduate places at universities from 2012; the endorsement of the Australian Qualifications Framework and the establishment of new regulatory arrangements for vocational education and training and for higher education.

Australian Governments are clearly supporting a market-based approach to the provision of both vocational and higher education.

TAFE institutes in Australia and FE colleges in the UK, traditionally the primary providers of vocational education and training, are responding to this changing educational landscape by increasingly offering higher education qualifications in their own right or in partnership with universities.¹

Relationships between TAFE institutes and universities will involve competition and cooperation, although different TAFE institutes may emphasise one or the other in their relationships with universities. Rather than this movement of TAFE institutes into the provision of higher education programs being seen as competing with universities, it is likely that universities in Australia, particularly the recruiting universities, will want to form more linkages with TAFE institutes to increase their share of Commonwealth Supported Places and guarantee a pipeline of students. Those TAFE institutes that offer higher education qualifications in their own right will continue to develop their provision and

participate in the tertiary education market for students for degrees, and also form partnerships with universities where this is mutually beneficial.

The offering of more higher education qualifications has also brought challenges to TAFE institutes: in the partnerships that TAFE institutes form, their academic governance arrangements and the quality of their higher education delivery and assessment. A consistent theme in Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) reviews of higher education offered by TAFE institutes has been the need for a better appreciation of what is meant by scholarship and for more understanding of the importance and value of higher education governance arrangements.

In many respects, TAFE institutes in Australia have a number of issues in common with FE colleges delivering higher education in the UK.

Further education in higher education in the UK

The UK higher education in FE landscape is complex with a variety of institutions and agencies delivering and accrediting vocational education and training, FE and higher education qualifications.

FE colleges have an important role to play in the provision of higher education in the UK. They offer approximately 10% of the delivery in England.² Scotland's FE colleges deliver about 25% of higher education undergraduate student load (depending on how this is calculated).³ Some English FE colleges have a considerably higher education load, most notably the Mixed Economy Group of Colleges (40 of 340).

Three hundred and forty-seven FE colleges in England were incorporated in 1992.⁴ They deliver to 16–19 year olds undertaking secondary school certificates (a major student cohort for FE colleges in

contrast to TAFE institutes); to students undertaking a range of vocational qualifications – NVQs (which are the equivalent of training packages) and apprenticeships (although the latter in much smaller numbers than in Australia). FE colleges also offer Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs). These national qualifications have a long history in the UK.

FE colleges have an enviable success rate of 81% retention and 65% were judged by the Quality Assurance Agency to be good or outstanding.⁵

Scottish Colleges have recently embarked on a rationalisation and modernisation of their HNCs and HNDs.

The greatest growth in higher education in FE in England has been in foundation degrees. These are offered by universities and FE colleges, although not in Scotland. Scottish colleagues were of the opinion that HNCs and HNDs are well understood by the community, employers and students. Scottish HNCs and HNDs are accredited by government accreditation bodies and, unlike foundation degrees, do not need to be validated by universities. Scottish FE colleges argue this gives colleges the independence they need to develop locally responsive education qualifications.

Foundation degrees were largely an initiative of the former Labour Government. While their original purpose may have been to provide a higher education pathway for existing workers and part-time students, it would appear that they have morphed over time into transition qualifications for exiting secondary students and for mature-aged students who wish to enter higher education. They became part of the former UK Government's strategy for widening access into higher education, especially for students from low SES backgrounds. FE colleges currently supply 38% of higher education entrants.⁶

'All Foundation Degrees have to meet two crucial benchmarks: employer involvement in curriculum and delivery and workplace delivery' (Susan Hayday, Director of Workplace Learning Strategy, Foundation Degrees Forward). Their focus is on local industry and vocational relevance, although there is some tension between their vocational orientation and the objective of widening access. There is a plethora of these degrees throughout England, and some would argue potentially causing confusion to employers.⁷

Foundation degrees are not just the first two years of a degree; they are designed to have a specific vocational outcome and support student transition to a full degree. This is in contrast with Australia especially via franchising arrangements under which universities determine the courses of their partner institutes.

Despite their popularity, the future expansion of foundation degrees in England is unclear. They are seen to be a Labour Party initiative, not wholeheartedly embraced by the Coalition Government.

The larger picture however of the Coalition Government's changes to the funding of universities is a mixed one – there appear to be both opportunities and challenges for FE colleges in this more competitive marketplace. FE colleges are looking at how they can tap into the additional 20,000 places that the Coalition Government has allocated for fees lower than GBP7,500.

The Association of Colleges warned, prior to the White Paper, that a more competitive marketplace for higher education students may play out badly for FE colleges. The Association pointed to some validating universities withdrawing from their relationships with colleges. There was some evidence of a growth in teacher redundancies.⁸

On the other side of the ledger, as many English universities signal their intention to charge the maximum allowed GBP9,000, some FE colleges are taking a different approach. New College Durham, an FE college, currently has about 1,500 students doing higher education courses and plans to pitch its fee for degree courses at GBP6,000. Like many FE colleges, it hopes to gain from the expansion of places for institutions with an average fee of GBP7,500 or less. The principal, John Widdowson, welcomed the changes announced in the White Paper, 'The ability to offer additional places is really welcome. There is demand from people who want to study locally and do vocational qualifications. [Colleges] will fill these 20,000 places pretty quickly and still find unmet demand'.⁹

FE colleges, it would seem, will charge lower fees and potentially attract more students but they do this in a time when the UK Government is imposing cuts to public funding, for example, in education infrastructure and places. The Government is also encouraging greater competition that will come from existing for-profit providers and also from global competitors (Pearson, Apollo Group and Kaplan are just a few of the world's leading education companies).

