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Office for Learning and Teaching

Grants program

Progress Report 1 March 2012

State-based Promoting Excellence Networks – Victoria/Tasmania

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Please refer to the document, *Project Management Information*, available on the OLT website,
<http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects/project-management>.

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1 Progress against specified outcomes and deliverables

Establishment of an active Victorian and Tasmania (VTAS) network

Upon receipt of the signed funding agreement, contact was made with all promoting excellence/learning and teaching staff within all Victorian and Tasmanian higher education institutions to advise them of the new collaboration and seeking their involvement.

A Google site was developed by Monash in consultation with the other project team members and site permissions were given to all VTAS members and 'friends of the network'. These permissions gave the PEI community the ability to contribute to discussion forums and provide feedback on all aspects of the site.

The project team members met for the first time on 29 September 2011. The meeting focused on assessing their requirements and expectations of a state-based network. We also shared ideas for the website, our vision and the plans for the first workshop. At this meeting, a date was set for the inaugural Vic/Tas State-Based Promoting Excellence Network Workshop.

PEI staff support and training/PD related to sharing of systems, knowledge and processes that contribute to optimising student learning

At the first workshop in February 2012, UTAS, Deakin University, La Trobe University and Monash shared their processes for: peer support for award applicants; what low SES students value in good teaching; and an initiative to ensure learning and teaching researchers have their research recorded and counted as research activity by their institution.

The second workshop will be held in September 2012 and will be hosted by La Trobe University. The project team will meet in March to develop an agenda for the second workshop. A call for agenda items will be made to all the friends of the network who want to contribute to the workshop and/or provide discussion ideas. We are therefore on target to meet this outcome.

Fostering collaborative development of learning and teaching research grant projects between VTAS institutions.

We propose to use the whole-of-network workshops as a vehicle for the distribution of knowledge about current and proposed learning and teaching research grants. Presentations such as the one given by Deakin university (see below), along with the informal networking opportunities provided by the workshops, foster opportunities for cross institutional collaboration on research projects. A 'Looking for Partners' section on the Vic-Tas Promoting Excellence Network website allows members of the network to promote topics or projects seeking partners.

Enabling post-project dissemination, engagement and therefore impact of research project outcomes and resources

At the first VTAS workshop at which faculty-based academic staff participated as well as PEI support staff, Deakin University presented on their *ongoing* project 'Teaching Students from Low SES Backgrounds' including approaches and resources that will result from the grant project. One hundred per cent of the 9 respondents to the survey to date which evaluated satisfaction with the meeting indicated it was 'extremely useful' or 'useful'.

Future workshops will build upon this and PEI leaders will target grant project leaders and invite them to present on their work to disseminate knowledge of it, to increase engagement and maximise impact of the outcomes.

Catalysing initiatives that connect existing peer groupings – early career staff, faculty groups, to provide opportunities to share, encourage and value teaching excellence and innovation

The February workshop was successful in providing an opportunity for networking and for sharing innovations and initiatives in addition to the formal program.

The PEI team at Monash is also active in catalysing a community of education focused staff in all faculties at Monash through workshops, a shared website and a Seed Leadership proposal to disseminate training resources and approaches. These staff members were invited to attend the February workshop, and several were in attendance on the day. This provided them with the opportunity to network with learning and teaching staff and scholars from across the state.

2 Review of Progress

2.1 Major achievements against schedule/ project brief

In the past the communications between Victorian and Tasmanian higher institutions has been minimal. This initiative has created the motivation and opportunity for like-minded academics and professional staff to gather for the first time. Events such as the inaugural Vic-Tas Promoting Excellence Workshop provide invaluable networking and knowledge dissemination opportunities.

We are tracking well against our schedule with the website going live in January and the first workshop being held two months ahead of schedule in February. The February workshop was a great success with 40 participants registered from 9 separate higher education institutions. Having Suzi Hewlett, General Manager, the Office of Learning and Teaching, attend, was insightful and showed great support of the promoting excellence network. The 3 minute 'speed dating' style introductions enabled attendees to connect with each other and to hear the areas of interest/projects that they were involved in. This was followed by presentations from Monash, La Trobe, Deakin and University of Tasmania.

