The ITL Welcomes a New Director: Professor Keith Trigwell

I am delighted to be a part of the group of people fortunate to work at the University of Sydney’s Institute for Teaching and Learning, and whose work you see featured in this publication. For the last six years I have been at the University of Oxford where, as a Reader in Higher Education I was asked to investigate the learning experience of Oxford students. It was a task I approached with some enthusiasm, as the chance to explore the views of this comparatively secret society (the collegiate undergradu- ate system) with the support of (some of) the colleges, was an opportunity not to be missed. While there were a few surprising differences between the Oxford and Sydney undergraduate systems, it was the extent of similarity that was most surprising. As at Sydney, students’ perceptions of their learning environment are related to their approaches to learning, and one of the biggest barriers to quality learning is the students’ perceptions of their workload.

I became interested in the position of Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) in Sydney, in part, because of the reputation of the ITL. It is, without any doubt, an international leader in student learning-focused, research-informed academic development. The University of Oxford is using ideas and practices developed here, and academic development practice in different parts of the world is benefiting from an analysis of the way things are done at Sydney. I intend to build on these strengths and consolidate this external reputation. All academic staff in the Institute are research active and we use this research, as well as research conducted elsewhere, in work with members of the University community aimed at enhancing and assuring the quality of teaching and learning. What the ITL offers the University of Sydney are ways of capturing best practice in teaching and disseminating those ideas through combinations of discipline-based and cross-disciplinary discussions. The Institute has three main approaches – a comprehensive student feedback system (SCQED and UScE) to monitor best practice, substantial courses on aspects of academic practice (on teaching and supervision) and Strategic Working Groups focused on exploring enhanced practice in a small number of topical areas. For more information, visit our website at http://www.itle.usyd.edu.au which describes these approaches, including the Institute’s unique blend of teaching and research.

Learning and Teaching Alumni Chapter

The Learning and Teaching Alumni Chapter (LTAC), established by the ITL in 2005, met in September to discuss the NSW Quality Teaching Awards. Past win- nors of the Awards shared their personal experiences, following some guiding words from Dr Norman McCulloch of the Australian College of Educators. Our Alumni will be holding their next meeting towards the end of this year, so keep an eye on the home page at http://itl.usyd.edu.au/community/alumni.htm. We will be advising our members soon of the forthcoming meeting topic and details.

Principles and Practice Program (3 day program)

Three academic staff members from Nagoya University have enrolled in the ITL’s 3-day program in November, with five staff from Moore Theological College in Sydney enrolled in the February program. Moore College is now requiring most of its new staff to complete the ITL’s program, and the Japanese contingent is evidence of the program’s international reputation. The ITL runs this important program three to four times a year, sometimes with as many as 70 of our own University staff attending. Further information available at http://www.itle.usyd.edu.au/programs/3day/.

A PhD for the ITL!

Congratulations to Dr Kim McShane, who in recent months completed her PhD thesis enti- tled Technologies Transforming Academics: Academic identity and online teaching. Kim investigated some of the assumptions for lec- turer identity of being, or becoming, a facilita- tor" of online student learning. In the early stages of her study, Kim noted: 1. a “silence” surrounding teaching per se in recent policy on learning (and teaching) in Australian higher education, 2. the dominance of “the student focus” in much current learning (and teaching) research that tends to erase the teacher, and 3. a naïve hostility toward the “untechno- gised” lecturer and other so-called “traditional practices” in the literature on ICT-enhanced learning (and teaching).

These insights led Kim to conduct an empirical research project exploring the teaching experiences of twelve university lecturers who taught online, or were making the move online. She organised the critical, interpretative analysis of the data according to three common, sacred lecturer identities: the teaching metaphors of performance, care and creative direction. From the perspective of each metaphor posi- tion, the move to becoming a facilitator of blended learning was uneasy.

The findings suggested that the teaching values and practices of first-year, first-time, direct- ing lecturer, in particular lecturer-student responsiveness and reciprocity, do not adapt to online pedagogies. Lecturers in the study became bystanders and “voyeurs” to online student learning, and they were “de-responsi- bilised” of their relationship with their students, exemplifying “the end of obligated relations to others” (Readings, 1996) in university learning and teaching. While not dismissing online teaching, most participants preferred the spontaneous, proximate con- textile of face-to-face teaching for the conduct of critical analysis and reflection, collaborative debriefing, and for pedagogical processes that challenge and “draw out” learners. It would seem then that blended teaching, that combines both online “witnessing” and face- to-face intervening, establishes the transitional conditions for a new, emerging moral order in the ethical relations between university learn- ers (and teachers!).

Call for Presentations

ITL Seminars 2007

Would you like to propose a seminar for our 2007 series? Each semester the ITL hosts a series of fort- nightly seminars showcasing research scholarship and development activities in university learning and teaching. We welcome scholarly presentations from interested, research-active colleagues and developers at USyd and at other universities. Alumni and gradu- ates of our Higher Education teaching and learning programs are encouraged to consider presenting on scholarly work they have presented or published of late. Visit our current seminars website at: http:// www.itle.usyd.edu.au/community/researchsem.htm, or email Kim: k.mcshane@itl.usyd.edu.au.

Bringing together Learning Outcomes & Graduate Attributes

The Generic Graduate Attributes (GGA) Working Group is currently focusing an assessment, beginning with looking at ways of refining and developing effective learning outcomes. Good learning outcomes are a pre-cursor to effective learning and teaching activities. If people write better learning outcomes formulated in con- sultation with others - past and present stu- dents as well as academic and professional colleagues. To this end, faculties are holding a series of workshops or discussions (often within existing learning and teaching events). The overall focus of this series of discipline- specific workshops is to support academics in developing learning outcomes for existing units of study which incorporate the graduate attributes. Faculties are working at different levels, as appropriate for each disciplinary context and stage of development or in accord with existing change processes.

Visit the GGA website at: http://www.itle.usyd.edu.au/graduateattribu- ites/