Partnerships with universities

Many of the tensions Australia experiences between TAFE institutes and universities in developing partnerships and competing in the market are evident in the UK.

Some provision in FE colleges is directly funded by Government but most is routed through universities in franchises and partnerships. Even where directly funded to deliver higher education, FE colleges must still rely on university partners to validate their higher education qualifications.

Some 'mixed economy' FE colleges are seeking self-accrediting status for their own foundation degrees through the Privy Council. This is the preferred position of FE colleges, as some (particularly the Mixed Economy Group [MEG]) feel that they are otherwise required to fit into the 'university mould' of higher education qualifications and participate in often prolonged validation processes.

Partnership arrangements between universities and FE colleges exist on a continuum: franchising arrangements are at one end, which often involve little support or interaction between the university and FE college, and at the other end, true partnerships, in which the university helps to build capacity in their partner FE colleges and provide resources and support to teachers and students.

The concept of scholarship

Members of the Board of TDA requested that one of the issues to be pursued in the UK was scholarship. The sub-text was to investigate how FE colleges prepared their higher education students to make a successful transition to study at university. What was the understanding of scholarship in FE colleges in partnership with universities? What arrangements did the colleges/the partner universities have in place to foster and develop scholarly behaviour and activity?

As in Australia, there was ongoing interest and lively discussion on the topic in the UK. Our UK colleagues certainly felt that there was a need to go beyond a narrow definition of scholarly behaviour as being engaged in research and publication. While there was a multiplicity of views, there was broad support for Ernest L. Boyer's report, *Scholarship reconsidered*¹⁰ with its exposition of the 'scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching'.

There was also general agreement that all students undertaking higher education study needed to develop cognitive, critical and analytical skills.

FE colleges have adopted a range of strategies to promote scholarship for FE in higher education staff and students.

Case study 1: The University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty – 'Like the Roman Empire'

The University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty has a thoroughgoing approach to promoting quality and scholarship in their delivery of their foundation degrees. The Faculty works with nineteen partners (the majority are FE colleges) in a large geographical area, stretching from Bristol to Penzance. This is the largest partnership in the UK with 10,500 students (one-third of the university population). The University validates all courses and awards the qualifications offered with its partner FE colleges.

The Faculty also recognises the differences between university disciplines and academic faculties and, like the Roman Empire, deals with its component parts differently.

All staff who teach further education in FE partner colleges are registered university staff and have access to all university facilities, although the university is not their employer. The Dean of the Faculty, Dr Colin Williams, maintains that the focus of the Faculty needs to be on the students – staff need to adjust to a variety of learning styles. Many of the students come from low SES backgrounds and would not previously have aspired to or had the support to go to university.

Dr Williams and the staff in the Faculty are keen to foster an academic community across the University that supports scholarship in staff and students via:

- academic liaison staff from university faculties working with colleges at a subject level, recognising the differences between disciplines
- Subject Forum Chairs as a bridge between the FE colleges and the university faculties
- an annual conference, for example, in the Liberal Arts (this year's conference had a focus on censorship)
- master classes for all higher education teaching staff at partner colleges
- seminars on topics such as copyright
- external examinations.

The elaborate quality assurance and administrative structures of the Faculty are not necessarily replicated in other college/university partnerships. In many cases it is understood that the validating university will visit a college once a year and if they are unhappy with what they see, will commission an independent reviewer.

Case study 2: The Higher Education Academy (HEA)

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) in many senses performs a similar function to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), whose functions will transfer to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

HEA works with college principals, university academics and FE staff to establish a range of strategies to support FE college staff in attaining the understanding and skills to engage their students in scholarly activities, including workshops on assessment; experiential learning; exploration of pedagogy for higher education in FE; a scholarly activity webpage, print and soft copies of resources; and webinar facilities for FE staff.

Case study 3: New College Durham – 'It's about the language'

John Widdowson, Principal of New College Durham and convener of the Mixed Economy Group, frames the debate around scholarship in terms that emphasise the 'applied' nature of higher education as offered by FE colleges. While he supports higher education students acquiring 'critical professional practice', bringing together skills and academia, he believes that some academic behaviour is designed to exclude low SES students.

Some of the strategies New College Durham staff use to ensure that students are being prepared for transition to university include the availability of personal and professional development units (subjects or modules); an academic librarian working with students on assignments and moderation between teachers.

Staff at New College Durham maintained that retention is very high in their higher education in FE courses and students are adequately prepared for transition.

Staff acknowledged, however, that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has observed that FE colleges overall are not systematic enough in reflecting and recording what the staff are doing and therefore are not sufficiently strategic.

Supporting regional economic development

In England there is considerable focus on local development of programs, especially via foundation degrees. It is argued that there are gains in regional arrangements that raise the levels of skills in a region via retaining people in the region thereby creating a bank of graduates that may attract industry to the region (University of Plymouth Faculty perspective).

Australian Governments have indicated that TAFE institutes will play an important role in increasing access to higher education in regions; however, there has been less discussion about the way higher education in TAFE institutes can support regional economic development.

