

The director's cut: The Central Queensland University teaching and learning showcase and *studies in learning, evaluation, innovation and development*

J. McConachie, DTLS, Central Queensland University, j.mcconachie@cqu.edu.au

The institution known currently as Central Queensland University (CQU) has been through a number previous incarnations: the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, the University College of Central Queensland and the University of Central Queensland. The 'look and feel' of teaching and learning at the institution has changed markedly during those incarnations: face-to-face teaching has spread from Rockhampton to Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone and Mackay in Central Queensland. Then it spread to Australian international campuses in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Sydney, and to overseas centres in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. Similarly the largely print-based materials that underpinned the organisation when it was one of eight Australian Distance Education Centres as designated by the Commonwealth Government have been augmented by, and transformed into, teleconferences, videoconferences (particularly among the Central Queensland campuses), videostreaming and online learning.

Despite these dramatic changes, one constant has been the determination by staff members – academics, managers and administrative and technical support staff – to ensure that the learning experiences for students are of the highest possible quality, effective and relevant. This determination has resulted in CQU's well-established reputation for the provision both of teaching that is challenging and rigorous, and of support services that identify and engage with the specific needs of particular groups of learners.

If this reputation is to grow and develop, rather than ossify or wither, it is crucial that CQU's teaching and learning are accompanied by equally challenging and rigorous research activities. Boyer (1990) has demonstrated that, rather than research and teaching and learning being separate enterprises with nothing to say to each other, they are in fact conjoined in an enduring dialogue, framed around the multiple scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching. This dialogue has informed much recent and current work in the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education (see for example Becker & Andrews, 2004).

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Two initiatives in 2004 indicate that the scholarship of teaching and learning is alive and well at CQU. The first initiative was the 2nd CQU Teaching and Learning Showcase, held in the week 16-20 February. Facilitated and organised by staff members of CQU's Division of Teaching and Learning Services (DTLS), the Showcase provided an engaging and lively forum for the exchange of strategies and techniques constituting 'best practice' in teaching and learning at CQU. The Showcase also presented dialogue with innovative teachers in other Australian universities, reflecting the significant point that questions of teaching quality and learning effectiveness exercise all contemporary universities.

The second initiative was the launch of the electronic, refereed, scholarly journal *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* by Professor John Rickard, CQU's Vice-Chancellor and President, on 28 October. The journal is a joint initiative of the staff members of the Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development (LEID) Centre (part of DTLS and itself launched during the Teaching and Learning Showcase on 17 February) and Mr David Jones from CQU's Faculty of Informatics and Communication. The journal's establishment has been premised on the need to bring high quality and collaboratively supported research to bear on a series of issues confronting the scholarship of teaching and learning. Both these elements – the quality and the collaboration – are vital to the ongoing engagement with those issues.

In that context, it is fitting that the journal's inaugural double issue has been devoted to the publication of the refereed proceedings of the Showcase. I am delighted that DTLS has been an integral part of both these initiatives: such involvement is in accord with the Division's mission:

The Division will provide services and products to staff and students to support CQU's vision to be a leading, flexible teaching and learning and research institution. This will be achieved through high quality support for teaching and learning [and] well focussed research....
(Division of Teaching and Learning Services, 2003, p. ii)

References

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