2.2 Lessons learnt

The website will be key to efficient communications between institutions. One challenge identified by the project team has been encouraging our network colleagues to utilise the site to its fullest potential. We are currently considering how best to engage them with the site. As the website was built as a Google site, users are required to log in using a Gmail account. This has proven something of an impediment as members are sometimes reluctant to create 'yet another email account'. At the next project team meeting, we can ascertain further how to overcome these impediments and to see whether using other methods for some functions is more effective – like simple USBs for storing and sharing resources, or group emails – because people do access their email.

Given the change in submission dates to the OLT Grant and Award program from the 2011 ALTC dates, the timing of PEI events may be altered slightly.

2.3 Challenges met

Our efforts to invite only staff working in learning and teaching units to a VIC-Tas PEI network sharing meeting in February failed with very few participants showing intention to attend. We therefore decided to open the meeting to wider participation by academic staff from Victorian and Tasmanian institutions, as well as the PEI network. We had forty registrations. It is possible that the first OLT Grants round deadlines impeded people's participation – it was a busy time. It underlined for us that the first challenge for, given the lack of activity in the past for a state based network, is to demonstrate the value it can offer institutions and individuals. We believe we met this initial challenge: Suzi Hewlett's address, given the newness of the OLT, was an important drawcard and was well received. As the OLT puts its stamp on new processes and priorities, this will continue to be important. In summary, it initially proved difficult to attract the state PEI staff to a network meeting but the widened forum proved to be quite well attended (and included PEI network Staff from 9 of the 12 network institutions). It provided a good opportunity to share initiatives and for staff to get to know others working in similar fields across the two states.

With the high turnover of staff in learning and teaching centres within higher education institutions, we will need to be diligent in keeping contact databases up to date so as to keep the network informed of our initiatives. Making sure that we continually seek input from our network colleagues as to the specific areas of interest/need that they wish to be addressed in our workshops is essential and we plan to conduct several surveys over the course of each project year. In addition, we will be proactive in our communications with colleagues about future events/projects.

2.4 Indicate if and how these challenges will have an impact on the outcomes, the timeline or the budget?

No. At this stage it is not envisaged that these challenges will have an impact on the timeline nor the budget.

2.5 In terms of the planned deliverables, what is your estimation of how far the project has progressed? Please indicate percentage below:



3 Formative Evaluation

3.1 What formative evaluation processes are being used?

A survey monkey has been developed to survey all workshop participants to seek feedback on the success or otherwise of the workshop, as well as requesting topics for the next workshop. Results are being still being compiled but to date, the response rate was 22% and we will do a paper based survey to be completed on the day to increase this next time. The responses indicate a good level of interest in the sessions. Of most interest, in reply to the question which sought to find out what can be actioned as a result of the information presented: 'Was there any content presented in the sessions that you anticipate using in your institution?', recommendations from 'Teaching Students from Low SES' received a 90% affirmative response, the 'Peer Professional Learning Program' received a 56 % affirmative response, and 'Making Learning and Teaching Count' received a 45 % response.

3.2 What have you learnt from these processes thus far?

The response rate was lower on our satisfaction survey than we would like and we will do a paper based survey to be completed on the day to increase this next time. We will repeat this type of question in future surveys to try to ascertain the real impact on processes.

4 Events

Provide details of events held during the period. Events include workshops, forums or colloquiums involving participants outside of the project team.

Event Date	Event title, Location (city only)	Brief description of the purpose of the event	Number of participants	Number of higher education institutions represented	Number of other institutions represented
29.11.11	Meeting	First project team meeting for planning purposes	8	3	0
8.2.12	Workshop	VTAS State-based promoting excellence network workshop	40	9	1 (OLT)

Provide details of events planned over the next six months. If you would like to publicise forthcoming events on the OLT website please email learningandteaching@deewr.gov.au.

Task	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
2 nd VTAS project team meeting held	▪					
Call for agenda items to all VTAS members		▪				
3 rd VTAS project team meeting to finalise workshop details					▪	
Schedule for second state-wide workshop finalised and sent to attendees						▪

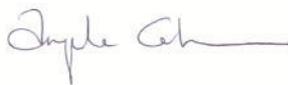
5 4. Certification

Certification by fellow

I certify that this is an accurate representation of the progress of the project.

Project leader: Associate Professor Angela Carbone

Signature:



Date: 1/3/2012

Certification by DVC/PVC (Academic), or equivalent, or official delegate

I acknowledge submission of the Progress Report.

Full name: Professor Sue Willis

Position: Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

Signature:



Date: 1 march 2012

Please send report via email: learningandteaching@deewr.gov.au