The implications for Australia are that it would appear that new higher education qualifications that are in response to local demands and requirements will need to be developed, in contrast to just taking the first two years of existing 'generic' degrees at universities and arranging for them to be delivered by the TAFE institutes in the regions.

Building capacity

The UK Government requires FE teachers to be registered, to have teaching qualifications, and to document their annual Continuous Professional Development Program, although this is not required if they exclusively teach only higher education programs.

The UK Government has, in the past, also funded consortia arrangements that are premised on a university working with a number of different FE partners to build the FE colleges' capacity to offer higher education. A number of these consortia have remained even after initial funding ceased.

The research funding bodies have also funded extensive research into higher education in FE. Some of the strategies employed by colleges have been examined under the section on scholarship.

The implication for Australia is that it would be beneficial if the Australian Government placed a greater focus on building capacity of higher education teachers in Australian TAFE institutes and in helping build capacity for academic governance in TAFE institutes more broadly.

Governance

FE colleges offering higher education are required to have appropriate academic governance, that is, appropriate structures, academic representation and terms of reference.

Colleges are audited by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to ensure these requirements are met. As an example of what is possible in partnerships, the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty has integrated academic governance with representatives of its nineteen FE partners on its academic governing bodies.

Funding

The FE sector in England is represented on the key higher education funding body by John Widdowson, Principal of New College Durham, Chair of Mixed Economy Group.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funds universities and FE colleges either directly or indirectly.

Additionally, an FE college principal is a member of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (contrast this with the lack of VET or TAFE institute representation on the AQFC and the absence of any TAFE institute representatives in the higher education funding arena).

Conclusions

This study tour provided insights into many facets of higher education in FE. The UK higher education in FE landscape is complex with a variety of institutions and agencies delivering and accrediting vocational education and training, further education and higher education qualifications.

A better understanding of the UK FE system, in a period of recovery from the GFC and with curtailed

government spending, albeit that this is a period of opportunities and challenges for FE colleges, was made possible because of the openness of discussions with a wide variety of key informants from universities, FE colleges (principals, senior managers, coordinators and teachers), officials from government agencies and statutory bodies, the Association of Colleges in England, and Scotland's Colleges.

As stated earlier, this study trip had several goals. Importantly, it was to build collaborative networks and enhance LH Martin/TDA's understanding of the policy and operational implications of FE colleges delivering higher education in the UK. In my view, each of the goals was achieved and now, for us in Australia, the benefits will be when we draw on our collective findings and experiences and share those with our colleagues here and in the UK.

Endnotes

- ¹ There are different models of Higher Education in Further Education/VET across Australia's States and Territories, including: Dual sector universities (which increasingly includes the delivery of Higher Education by the TAFE divisions) Partnerships/franchising TAFE offers degrees and associate degrees in their own right (Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales) TAFE offers associate degrees as a vocational outcome and as a pathway to university (Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia).
- ² Statistic provided by Foundations Degree Forward.
- ³ Statistic provided by Scotland's Colleges.
- ⁴ The UK Government is responsible for education and skills in England only.
- ⁵ Julian Gravatt, Assistant Chief Executive, Association of Colleges Seminar, 19 July 2011, Sydney.
- ⁶ Julian Gravatt, Assistant Chief Executive, Association of Colleges Seminar, 19 July 2011, Sydney.
- ⁷ Colin Rainey, Senior Adviser Higher Education Academy, advised that there were over 300 Business foundation degrees.
- ⁸ *The Times* Higher Education Supplement, 7 April 2011.
- ⁹ *The Guardian*, 29 June 2011, p. 11.
- ¹⁰ Ernest L Boyer Scholarship *Reconsidered Priorities*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990).

International perspectives from the TDA National Conference, September 2011

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Higher education in English Further Education Colleges: 'protect and grow'

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Martin Doel OBE, Chief Executive of Association of Colleges, UK, works alongside the AoC Board, President, staff and membership to champion and promote the work of Colleges, develop and promote an environment in which they can flourish, and ensure Colleges are recognised as major contributors to the economic and social prosperity of the UK. His extensive experience in education includes the development of a skills strategy across the Ministry of Defence in response to the Leitch report, and close liaison with the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) on education initiatives for service personnel, including the development of policy relating to under 18s.

Martin has a first class honours degree from King Alfred's College (now the University of Winchester), and a Masters Degree from Kings College London.

Introduction

With the release of its White Paper 'Higher education: students at the heart of the system' in June 2011, the United Kingdom (UK) Coalition Government signalled the direction of its policy for higher education in England.¹ The White Paper was preceded by the Browne Review² into the financing of higher education and much of the subsequent media commentary has concentrated upon the increase in tuition fees up to a ceiling of GBP9,000, supported by a revised system of student loans.

The White Paper was, however, also notable for an increased emphasis upon diversity of supply within higher education, inviting greater involvement by private for profit universities and further education (FE) colleges. This diversity of supply was linked philosophically to a greater emphasis upon student choice with students being seen as empowered consumers.

The White Paper was, though, launched against a backdrop of severely constrained public finances, and whilst the Coalition Government has maintained the same number of student places as the outgoing Labour administration, it felt unable to facilitate a true free market in higher education. A student numbers control system therefore remains in place, albeit with a 'core and margin' for growth for those suppliers of places to either high achieving applicants,³ or to those institutions charging below a threshold of GBP7,500.⁴

As explained below, the prospect of FE colleges playing an expanded role in the delivery of higher education is threatened by the control that Universities have over existing provision and the fact that the revised policy foreshadowed by the White Paper will not be fully in place until the academic year commencing 2013. The mantra that

best sums up the position for English FE colleges is therefore 'Protect and Grow' encapsulating the need to preserve existing provision ahead of the opportunities to grow under the new system.

Existing pattern of higher education in FE colleges

Notwithstanding the implied prospect of increased competition between FE colleges and universities, the existing pattern of delivery of higher education in FE colleges is largely complementary to that provided within universities. Whilst the overall number of higher education students in FE colleges has increased over the past 10 years, this has been within the context of an overall increase in student places in all institutions and the college share of those places has remained at about 10%.

The greatest proportion of that 10% is delivered in higher education 'cold spots'. These 'cold spots' are either geographical where there is no nearby university (for example, Taunton in Devon) to serve students who do not wish to live and study away from their home or workplace or where the courses offered by the local college are not available in the local university which is often focused on traditional three-year honours degree courses in academic subjects.

The 'signature' college courses are vocational in the form of foundation degrees (a two-year course similar to the United States of America's associate degree) that may be topped up to become a full honours degree, and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas which are industry-specific vocational qualifications.⁵ College students are also more likely to be studying part-time whilst in employment and be living at home, coming from a 'non-traditional' higher education background; their average age at entry at age 21 is also higher than in the university sector.

In all but two FE colleges, which have recently been granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP), all foundation degree and honours degree level provision is validated by a partner university. The cost of validation services provided by a university can be up to 30% of the fees levied by a college. Additionally, whilst some colleges benefit from a direct funding agreement from the Higher Education Funding Council, a majority deliver higher education under a franchised arrangement from a university. In the latter case, the colleges are effectively delivering university numbers which is significant in relation to any need to ration higher education places.

The quality of the higher education delivered by colleges is further vouchsafed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), a university-owned but independent inspection body.

Short-term threats

Whilst the prospect of increased competition to attract students paying elevated student fees offers little threat to elite universities in England, it is a more worrying development for many so-called 'new universities'. These former polytechnics have grown rapidly over the past 15 years, often by franchising provision through FE colleges. As in many cases of expansion, however, many of the new universities have failed to control their cost base, not least in an effort to improve their standing in the university league tables which are largely dependent upon research activity. As a consequence, many have felt unable to offer student fees much below the GBP9,000 cap charged by the elite research universities.

In this context, FE colleges, whose cost model is buttressed by their wider delivery to adults and to 16–18 year olds, and by their concentration on

teaching, could be seen as a threat by their partner universities. Left to their own devices, most colleges will charge well below GBP7,500 for their provision of higher education. In such circumstance, it would be understandable for reasons of institutional self-interest if some universities were to withdraw their franchised numbers from colleges or to pressure colleges to charge similar fees to themselves. Additionally, some validating universities may choose to withdraw validating services from partner colleges who have a direct funding agreement with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Although not yet widespread, we are seeing examples of both forms of behaviour by universities. Though understandable at the level of institutional self-interest, such actions threaten to derail Government intentions before the revised arrangements for a 'core and margin' model are enacted, and colleges are granted the greater freedom to deliver the vocational, employer-led, flexible and cost effective higher education that Government is seeking.

Such action by universities also flies in the face of the establishment and maintenance of long-term partnerships between colleges and universities that deliver to the differentiated needs of students, businesses and communities.

Medium term opportunities

In the midst of addressing short term threats, colleges are focusing on medium term opportunities for growth in their higher education provision. In doing so they are seeking to build upon their distinctive strengths:

- A vocational focus and a long history of working with industry and commerce at the

precursor level in apprenticeships and other qualifications.

- The ability to work at the local and regional level with a range of employers from large national players to small and medium enterprises.
- Concentration upon a direct and supportive teaching model which addresses the needs of non-traditional entrants and those seeking more flexible modes of delivery.
- Working within a highly competitive environment with an emphasis upon consistent and externally verified quality assurance.

The White Paper with its immediate prospect of 20,000 additional directly funded places in 2012 under the core and margin model seems likely to be but the first step to colleges accessing student places under a more market-driven system. The White Paper also premises a review of foundation degrees and the prospect of reducing the university stranglehold on full degree awarding powers. In both cases the predominant market advantage enjoyed by universities by virtue of status will be reduced with a concomitant opportunity for college growth.

Such growth could be entirely independent of universities or could be in a new more equal partnership model in which each party delivers to its strengths and provides integrated progression pathways. These pathways could involve the evolution of wider credit accumulation and transfer agreements between colleges and universities on a '2+1' or '2+2' model. We are working with our equivalent organisation in the university sector to promote such models.

A more equal partnership between FE colleges and universities also requires a more shared approach

to quality assurance measures. To this end, we have recently agreed the principle that colleges will become full partners in the Quality Assurance Agency, moving from the position of supplicant in the application of quality to becoming a co-owner in the process.

Conclusions

The challenge to FE colleges in realising the medium-term opportunities that may arise from the 2011 White Paper is to think strategically, to build upon their existing strengths and to meet the responsibilities of being a full, rather than junior partner in the delivery of higher education. But, in the meantime, there is a need to protect current provision against short-term institutional interests.

Endnotes

- ¹ Education policy, including Higher Education, is devolved to each of the Home nations and the 2011 White Paper applies only to English Universities and Colleges.
- ² Led by Lord Browne, former Chairman BP.
- ³ Those students achieving AAB grades at A level.
- ⁴ Further qualifying criteria have yet to be released.
- ⁵ A number of further education colleges do also offer full honours degrees and Masters degrees, most notably in specialist areas such as land-based studies.

Broadening the degree granting power of colleges to meet the needs of the new economy

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Dr Dan Patterson has been Niagara College's President since 1995. Prior to joining the college system, he held senior executive positions with the federal and provincial governments. As Chair, Dan led the Ontario Committee of Presidents through a critical time for the college system, resulting in the introduction of baccalaureate degrees for colleges and a new provincial mandate.

Introduction

This paper is about broadening degree granting power given to colleges in order to meet the needs of the new economy.

It argues that the themes of industry relevance and the quality of teaching and learning in colleges are critical elements that will compel government decision makers to expand degree opportunities which are currently limited in Ontario colleges. The single biggest predictor of success will be to what extent we are able to link our degree offerings to the economic needs for a highly skilled workforce.

The paper examines lessons learned from 10 years of degree granting experience and what the future holds for Ontario colleges.

Origin of degree granting in Ontario

The Ontario publicly funded postsecondary education system consists of colleges and universities, each with a distinct mandate. Historically, the 24 Ontario colleges have been vocationally focused offering diplomas and apprenticeship training, while the 17 universities focus more on research and undergraduate and graduate degrees. In 2000, Ontario colleges received authorisation to grant four-year degrees in applied fields of study, subject to a number of restrictions, one of which limited college degrees to defined applied areas of study in order to avoid overlapping mandates with the university sector.

Each college degree application is rigorously reviewed by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), an arm's length agency appointed by the government, using detailed degree standards that are similar to those used by the university sector for their baccalaureate programs.

There are approximately 80 degree programs in Ontario, delivered by 15 of the 24 colleges, representing 4% of the system's total full-time enrolment and approximately 1.5% of Ontario's baccalaureate students. In addition to eight semesters of academic study, college degree programs include 14 weeks of paid work experience.

In 2009, the Ontario college system recommended broadening the scope of colleges' degree granting authority, allowing colleges more flexibility to offer degree programs that meet the needs of the Ontario labour market, including in areas that have traditionally been the purview of universities. Another issue facing colleges is the delivery of degree programs within the existing college funding model. While the cost of delivering college degree programs is similar to university degrees, colleges receive less funding per student than their university counterparts. The college system is advocating to government that the funding parameters for college degree programs reflect actual delivery costs.

Lessons learned

With more than a decade of experience managing the evolution of our expanded mandate, Ontario colleges are well positioned to reflect on some of the lessons learned.

Persistence

In a word, persistence was one of the most important ingredients that led to Ontario colleges' success in obtaining degree granting status. Moving from a regulatory regime in which universities had a monopoly on the power to grant degrees required a relentless persistence and a defensible business case, supported by a unified and sustained strategy. In making our case, colleges were able to demonstrate the added value of a college degree, with a different

mix of theory and application than the universities were able to offer. The government of the day embraced the notion that greater competition in postsecondary education would be a stimulus to increased efficiency, innovation and quality.

While securing degree granting status was a tremendous accomplishment, it is only the first major step in having college degrees accepted. For example, colleges currently must negotiate on an individual basis for their graduates to qualify for masters level studies. Continued advocacy is key to expanding degree opportunities and raising the profile of college baccalaureate degrees with employers, universities, prospective students and government decision makers.

System design and accountability

As mentioned earlier, when the Ontario Government expanded degree granting authority to colleges it established certain restrictions and implemented a rigorous approval and quality framework. In part, this process helps to address some of the concerns around duplication with the university sector and the credibility of college degrees. This has led to college degrees being quite narrowly focused, which is counter to what employers are seeking in degree candidates, and makes it difficult for colleges to develop the critical mass of degree students needed to be competitive. College degrees must contain sufficient general education and generic skills content, to ensure that graduates are able to demonstrate the broad knowledge and critical thinking skills expected of a degree graduate.

The second issue has been the approval process itself, which can take up to three years to bring a concept to market. One of the distinct strengths of the college sector has been its relationship with industry and its ability to respond quickly to labour

market needs, yet the approval process is more onerous than that applied to universities. While a rigorous approval system is necessary to ensure quality and credibility of college degrees by both the public and employers, this must be balanced with the need for flexibility and responsiveness in a competitive labour market.

Branding the college credential

Colleges have a huge opportunity but they also face a challenge in convincing employers and prospective students that a college degree is not only as good as but better than a university degree. The challenge is in branding and marketing the credential itself within the broader economic context. Employers need to see that in hiring a graduate with a college degree, they are not only hiring an employee with the problem solving and critical thinking skills of a university education, but also with the contextual knowledge and highly developed applied skills of their field. Prospective students need to see that far from limiting their options, a college degree opens opportunities, not possible with a four-year university degree. College degrees should be branded and promoted as an 'undergraduate degree +', a credential that combines all the theoretical knowledge plus an applied focus that allows graduates to hit the ground running when entering the workforce. This requires a coordinated, system-wide approach to promoting and branding college degrees, as well as full recognition by universities that will allow graduates to continue into graduate studies.

Creating the right culture

The introduction of degree programs can have unintended consequences if college leaders do not recognise the potential risks. Given the prestige often associated with degree programming, colleges need

to celebrate their unique ability to embrace their access mandate while at the same time opening pathways into higher levels of education. Colleges are proud of their reputation for taking students from where they are today and providing them the opportunity to realise their goals, whether at the apprenticeship, diploma or degree level. Without this constant reinforcement, there is a tendency toward institutional drift as well as creating a two-tiered culture, with those not associated with degree programs feeling undervalued. A culture of mutual respect among faculty and staff of both degree and traditional college programs is crucial in avoiding internal division and ensuring the success of expanded degree programming within colleges.

Conclusions

As we look to the future, there are a number of positive trends that build support for our case. Ontario demographics and labour market projections point to increased student demand for degree programs that lead to a career. The provincial government has pronounced a target of a 70% postsecondary attainment rate (from the current 62%), putting substantial pressure to create additional postsecondary spaces. A continued tight fiscal climate makes the cost effective delivery model offered by colleges an attractive alternative to meeting the increase in demand.

Within this environment, the potential for expansion of college degrees in Ontario is very promising, but it is not guaranteed. We must build on the momentum created to date; continue to be tenacious and unified in our advocacy and building the brand reputation of our graduates. The next major milestone will be to achieve brand awareness and full recognition by employers, prospective students, universities, governments and the public at large of the value of a college degree.



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Dr David Ross has been involved with college baccalaureate development since 1994 including his current leadership role with Langara. Part of his research has focused on the resource requirements as traditional two-year institutions transition to baccalaureate offerings. He was also responsible for the development and implementation of one of the early college degrees in the British Columbia system.

This is a brief synopsis of the evolution of degree granting colleges in British Columbia with a discussion on the successes, opportunities and challenges after two decades of change.

Evolution of degree granting colleges in British Columbia

Until the 1960s, the higher education system in British Columbia (BC) was a traditional effort consisting of the University of British Columbia (and affiliates) and a vocational system primarily focused on trades training. It was not until 1965 that the first two colleges with a broader program mandate were established in BC, with twelve more to follow over the next ten years. A primary objective of college development was to provide access to post-secondary education in regions not previously served. Programs included developmental, career, vocational and the first two years of university studies. The latter was targeted to provide transfer opportunities for degree completion at BC's universities located in the large urban centres of Vancouver and Victoria.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was dramatic growth in post-secondary enrolments in the province. By 1985 the regions were very active in advocating for baccalaureate degree completion opportunities closer to home. As a result, between 1989 and 1995, five colleges' mandates were increased to include undergraduate degrees. Most involved a mentoring relationship with one of the universities in the province. There was a variety of models used with the five colleges in relation to timing, access and programs. All were renamed University Colleges and within ten years they had granted over 6,000 baccalaureate degrees.

From the mid-1990s until the early part of this century, the remaining colleges and two technical institutes were also provided applied degree granting status as well as the opportunity to partner with universities to offer collaborative degrees. The university colleges were further expanded in

the early part of the last decade to include applied masters degrees where appropriate.

In 2004 one university college became Thompson Rivers University, while another was split into two institutions. The split saw the establishment of another campus of the University of British Columbia and a new regional college with degree granting capacity. In 2008 the remaining three university colleges, one of the degree granting technical institutions and one of the colleges were all made teaching-focused universities.

Overall, more than 175 undergraduate and several applied graduate degree programs have been developed and implemented through this process, with now thousands of graduates annually. From this change has come some significant opportunities and evolving challenges. The following is not an exhaustive list but instead attempts to provide some examples in the sector.

Opportunities

Increased access and participation in post-secondary education

There has been improved social, physical and economic access to post-secondary education in BC as a result of the development of college degrees. This has allowed more learners to participate in a widening spectrum of higher education programming which is vital preparation to better participate in an ever-changing economy. Historically, under-represented groups also saw increased involvement as programs developed (although this is still an area of substantial concern). There was also improved economic access for students through lower tuitions and the generally more cost effective model of studying closer to home.

More responsive to regional and sectoral needs

Colleges have gained significant experience developing and implementing degree programs. This is increasingly being leveraged to become more regionally and sector responsive and nimble, allowing for timelier development.

Development of a transfer system across all HE sectors

Of critical importance was the early establishment of a transfer system helping students move from college to university. That has continued to evolve to a point where colleges are also receiving institutions, with students coming to colleges after or during university for skill development, availability and other learning opportunities. The value of a robust transfer system also provides an opportunity for better use of limited resources with fuller classes and timelier credential completion.

Emergence of an applied research mandate at colleges

With the development of upper division curriculum and evolution of faculties to deliver those programs, colleges have been increasingly motivated to undertake applied research. This has been further supported by the provincial and federal governments with the added objective of advancing the innovation agenda in the region. This has meant new resources coming to colleges, while providing an avenue for improved connections with communities and business.

Challenges

Resource availability

In the BC case, even with all the program changes that have taken place, there has been very little

change in funding colleges versus universities. Bureaucratic structures still reflect to a large degree the two solitudes model from 50 years ago. Recognition of the resources required to properly support degree initiatives has been very limited. This includes technology, faculty development and the facilities required to deliver the programs. For example, the support for faculty is critical. Delivering upper division curriculum requires professional development, library resources and other needs in addition to the traditional two-year model.

Institutional mandate confusion

University Colleges, Colleges, Teaching Universities, Research Universities, Institutes and Polytechnic Universities are all officially and unofficially, commonly used institutional names in BC. This has often left the education consumer with a confusing process to navigate and engage.

Not all program areas have participated

There have been some programs such as business, health, arts and science that have seen more degree development and implementation than others. This is in part due to sector requirements and program size, but also in part to the inability to break tradition and develop the necessary ladders and connections to be more inclusive.

Acceptance of the college degree

The acceptance of an applied/college degree continues to be a work in progress. The confidence in these credentials has also been at times influenced by the perception of system changes being a political manoeuvre and not part of a broader post-secondary vision. However, as the number of graduates grows, a track record is being established

with graduate programs and employers. This academic and career success is placing our graduates in increasingly senior and more influential positions.

Conclusions

As economies continue to evolve, degree completion is increasingly required as the ticket to career advancement and a centrepiece to maintaining quality of life. Over the first 20-plus years of the college degree initiative in BC, more learners than ever before have access to baccalaureate opportunities and moreover, increasing numbers are choosing the college degree option for a variety of benefits not available in more traditional settings.

The challenges are also clear. In the vast majority of cases the resources required to fully support this increased access are chasing the development of the programs ... not leading them. Instead, change is mandated for shorter term political solutions and low cost expectations. We now have enough of a track record to know that the establishment of the necessary resource base at the start of new programs better supports learners, provides long-term stability and often attracts other resources.

Although many jurisdictions outside of BC do not participate in the college degree process, the numbers are increasing. With this, the rapidly growing numbers of graduates from college degrees are clearly establishing themselves in graduate programs, as entrepreneurs, as business leaders and perhaps most importantly, as community leaders that influence public policy. Although still not etched in stone, the building of this base, especially over the past ten years, has moved BC to a point where it would be very difficult to regress to a former detached system.

United States of America

Community College Baccalaureate Association

<http://www.accbd.org/>

The Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) strives to promote better access to the baccalaureate degree on community college campuses, and to serve as a resource for information on various models for accomplishing this purpose.

The CCBA attempts to gather all published articles and legislation dealing with the community college baccalaureate degree. We also solicit copies of unpublished materials related to this topic. We host an annual conference to share information and develop ways to promote the community college baccalaureate degree to governors, state legislatures, national policy boards, and other appropriate persons and organisations.

The baccalaureate degree is an important entry requirement for the better jobs and a better lifestyle. Therefore, every person should have an opportunity to pursue the baccalaureate degree at a place that is convenient, accessible and affordable.

American Association of Community Colleges

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/default.aspx>

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organisation for the nation's community colleges. The association represents almost 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 11 million students.

League for Innovation in the Community College

<http://www.league.org/>

The League is an international organisation dedicated to catalysing the community college movement. We host conferences and institutes, develop web resources, conduct research, produce publications, provide services, and lead projects and initiatives with our member colleges, corporate partners, and other agencies in our continuing efforts to make a positive difference for students and communities.

Council for the Study of Community Colleges

<http://www.cscconline.org/>

Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) is an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Council members include university-based researchers and community college practitioners who further scholarship on the community college enterprise.

National Research Center for Career and Technical Education

<http://www.nrccte.org/>

The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) is the primary agent for generating scientifically based knowledge, dissemination, professional development, and technical assistance to improve career and technical education (CTE) in the United States.

Achieving the Dream

<http://www.achievingthedream.org/>

Achieving the Dream is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. Built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream advances community college student success through work on four fronts:

- Transforming community colleges
- Influencing policy
- Developing new knowledge
- Engaging the public.

England and Scotland

Association of Colleges

<http://www.aoc.co.uk/>

The Association of Colleges (AoC) exists to represent and promote the interests of Colleges and provide members with professional support services.

As such, we aim to be the authoritative voice of Colleges — based on credible analysis, research, advocacy and consultation with Colleges — and the first choice destination for guidance and advice for members.

AoC was established in 1996 by Colleges themselves as a voice for further education and higher education delivered in Colleges at national and regional level.

Our membership includes General and Tertiary Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and Specialist Colleges in England and Northern Ireland. We work with and represent Colleges in Wales and Scotland through affiliation of AoC and partnership with sister bodies in both countries via the UK Council of Colleges.

As AoC is a not-for-profit organisation created by Colleges for Colleges, subscription and commercially generated revenue together sustain its work in representing and promoting the interests of Colleges, and in the provision of support services.

HE in FE at the Higher Education Academy

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/he-in-fe>

The work of the Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) Enhancement Programme is guided and supported by a Reference Group comprised of representatives from colleges and organisations with a stake in the sector. Our Main Aim is to support colleges of further education offering programmes of higher education by:

- improving levels of communication and awareness within the HE in FE sector
- assisting colleges to draw on expertise from the Academy's subject centres
- gathering, developing and disseminating examples of effective practice of teaching, learning and assessment within the sector
- supporting scholarly activity in and around the area of HE in FE
- supporting and informing the professional development and recognition of staff in the sector providing a forum for policy debate and response.

We support college staff and managers through regular events, workshops and briefings dedicated to HE in FE. Working closely with other agencies and academic subject specialists, we provide a supportive, informative service promoting awareness and professional development across the sector.

Higher Education Funding Council for England

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice.

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

QAA is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of

higher education, and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies . . . Each higher education institution is responsible for ensuring that appropriate standards are being achieved and a good quality education is being offered.

It is our responsibility to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications, and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

We achieve this by reviewing standards and quality, and providing reference points that help to define clear and explicit standards. We use a variety of methods to review standards and quality.

Institute for Learning

<http://www.ifl.ac.uk/about-ifl>

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the independent professional body for teachers and trainers in further education (FE) and skills. Our members work across a range of educational environments, in any context where young people and adults develop the skills and knowledge required to lead successful and rewarding lives. The role of IfL is to support professional development and excellence in order to deliver the best possible teaching experience to millions of learners.

As a key partner in ensuring an expert FE workforce, IfL is responsible for:

- registering teachers and trainers in FE and skills
- keeping an overview of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD)
- conferring the professional status of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) through the Professional Formation process.

We work to raise the status of teachers and trainers in FE and skills by promoting and supporting professional excellence through continuing professional development (CPD). We also represent the voice of our members to sector organisations, national agencies and the government.

Learning and Skills Improvement Service

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was formed to accelerate quality improvement, increase participation and raise standards and achievement in the learning and skills sector in England.

LSIS is dedicated to working in partnership with all parts of the sector to build and sustain self-improvement and we work closely with sector practitioners in the delivery of what LSIS provides.

We are responsible for developing and providing resources that help colleges and providers implement initiatives and improve quality. This is achieved by commissioning products and services, identifying and sharing good practice throughout the system, and providing tailored programmes of support.

Foundation Degree Forward

<http://www.fdf.ac.uk/>

Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) ceased at the end of July 2011, but its website is still functioning and there are a range of resources that TAFE institutes, teachers, learning advisors and VET researchers may find helpful.

fdf was established as a national body by the 2003 higher education White Paper as a HEFCE-funded organisation with a remit to support and promote high-quality foundation degrees.

As a result of an evaluation in 2006, **fdf** shifted its role and branding away from an exclusive focus on Foundation degrees towards workforce development and partnerships between employers and higher education across all qualifications. Foundation degrees are two-year higher education qualifications that are broadly equivalent to the first two years of a degree.

The FurtherHigher Project

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/furtherhigher/>

The FurtherHigher Project was a large research program led by Professor Gareth Parry from the University of Sheffield. The project website lists the project's key research papers and working papers.

The division between further and higher education in England is long-standing. The project examines the impact of this separation on strategies to widen participation in undergraduate education. Does it advance or inhibit a broadening of participation, or is its influence otherwise neutral?

Alongside national and international studies of policy, organisation and participation in dual-sector systems, fieldwork is conducted with students and staff in four partner colleges and universities.

The study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) within its Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).

Scotland's Colleges

<http://www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk/Welcome.html>

Scotland's Colleges was created in 2009 from the merger of the sector organisations, SFEU, SCI, ASC and COLEG, in order to enhance collective efforts to make a positive impact on learners in the Scottish college sector.

Building on our combined expertise, along with our passion and ability to respond to the wide-ranging demands of Scotland's college community, we are able to lead and influence with innovative approaches to meet the ever-changing needs of the sector.

By being at the heart of collective activity within the college sector, we aim to create a greater coherence, making the collective stronger for our member colleges, their staff and Scotland's learners.

Scotland's Colleges exists to support, represent and promote the Scottish college sector.

Through our work we:

- seek to prepare and assist the sector deliver its vital contribution to the economic and social needs of Scotland
- serve the ambitions of Scotland's learners and the demands of Scotland's employers
- enhance the sector's national and international reputation.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/CCC_FirstPage.jsp

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland.

In our accreditation role, we authorise all vocational qualifications that are available in Scotland and approve organisations that wish to deliver them.

As an awarding body, we work with schools, colleges, universities, industry, and government, to provide high quality, flexible and relevant qualifications. We strive to ensure that our qualifications are inclusive and accessible to all, that they recognise the achievements of learners, and

that they provide clear pathways to further learning or employment.

Skills Development Scotland

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

Skills Development Scotland is a non-departmental public body which brought together the careers, skills, training and funding services of Careers Scotland, Scottish University for Industry (learn.direct.scotland) and the skills functions of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise.

My World of Work

<http://myworldofwork.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

My World of Work is a careers development site for Scotland. It is very impressive and has a range of tools that help people to identify possible careers, as well as the training they will need to undertake them. It has a range of tools such as CV builders and various surveys that help people to identify their interests and the kinds of jobs for which they are suited. It lists job vacancies and qualifications, and institutions for individuals' chosen areas of work. It is possible to register for this site, but a Scottish postcode will be needed to do so. You will be able to identify some Scottish postcodes here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_postcode_areas_in_the_United_Kingdom

TAFE Directors AUSTRALIA



(L to R) Martin Riordan (CEO, TDA), Dr Rolando Montoya (College Provost, Miami Dade College), Bruce Mackenzie PSM (Chair of TDA, CEO Holmesglen Institute VIC)



Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan at the Miami Dade Culinary Institute launch



MDC Degree Roundtable, hosted by Miami Dade College Faculty Deans

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